**FOUNDATIONS**

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**STUDY GUIDE and DIGGING DEEPER**

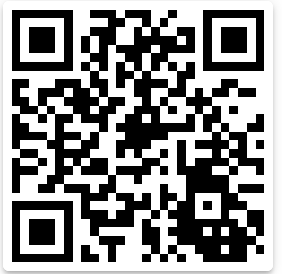
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**The study is in the back section.**

**This can be found online at yesgod.info/foundations**



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| Digging Deeper and life applications at yesgod.info/foundations |  |
| **FOUNDATIONS FOR OUR LIVES** | |
| INTRODUCTION: As you reflect on the truths presented below, they may or may not be familiar to you. If they are new, you have the chance to gain a fresh perspective on your relationship with God, grounded in truth rather than the lies of the Devil. Whether each principle is a new idea or a familiar one, the real question is how fully you embrace it. In other words, do your actions and reactions align with someone who believes these truths? For this tool to effectively facilitate meaningful and hopefully lasting change in your life, it is crucial that you not only read this, but also meditate on the truths for any areas where you do not have complete victory, answer the questions, and complete the Study Guides. Study Guide Overview (This and other links can be accessed through the online version.)  LEGEND: **PARRELLELS**  **APPLICATIONS**  For practical components of the Christian walk, including, among others, prayer, reading the Bible, and attending church, please see the [Guide for Christian Living](http://yesgod.info/new) | |
| **CORE PRINCIPLES**  [1)](file:///C:\DOCS%20AND%20FILES\My%20Webs\god\resources\foundationsofourlives.htm#Know) Knowledge without application is useless.  [2)](file:///C:\DOCS%20AND%20FILES\My%20Webs\god\resources\foundationsofourlives.htm#1)) THE foundation for our life is God's love and God's power.  [3)](file:///C:\DOCS%20AND%20FILES\My%20Webs\god\resources\foundationsofourlives.htm#2)) THE pathways Jesus gave us for our life are to love God and to love others.  [4)](file:///C:\DOCS%20AND%20FILES\My%20Webs\god\resources\foundationsofourlives.htm#3)) EVERYTHING in our lives is a gift  **VIEW OF OURSELVES AND GOD**  [5)](file:///C:\DOCS%20AND%20FILES\My%20Webs\god\resources\foundationsofourlives.htm#4)) ALL good and all love is from God.  **LEARNING ABOUT GOD**  [6)](file:///C:\DOCS%20AND%20FILES\My%20Webs\god\resources\foundationsofourlives.htm#5)) It is God's will that you get to know Him.  **LIVING IN THE WORLD**  [7)](file:///C:\DOCS%20AND%20FILES\My%20Webs\god\resources\foundationsofourlives.htm#6)) Learn from the past, glorify God in the present, and trust God for the future.  [8)](file:///C:\DOCS%20AND%20FILES\My%20Webs\god\resources\foundationsofourlives.htm#7)) It is not about us and our desired way; it is about God.  [9)](file:///C:\DOCS%20AND%20FILES\My%20Webs\god\resources\foundationsofourlives.htm#8)) Difficulty in our lives comes from the fall.  [10)](file:///C:\DOCS%20AND%20FILES\My%20Webs\god\resources\foundationsofourlives.htm#9))  God often uses the consequences of the fall to draw us closer to Him.  [11)](file:///C:\DOCS%20AND%20FILES\My%20Webs\god\resources\foundationsofourlives.htm#10))  Motives Matter.  **OVERCOMING DECEPTION**  [12)](file:///C:\DOCS%20AND%20FILES\My%20Webs\god\resources\foundationsofourlives.htm#11)) In this untrustworthy world, the only source for guaranteed truth is the Bible.  [13)](file:///C:\DOCS%20AND%20FILES\My%20Webs\god\resources\foundationsofourlives.htm#12)_) The deception in our lives most often comes from worldly thinking.  [14)](file:///C:\DOCS%20AND%20FILES\My%20Webs\god\resources\foundationsofourlives.htm#14)) We naturally forget both people's unfaithfulness and God's faithfulness. | |

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| 1) **Knowledge without application is useless.**One might even say it is counterproductive. The more we understand what is best for us, and the less we put it into practice, the more conflicted we become. This can lead to a tendency to ignore the truth, which may result in a hardened heart. The purpose of acquiring knowledge is to learn to love God and others.   ● EARTHLY PARALLEL 1: Scripture is compelling in this regard. *“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it--he will be blessed in what he does.”* (James 1:22-25)   ● EARTHLY PARALLEL 2: A similar percentage of medical professionals struggle with substance abuse as the general population. Furthermore, over half of them are overweight. They may possess substantial knowledge regarding the harmful effects of their actions on their bodies, yet many fail to apply this knowledge. Almost everyone recognizes that drinking plenty of water, avoiding overeating, and exercising are essential for maintaining good health. Some individuals feel uncomfortable when reminded of these truths.   ● APPLYING THE PARALLELS: When truth is revealed to you, on a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 representing shying away from it, five denoting ignoring it, and 10 indicating complete application, where do you rate yourself?   ● APPLICATION 1: Consider 1 Cor 8:1-3 and 1 Cor 13:2. What change, if any, occurs in your thinking when you reflect on the idea that all the knowledge you have and seek is utterly meaningless unless you love—specifically, love God and love (do what is best for) others?  ● APPLICATION 2: In which areas of your life are you failing to apply the truth? Read and reflect on the passages below. How might your perspective change?  ● APPLICATION 3: When truth is revealed to you, reflect on its significance and how it relates to your life.   * *Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that we all possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know. But the man who loves God is known by God.* (1 Cor 8:1-3) * *If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.* (1 Cor 13:2) * *"Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."* (Matt 7:24-27) * *He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."* (Luke 11:28) * *Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and does not do it, sins.* (James 4:17) * *Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.* (James 3:13) * *If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.* (1 John 1:6) |
| 2) THE foundation for our life is **God's love and God's power**. All of our problems stem from our failure to trust in these two attributes. Nothing in this world possesses both. People can love others, but without power, it is useless. For example, love alone is not enough to cure cancer. Some individuals possess power but do not love others: they are to be feared. God has both. When we rely on God’s love and power, we walk in confidence and peace. The events in the world or the sins of others do not shake us. We have confidence that God can work through us in ways that exceed our perceived abilities. When we feel capable of achieving anything without recognizing that our ability is a result of God’s power, we are being prideful.   ● EARTHLY PARALLEL: There are parts of many cities that can be dangerous to walk through at night. Imagine that someone who cares about you has four close friends who are part of an elite military fighting team. Picture yourself walking through a highly dangerous area with one of them in front, one behind, and one on each side of you. You notice three large, suspicious individuals and react with fear. One of the team members sees your distress and, while touching the M16 resting on his shoulder, smiles and says, “No worries, we’ve got this!” Your confidence in this situation does not rely on your abilities, but rather on the skills of those who have vowed to protect you.  ● APPLYING THE PARALLEL: God has vowed to take care of us and manage our lives. His purpose for us is to trust in His love and power. People often stumble here because they mistakenly believe that God has promised to protect them from difficulties. On the contrary, Jesus said, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33) Someday, everyone will physically die, but those who have received the gift of Salvation will live forever. It is the “forever” that should be our primary focus. (See the topic “Deception in Our Lives”) As we walk through life, Jesus, like the "elite force" mentioned earlier, is with us, protecting us from harm that hinders us from becoming more like Him. “The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom.” (2 Tim 4:18) Even when this world is unimaginably fearful and painful, we, like Jesus, must focus on the joy beyond our cross. (Heb 12:2) He, like the "elite force," is saying, “Do not worry. I’ve got this.” (Ps 23:4)  ● APPLICATION: Reflect on a difficult period in your life. How might your perspective have shifted if you had believed that God was all-powerful and all-loving? The next time you encounter a problem, pause and think about whether you trust that God is all-powerful and that He loves you. Ask yourself two questions.  ● What more could God do to prove His power and love? When you trust in the truth, the result is perfect peace. Our emotions can indicate when we are not abiding in Christ. List instances of painful emotions (fear, worry, anger, feeling disrespected, unappreciated, etc.) in your life.  ● Did you trust that God had those situations under control? If not, write out how your reactions might have changed if you had fully trusted God.   * *This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. (1 John 4:10)* * *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding* (Prov 3:5) * *You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. (*Isa 26:3) |
| 3) THE pathways Jesus gave us for our lives are to love God and love others. Although it is difficult, the message is simple. The word “love” refers to Agape love, which means doing what is best for the other person, regardless of our feelings or the cost involved. We express our love for God in various ways, including obedience and worship. Our love for others, motivated by God’s love for us, is demonstrated by meeting their needs, which may be spiritual, emotional, or physical.  ● EARTHLY PARALLEL: A toddler cannot grasp the reasons behind most of their parents' commands. They lack an understanding of the harm that can come from touching something hot or falling from a great height. Their ability to avoid serious injury depends on listening, trusting, and obeying. They also learn by observing their parents. When they witness kindness in words and actions, they internalize that as normal. When instructed to “be nice” to a sibling, they have a sense of what that looks like.  ● APPLYING THE PARALLEL: Like little children, we depend on Jesus not only for our pathway through life but also for the example of how to live and love. Jesus has summed up the law with the command to love God and others. He also provided us with the perfect example of love: his death for our life. He "came to serve, not to be served." (Mt 20:28) As we meditate on the immense sacrifice made so our relationship with God could be restored, our love for God grows along with our desire to be like Jesus. By reflecting on Jesus's example, we learn how to treat others. The way we treat others stems from how we believe we have been treated. We need to meditate on the truth that a perfect life was given so we may have eternal life. What more could we want? Now share that love with others. Do what is best for them, no matter how you feel. Be nice!  ● APPLICATION: 1) Loving God: Obeying God’s commandments shows love for Him. The Ten Commandments provide us with guidelines. However, the passages below from the book of James present us with a broader, yet simpler and more challenging, task of obedience. 2) Loving Others: Some needs are clear. For instance, some people around the world must walk long distances for water. We can offer financial support to address those needs. Giving money to some individuals might prevent them from working, which is not truly loving toward them. Most of the time, we have a good grasp of a person’s genuine needs: a listening ear, sharing a truth about God or life in general, or helping with a task. Are you sensitive to the needs of others? When a clear need is brought to your attention and you do not respond, what is stopping you from sharing God’s love? If there is no valid reason, then confess it, repent, and love.   * *Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (*Matt 22:37-40) * *"If you love me, you will obey what I command.* (John 14:15) * *“Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and does not do it, sins.”* (James 4:17*)* * *“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world*.” (James 1:27) |

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| 4) EVERYTHING in our lives is a gift, including what we have worked for. Therefore, thankfulness should be our primary response to all we receive. As we embrace this truth, the result is humility. The most important gift anyone can receive is Salvation. When we understand that there is nothing in our lives, including our Salvation, that we can take credit for, we are humbled before God and do not view ourselves as better than others. Since our physical and intellectual attributes, when and where we were born, and all of our abilities and opportunities are gifts, where is there room for boasting? On the contrary, we should be overflowing with thankfulness. Our lack of thankfulness stems from setting a bar, a level of expectation for the minimums in our lives.  ● EARTHLY PARALLEL: Consider professional sports stars, brilliant scientists, or those who win beauty pageants. No matter how hard the average person works, they will NEVER attain the worldly status of those gifted individuals. Even if a person born in a developing country is highly talented, they will most likely never have those opportunities. Being born into a specific situation is also a gift. Two hundred years ago, even the most privileged individuals lacked access to electricity or the ability to fly in an airplane.  ● APPLYING THE PARALLEL: Reflect on your physical abilities that some individuals lack (sight, hearing, arms, legs, and physical strength). Consider the circumstances surrounding your birth. Think about how much you learned through words and examples while growing up. Visualize each of these as gifts.  ● APPLICATION: Create a list of personal attributes and accomplishments. These may include your appearance, athletic abilities, intelligence, or the amount of money and material possessions you have or have had in the past. Do you see yourself as superior to those who lack your qualities or achievements? Be honest. Reflect on the following verses and note any shifts in your perspective. Write another list of your life expectations. Examples may include, but are not limited to: not experiencing physical discomfort, having enough money to do as you please, or having others treat you in a certain way. After reflecting on the verses below, note any changes in your viewpoint. Next, list at least five benefits you have received because of your Salvation. Spend about 3-5 minutes considering them. Focus on something blank, like a piece of paper or a wall. Read Eph 2:8-9. Take at least 2-3 minutes to reflect on what you did to earn the gift of your Salvation, which is nothing. There is nothing anyone can do to "deserve Salvation." Take a few minutes to reflect on your self-worth in relation to others based on what you wrote earlier, while remembering that you cannot earn an eternal relationship with God in Heaven.   * *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast.* (Eph 2:8-9) * *You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.* (Deut 8:17-18) * *Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.* (I Thes 5:18) * *"Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." (*Matt 8:20) * *For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?* (1 Cor 4:7*)* |
| 5) **All good and all love is from God.**  Everything we receive and all we give is God’s love flowing through people. Living in these truths humbles us, reminding us that every good deed we do for others and all our accomplishments come from God using us as His vessel. We also recognize that everyone who has ever shown us love is the same: God’s love expressed through others. As we reflect on the love that comes into our lives from God, we learn to depend on God rather than on others to continue loving us.  ● EARTHLY PARALLEL: Our ability to survive on Earth relies heavily on the sun. Even areas of our world that receive minimal sunlight can be so frigid that survival is impossible without proper clothing or shelter. In some climates, food does not grow during the winter months. Certain religions honor the sun, making an effort to recognize its significance. We can take credit for our success in cultivating plants, and indeed, following proper practices leads to greater success. However, the source of growth ultimately stems from the sun. Even for experts, insufficient sunlight will result in failure.  ● APPLYING THE PARALLEL: Similarly, all our success, what we receive, and what we can give to others come from the Son. He created all things, holds them together, and is THE source of love. Our success depends not on our hard work but on the love we are given. Our work is to pass the Son's (Jesus) love on to others.  ● APPLICATION: List some ways in which others have blessed you. Consider each instance as that person being a vessel of the good and the love you received, which comes from God. How does this perspective change your view of a time when one of those individuals let you down? How does it alter your understanding of God loving you through many people throughout your life? How does recognizing all the good as coming from God help you trust Him for the future? List some of the sacrificial things you have done for others. Remember that the good and the love did not originate from you, but rather flowed from God through you. How does this shift your perception of yourself? How does it affect your view of who you are compared to others?   * *Do not be deceived, my dear brothers. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.* (James 1:16-17) * *For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.**He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.* (Col 1:16,17) |
| 6) **It is God’s will for you to get to know Him.** J.I. Packer in Knowing God states: “Disregard the study of God... sentence yourself... no sense of direction and no understanding of what surrounds you." We learn about God and what He expects from us by reading and meditating on the Bible. It is essential to understand that God is not limited to teaching us through the Bible. He reveals Himself and truth in many different ways. Throughout the day, look for God’s revelation of Himself and what He’s teaching you. The earthly parallels below are examples. Jesus often spoke in parables, using earthly truths to help people understand heavenly ones. It is crucial to test what we believe we are learning against the Bible, which serves as the foundation for truth. As we read God’s Word and navigate life, our primary focus should be to seek what we are learning about God, our relationship with Him, and what He expects from us. Think in terms of getting to know God, not just learning about His attributes. We would not describe a good friend or family member solely by their attributes, but rather, more importantly, by who they are as a person.  ● EARTHLY PARALLEL: A friend introduces you to someone they know, and you sense a connection with this person. To build a relationship, you need to get to know them better, which requires spending time together. You might discover many things about them, such as their birth city, age, favorite color, high school, favorite food, and vacation spots. While you’d learn a lot, you still wouldn’t truly know them. Genuine knowledge of someone takes time and involves observing how they react in various situations. Similarly, you would not approach someone and say you want to be friends, then ask them for a list of what you need to do to earn their friendship. Instead, spending time together and meeting each other’s needs fosters trust, allowing your relationship to develop naturally.  ● APPLYING THE PARALLEL: Learning about God is very important, but it is not enough. One can possess abundant information about God and still have no relationship with Him. God reconciled man to Himself so we can have a relationship with Him. In all aspects of your life, seek to know God in a way that enhances your relationship with Him. For example, we often do not experience the consequences of our sins. (Romans 2:4) says that “God's kindness leads you toward repentance.” When you have done wrong and realize that God has shown you kindness in return, you learn the heart of God. That is one of many ways to learn more about God's heart.  ● APPLICATION: Read through 1 John 1. Even if you don’t discover anything new, write down: 1) what you can learn about God, 2) what you can learn about your relationship with Him, and 3) what He expects from you. As you read and study the Bible, continue to look for the answers to these three questions.  ● Reflect on recent events. Record the same details as above. Which Bible verses affirm that what you believe you've learned is true?   * *I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, (*Phil 3:10) * *but let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice, and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,” declares the LORD. (*Jer 9:24) * *Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. (*John 17:3) * *But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen. (*II Peter 3:18) |

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| 7) **The purpose of the past is for us to learn from it, the present is to glorify God, and the future is to trust God.** God is pleased with our direction in this moment rather than after we have accomplished a goal or completed a future task. We will never be perfected on this earth. (Rom 7:24) However, if we are seeking God at this moment, the good news is that we are pressing forward in a Godly direction. As we live in this truth, we will not think that someday, when we mature, we will be more pleasing to God. He is pleased with us at this moment if, in this moment, we are seeking Him.  ● EARTHLY PARALLEL: An inventor experiments repeatedly. Despite many failures, he learns what does not work through this process. In the PAST, he only has failed experiments and notes to avoid repeating them. In the PRESENT, he works hard with the hope of achieving success. The FUTURE remains unknown but exciting. What might the invention become? If he spends energy worrying about the future, he will waste the time and effort that could be used to learn from past mistakes. Learning from those mistakes is exactly what will lead to the desired future.  ● APPLYING THE PARALLEL: Like the inventor, we make mistakes, and we must learn from them. We need to repent of our sins, which are essentially mistakes. Similar to the inventor, we should strive to learn from the mistakes of others so that we do not waste our lives on needless experimentation. Worrying about the future prevents us from giving proper attention to what is right in front of us. We must learn from the past, take charge of our lives in the present, and look forward to the future.  ● APPLICATION: Reflect on the past. Have you truly repented of your sins? Do you learn from your mistakes or from what you perceive as the mistakes of others? Which ones have you not learned from? What do you gain by spending time in regret or dwelling on could-have-beens? Now, consider the future: What do you gain from worrying about it? How does trusting God for what lies ahead enable you to walk in peace in the present? Finally, think about the present: How much of your time do you spend living in the moment, seeking God right now? Write down any personal accomplishments that you believe will please God. Remember that what you just wrote represents your future. Close your eyes and be fully present in this moment. Thank God for all He has done for you. Worship Him for His attributes, including His Love and His Power. Tell Him right now that you desire His will, not yours. In this moment, you cannot please God more.   * *These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.* (I Cor 10:11) * *What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? (*Rom 7:24) * *This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.* (Psalm 118:24) * *Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, (*Phil 3:13) * *Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. (*Rom 4:20-21) * *Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."* (James 4:14) |
| 8) **It is not about us and our desired way; it is about God.** Jesus IS the way. Our lives are meant to be about God receiving glory. Walking in this truth simplifies life and is fundamental to nearly every thought we have and action we take. Although simple, it is not easy because we want OUR way.  ● EARTHLY PARALLEL: Imagine that someone close to you is getting married, and you have offered to help with the wedding. The bride selects the flowers, food, colors, entertainment, and decorations she prefers. You wouldn’t think of showing up and replacing her choices with your favorites. It is her day, and she should have it her way. Unfortunately, many employees, instead of following their boss's or customers' wishes, do what they want, either because they believe it is better or out of laziness.  ● APPLYING THE PARALLEL: Considering the two examples above, the challenge lies in accepting whose way it is supposed to be. Who is in charge? We tend to be more obedient to the bride than to the boss. It’s just one day with the bride, and we want to see her happy, so we do everything her way. While this can be challenging at work, it's straightforward: “Do what the boss says!” It’s just as simple with God: “Do what God says!” Working for a boss involves more than just following specific orders; it’s about contributing to the company’s success. Understand God's heart and His desire, grasp the bigger picture, and let that picture become your own. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." (Luke 19:10) He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. (Mic 6:8)  ● APPLICATION: Considering the following, write what has conflicted with God’s will. 1) The overall focus of your life over the past few years. (Example: getting rich). 2) The focus of your life now. 3) Recent decisions. (Example: lying) What do you hope to gain by fulfilling your own will if it conflicts with God’s? What change can you make in your perspective to cultivate an ongoing attitude consistent with Luke 22:42?   * *So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.* (Gal 5:16-17) * *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.* (John 14:6*)* * *"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."* (Luke 22:42) * *It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age*, (Tit 2:12) |
| 9) **Difficulty in our lives comes from the fall.**  Adam's sin resulted in our sinfulness, others sinning, and the corruption of the physical world. We should not expect an easy life. Our desire for things to be right in a broken world stems from God placing eternity in our hearts. As we develop more realistic expectations about how the world truly is, we will not be caught off guard by the evil of others, our own sin, and the pain we experience due to the failing physical world. We must accept the hardship caused by others’ sins, repent for our own, and long for heaven.  ● EARTHLY PARALLEL: As we age, our physical condition declines. Some people say that health is wasted on the youth. Most young people do not appreciate all the things their bodies can do. In contrast, many elderly individuals are simply glad to get around without significant pain. Although young people observe this in the elderly, very few recognize and make the most of their “working” bodies. Some complain about minor physical inconveniences, while an elderly person would jump at the chance to exchange conditions with them.  ● APPLYING THE PARALLEL: The difference between youth and the elderly lies in perspective. The wiser elderly individuals understand how their physical lives, subject to corruption, are obviously declining. This principle regarding sin's corrupting power extends to the evil present in other people's hearts and relationships. When someone recognizes that evil surrounds them, they can more fully appreciate the times they experience goodness. Instead of being caught off guard by the world's difficulties and the malice of others, acknowledge these realities as part of the fall and use them as opportunities to yearn for heaven. Seek out and take full advantage of the moments when God’s intervention becomes evident through certain circumstances or when someone’s life touches yours with God’s love.  ● APPLICATION: You have observed how the physical corruption of the world (including your body), the sins of others, and your own sin create pain in your life. Write out how these three factors have led to your difficulty and suffering. Given that all your experiences and the Bible teach you to expect this corruption and sin, how can you adjust your future expectations to be more realistic?   * *He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.* (Eccl. 3:11) * *For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. (*Rom 8:20-21) * *Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling,* (2 Cor 5:2*)* * *Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned* (Rom 5:12) |
| 10) **God often uses the consequences of the fall (sin and corruption), which results in our hardship to discipline us to teach us about Him.** When he does so, we must remind ourselves that God is all-loving and powerful so we can trust in His purpose. Knowing this changes our reaction to every difficult thing that comes into our lives. Athletes embrace hardship, including challenging training, because they know it prepares them for potential victory. If we view hardship similarly, understanding that we have a perfect coach (God) who allows everything for our good, we walk in peace, have hope, and stop seeing pain as detracting from the value of our lives. Many people (not just athletes) work out and “inflict difficulty” on themselves to become physically stronger. They look past the pain, recognizing the benefits it brings. However, when others’ actions cause us physical or emotional discomfort, we tend to resist it. While there are times when we should defend ourselves physically or remove ourselves from emotionally abusive situations, much of the time the discomfort results from normal suffering due to another’s sin.  If we remember that our Father is all-powerful and loves us, and that He has allowed this difficulty, then we have the opportunity to view the challenges imposed by others in the same way an athlete trusts their coach. Even though we may not understand it, hardship is promised to mature us in Christ. In fact, it is EXACTLY what God has allowed in our lives to train us. We have two choices regarding what to do with our pain. An earthly view (horizontal thinking) leads us to believe that pain diminishes the quality of our lives. This is Satan's lie. If we meditate on the truth (vertical thinking) that God is not only using difficulties to mature us, but also that Christ purposely went through what we would not choose to experience just to have a relationship with us, we will feel so loved, and God will be glorified. Some of our pain arises from our own sin. Just as physical pain from touching something hot serves as a warning, God allows consequences to redirect and discipline us toward godliness.  ● EARTHLY PARALLEL: Consider a toddler just learning to walk. They often fall, either due to a lack of balance or perhaps weak muscles. If a parent always holds the toddler’s hands, taking weight off their legs, it will take much longer for their balance or muscles to improve. Each time the toddler falls, they learn what doesn’t work. Stumbling step by step makes them stronger. Eventually, they can walk! There is excitement for everyone. The focus should not be on the falling but rather on the progress. This process also teaches the toddler another crucial lesson: perseverance.  ● APPLYING THE PARALLEL: To grow, we need resistance, whether self-applied or provided by the world around us. We often resist the difficulties that are inflicted upon us because we do not realize that they are precisely what we need to grow. As painful as it can be to watch our children fall, we understand that it is a vital step for them to progress to the next level, which is walking. God desires to grow us in our relationship with Him and in our trust in Him. The cry to God of someone abiding with Christ, who comes face to face with the evil in the world, could sound like this, “Daddy, I am scared, but I trust you.”  ● APPLICATION: How have you fought against the difficulties caused by others’ sins? If you had viewed it as a workout permitted by God for your benefit, how would that have changed your reaction? Whether you experience God’s discipline or kindness, are you accepting or resisting His move to redirect your life? When you oppose God and feel that you have gained something, how long does your temporary gain last?   * *“because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son. Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?* (Heb 12:6-7) * *For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. (*Heb 2:17-18) * *Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.* (James 1:2-4) |
| 11)  **Motives Matter.**  The houses built on rock and sand look the same. When we live our lives for God, we are building our lives on rock. When we live for ourselves or to please others, we are building on sand. The house built on sand WILL ultimately fail. Everything we do in our lives—our work, our efforts at church, and our interactions with family, friends, and others—is either done 1) for God or 2) to draw attention to ourselves, making us feel better about who we are or what we believe will enhance our lives. Our achievements, the attention we receive, and our emotions are fleeting, like sand under our feet, and are ultimately meaningless. When we act for God and things do not unfold the way WE think they should, we can find peace in knowing that God is pleased. After all, God is responsible for the outcomes.  ● EARTHLY PARALLEL: It is right in Scripture. Two identical houses, one built on rock and one on sand. They look the same and, perhaps for a long time, function equally well. However, when trouble arrives in the form of rain and wind, the house built on an unstable foundation (the sand) ultimately fails.  ● APPLYING THE PARALLEL: What foundation are you building your life on? Is it solid and enduring? Or is it based on worldly things that are destined to fail someday? "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matt 6:21) For example, when wealth is a focus, it can be lost, one can die without enjoying it, or one can realize too late that what they prized brought very little fulfillment. What are a couple of things you value most? Are they material possessions, your abilities, your position, or something else? If you lost that yet still had everything necessary to live, would your life feel fulfilled? If not, you may need to build a stronger foundation. Are you ultimately doing things for God’s purpose or your own? The answer will reveal the stability of the soil on which you are building.  ● APPLICATION: Reflect on the motivations behind various tasks in your life, whether they relate to your work, how you treat family, friends, or others. Ask yourself, "Who are you doing it for?" Create a list of your activities. Mark each one as follows. Always for God, mostly, both, seldom, and never. Write out the benefits you receive from doing it for yourself. Visualize all of that as building on sand. Think of the times when you worked hard and were not appreciated for it. Who were you doing it for? Be honest. At times, we do it for ourselves to receive praise, at times to please others, and sometimes to make our lives easier. If we are doing things for God out of obedience, we should not even want anyone to notice. We have already received His pleasure. Write out any times you have done your “acts of righteousness” for personal reward or thanks. Instead, visualize that act as obedience to God. The next time you find yourself seeking a thank you or praise, stop, look upward, and with your heart at least say, “I am doing this out of love for you Lord.”   * *Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.* (Col 3:23-24) * *"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'* (Mt 25:40) * "*Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.* (Mt 6:1) |
| 12) Nothing and nobody in the world is entirely trustworthy. **Our only source of guaranteed truth is the Bible.** As we learn to integrate this truth into our lives, we develop the ability to exercise discretion in everything we read and hear from others. When we know what is truth—God’s word—we can stand firm on His foundation, which allows us to operate effectively in this world, thus avoiding a strong reliance on what we are unsure of. Satan’s primary aim is to deceive us in order to lead us to believe lies. Satan has no power that God does not permit.  ● EARTHLY PARALLEL: If you had to climb a tall, old wooden ladder, you would want to ensure that every rung was sturdy. Before trusting your life to the ladder, you would inspect and possibly test each rung with your hands before stepping on them with your weight. No matter how strong it is, with each step, you would realize that solid ground is much more reliable. The risk arises from a continued trust in that ladder as it ages. The wood can become brittle or rotten, and a rung could break one day.  ● APPLYING THE PARALLEL: The only undeniable truth we have is the Bible. While we must place some trust in individuals, failing to test, retest, and acknowledge that everyone will disappoint us eventually may result in stepping on a rung that has rotted and could lead to a terrible failure.  ● APPLICATION: List those you have trusted in the past and later discovered were flawed or deceptive. What adjustments can you make to your schedule to dedicate more time to seeking truth in God’s Word? How might believing in that truth have helped you avoid mistakes?   * *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, (2 Tim 3:16)* * *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; (Prov 3:5)* |
| 13) **The deception in our lives most often comes from worldly thinking,**  also known as "horizontal thinking." God wants our primary focus to be on heaven, not on this earth. This requires ongoing effort, as virtually all our experiences relate to this life. God provides us with many earthly parallels to teach us that long-term thinking is beneficial. We need to make necessary changes to develop habits of long-term heavenly thinking. A pastor, Tom Horton, shared in a sermon decades ago two questions to ask in response to life events: “What can I learn about God from this event?” “What does it teach me about my relationship with God?”  ● EARTHLY PARALLEL: When people do not work hard enough or overspend, leaving them without savings, they experience stress and difficulty. When individuals overeat and fail to exercise for an extended period, they become unhealthy, and engaging in everyday activities can become physically taxing. Eating unhealthily or spending money on non-essentials can be enjoyable. However, if one lives solely for today's pleasures, one will ultimately pay the price in the future. There is no escape from the pain. This pain is either self-inflicted through discipline or results from a previous lack of it. There is no reason to exercise discipline if there are no future benefits. Thus, when one engages in exercise or avoids that extra helping, it reflects their consideration for the future and their desire to do what is best for their future self.  ● APPLYING THE PARALLEL: Long-term thinking, or the absence of it, distinguishes those who are mindful of their bodies and manage their finances responsibly from those who do not. When applied to spiritual matters, this same way of thinking brings us into alignment with God’s desires for us. We follow God's will for our lives today because we do not live solely for this life. We live for eternity.  ● APPLICATION: Health and money are two essential aspects of life where long-term thinking is greatly beneficial. What are the consequences of short-term earthly thinking? If you tend to think short-term, why do you believe you haven't made past decisions with an eye toward the future? What changes can you implement to adopt a longer-term perspective? Beyond asking yourself the questions above, how can you take time each day, throughout your daily routine, to reflect more on Heaven?   * *"Four things on earth are small, yet they are extremely wise: Ants are creatures of little strength, yet they store up their food in the summer;* (Prov 3:24-25) * *Since then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. (*Col 3:1-2) * *Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.* (II Cor 4:16-18) |
| 14) We naturally forget. We forget both people's unfaithfulness and God's faithfulness. We must continually strive to remember both God's attributes (such as His love and power) and His faithfulness in our lives. When we are deceived, we tend to trust people too much. We rely on them, and when they let us down, we stumble. Remembering mankind’s unfaithfulness helps us avoid depending too heavily on others. Remembering God’s faithfulness (our testimony) is part of the process of overcoming Satan. (Rev 12:11)  ● EARTHLY PARALLEL-1: Forgetting God’s faithfulness: Over the years, our friends and family have shown us love and care in many ways. However, when they hurt us, it is not easy to view that incident in light of all the good they have done. Their current actions and our pain often dominate our thoughts at that moment. It is important to consider the painful event within the context of the entire relationship with someone who cares about us.  ● APPLYING THE PARALLEL-1: Even more so, when we experience pain, God wants us to keep a larger perspective of His love and faithfulness in mind. That's why we're encouraged to “remember” God’s faithfulness and reflect on His qualities.  ● EARTHLY PARALLEL-2: Forgetting people’s unfaithfulness: Since our earliest memories, people have let us down in many ways. Yet when someone hurts us, we tend to respond as if it should not have happened again. We may think, “How could anyone treat me this way?”  ● APPLYING THE PARALLEL-2: We need to spend time understanding the message of the Bible. God created man. Man sinned. Through Jesus, the relationship can be restored. In the meantime, as discussed above in “Difficulty in our lives comes from the fall,” while we hope they will not, we need to realize that people will let us down. We must, therefore, lean carefully on others so we do not falter when they sin. We must stand firm on God, who fails no one. A significant part of standing strong in faith is remembering God's faithfulness.  ● APPLICATION: Create a list of God's attributes (e.g., love, power). How do these attributes compare to the limitations you encounter? Compile a list of God’s faithfulness in your life, including answers to prayer. Reflect on how considering God’s attributes could have altered your response and feelings regarding some of your past challenges.   * *Then Moses said to the people, "Commemorate this day, the day you came out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery, because the Lord brought you out of it with a mighty hand.* (Exod 12:3) * *They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. (*Rev 12:11) |
| All quoted Scripture is from the 1984 New International Version (NIV). This document may be copied and sold for up to printing and mailing costs. |

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| **1-KNOWLEDGE WITHOUT APPLICATION IS USELESS** |
| **OUTLINE**   1. **INTRODUCTION** 2. **ATTAINMENT OF KNOWLEDGE**    1. **We do well to seek wisdom.**    2. **Application of Knowledge** 3. **RESISTING APPLICATION**    1. **Earthly Parallel**    2. **Applying Spiritual Truths**    3. **Lack of belief that one has personal value**    4. **Lack of discipline -**    5. **Lack of self-control**    6. **Lack of desire**    7. **Ignoring the truth**    8. **Ignoring the significance of the truth.**    9. **Ignoring that the consequences of the truth will apply to them** 4. **THE BATTLE FOR OUR MINDS**    1. **Instant Gratification**       1. **Earthly Parallel**       2. **The Spiritual**    2. **Our minds are clogged with the present:**    3. **Satan tempts us:** 5. **MAKING THE FUTURE REAL**    1. **Eye on the Prize**    2. **The Three Main Roadblocks Overcome by Focusing on the Prize** |
| 1. **INTRODUCTION**   The concept that knowledge without application is useless should be self-evident to everyone; yet, most people possess essential knowledge that they have not put into practice. The main reason knowledge is not applied is that doing so can, at the very least, create short-term discomfort. We naturally resist embracing truths that will make life more difficult for us. We can become deceived about the value of long-term gains. In this study, when knowledge is referred to, it speaks to what we are sure is true.  The application of knowledge can be considered wisdom.  Earthly parallels will be presented to help us understand patterns of not applying truth that may carry over to spiritual knowledge. Although these parallels are earthly, it is worth noting that the Bible addresses our health and the wise use of money.  Some doctors abuse their bodies with a lack of exercise, drugs, alcohol, and overeating. They know better than anybody else what that does to their body. Doctors, aware of the intricacies that most of us cannot comprehend regarding the damage caused to the body by neglect, often fail to maintain their own health. Even though they possess a great deal of knowledge, most of them ignore the consequences of their actions. Others may not feel they have enough value to live a healthy life. In any case, knowledge alone is insufficient to yield a positive outcome.  Most people are aware that drinking plenty of water, exercising regularly, and eating a balanced diet rich in vegetables can lead to improved health. Few people adhere to these guidelines for their entire lives—the “why not” may help us overcome the roadblocks, both physically and spiritually. |
| 1. **ATTAINMENT OF KNOWLEDGE**   **The attainment of knowledge is through three channels:**   1. From the Bible, God's word to us is the only sure-to-be-accurate source of knowledge and wisdom: *“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”* John 17:17 Also 2 Pet 1:19 2. from others, through reading and listening. *“Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.”* Prov 15:22 3. by our personal experience   **We gather information**   1. extrinsically (from teaching) 2. intrinsically (by observing) Children learn what to do from their parents’ commands and about life from observing their parents.   **We store information:**   1. As facts and data. (We may learn a lot of information about an individual) 2. As intuition. (We know the individual personally.) |
| * 1. **We do well to seek wisdom.**   *“Wisdom is supreme; therefore, get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get Understanding.”*  Prov 4:7  *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”*  Prov 9:10  **Three big pictures that the Bible teaches.**   1. The Bible is a love story of God creating man, man turning away from God, and the rest of the Bible being God drawing man back to himself. 2. The Bible teaches us about the nature of God. 3. The Bible teaches us what God expects out of us.   We grow in knowledge as we read the Bible and listen to sermons grounded in accurate biblical teachings. Some of this knowledge is specific, such as the Ten Commandments. We also learn about God's nature and character. For example, we discover that God is all-loving and all-powerful. We learn both about God and, more importantly, we get to know God. In Knowing God, J.I. Packer said, “First, one can know a great deal about God without much knowledge of Him.” |
| * 1. **Application of Knowledge**   Knowledge of the Bible is not helpful unless we apply it. It does not matter how much we know about God and what He expects of us if we do not act on that information. The Bible is clear about this.  *“Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.”* James 1:23-25  Pay attention to the word “immediately” and the significance of forgetting what one looks like. The term "immediately" is an extreme word, and the idea of forgetting what one looks like is an extreme concept.  So, how are we supposed to live? Note that the focus of this passage is on action.  *“For, ‘Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it.*”  1 Pet 3:10-11 |
| 1. **RESISTING APPLICATION**   “It ain't those parts of the Bible that I can’t understand that bother me,  it is the parts that I do understand.” Mark Twain  For most people, the knowledge they have that they are not practicing is more problematic than what they do not know. The journey from information to application can be one of the longest and most challenging paths that people undertake.  Matthew 13 explains why truth may not be applied. It is beneficial to take time for self-assessment of the various categories we might occasionally fall into.  *Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop--a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.* ***He who has ears, let him hear."***  Matt 13:3-9  *"Listen then to what the parable of the sower means:*  *1. When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and* ***does not understand it,*** *the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the Path.*  *2. The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since* ***he has no root****, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away.*  *3. The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but* ***the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth*** *choke it, making it unfruitful.*  *4. But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and* ***understands it.*** *He produces a crop, yielding a hundred,* Matt 13:18-23  **The three roadblocks** to the application of information in this passage are:   * *does not understand it,* * *has no root* * *worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth*   **Seven components that hinder people from applying knowledge will be examined, each with a distinct focus.**   * An Earthly Parallel * Applying the reasons for drinking enough water * Applying Spiritual Truths   **FOCUS ONE: An Earthly Parallel**  There are many reasons people do not apply knowledge. One of these can be subconscious. Some of the information we receive conflicts with what we believe to be accurate. This means that we have been wrong in the past. Some people equate "wrong" with being bad or flawed. It can be even worse if someone has taught others incorrectly or lived their life wrongly due to past misguided beliefs. Some people are too proud to even admit to themselves that they have not been living correctly. The new knowledge is ignored and, so to speak, forgotten.  **The lack of applying truth is a result of:**   1. **Lack of belief that one has personal value.** Why bother eating healthy or exercising to extend your life if you don't see your worth? Our value comes from God, not from our skills or accomplishments. Our bodies are more precious than our possessions. Yet, almost everyone invests significantly more energy in caring for their belongings—such as their homes, vehicles, and personal items—than in maintaining their physical health. Our spiritual health, our relationship with God, is our most valuable asset. It holds the same value as everyone who has ever lived. Not believing this results from accepting Satan’s lies. 2. **Lack of discipline** – This stems from short-term thinking. Anyone needing to reach a bus or the gate of a departing airplane would walk or run as quickly as possible. The critical goal lies directly ahead, and the physical discomfort becomes secondary. Exercising one’s body makes physical tasks easier.   Many elderly people struggle with balance due to weak stabilizer muscles. They can either discipline themselves to perform exercises that strengthen those muscles or risk being unable to walk without assistance. Because of inactivity, some individuals find that strenuous exercise is necessary to get in and out of a vehicle or to climb a flight of stairs.  For most, there is no way out. Either one disciplines themselves, or life disciplines them later on. Bluntly, the lack of discipline is often a result of laziness. Proverbs reveals the outcome: “He who works his land will have abundant food, but he who chases fantasies lacks judgment.” Prov 12:11 “Diligent hands will rule, but laziness ends in slave labor.” Prov 12:25 The lack of discipline often leads to people becoming slaves to their bodies. They bow to the commands of their bodies rather than commanding their bodies to perform. Some people find motivation in the words: “Just do it!”   1. **Lack of self-control**— Anyone who has tried to lose weight understands the importance of saying “no” to certain foods and larger portions. Not saying “no,” like a lack of discipline, has consequences. The choice to overeat can lead to a loss of mobility as one ages. Few would trade a daily cookie and soda for the future inability to get around or, worse yet, developing diabetes. Three words simplify the key to success: “Just say no!” 2. **Lack of desire** - We all have desires that conflict with the truth. 3. I**gnoring the truth**.    * 1. If a person has believed a particular way for most of their life, it can be painful to admit they have been wrong all those years.      2. Most people with unhealthy habits or who do not practice healthy ones rarely consider the truth behind their actions or inactions. If the thought arises, it is quickly replaced by a more pleasant one. Reflecting on the negative expected outcome of one’s behavior is emotionally painful. 4. **Ignoring the significance of the truth**. The future impact of current actions is often overlooked. Some may argue that they fully understand the consequences of their actions and accept the outcomes. However, they cannot truly grasp how they will feel once the consequences of their actions or inaction come to light. The person who develops cancer from smoking will rarely claim that smoking was worth the pain, suffering, and early death they now face. 5. **Ignoring that the consequences of the truth will apply to them:** Before alarms sounded, many people did not wear seatbelts, believing they were unlikely to be in a serious accident, and if they were, their heads would not hit the windshield. Doctors warn some patients that a particular behavior is likely to lead to a serious condition. Many people are in denial about their risk.   **FOCUS TWO: Drinking enough water.**  Only a small percentage of Americans drink the recommended daily amount of water. Using this as an example, exploring the reasons behind the lack of water consumption may help clarify seven reasons people do not embrace the truth.   1. Who cares? I don’t want to live longer. 2. I don't take the time to drink enough throughout the day. 3. I would prefer to drink other beverages that taste better. 4. I don’t care about healthy living. 5. During the day, I hardly think about the importance of water to my health. 6. It can't be that big of a deal. 7. I don't think drinking more water significantly affects my health.   We will not examine the consequences of not drinking enough water here, as a comprehensive list is readily available through a simple internet search. When one looks at that list, even at one consequence—possible kidney disease—and considers the excuses outlined above, those excuses seem absurd. Yet, in our stubborn world, we hold onto one or more excuses when we fail to embrace the truth. The lack of long-term thinking is a common thread among the last three excuses. In other words, if a 20-year-old could take a few seconds each day to experience the emotional or physical pain of their 70-year-old self dying of kidney disease and realize that the primary cause was not drinking a couple more glasses of water each day, that 20-year-old would most likely make a change.  So, what does all this have to do with our walk with God? The Bible prominently emphasizes the concept of applying truth, especially truth that exchanges short-term discomfort for eternal gain.  **FOCUS THREE: Applying Spiritual Truths**   1. Lack of belief in personal value. Many people equate their worth with their performance, whether physical, mental, occupational, or relational. This is Satan’s lie to us. We often fall short—sometimes significantly—of the standards we set for ourselves or that others impose on us. The excuse for not applying the truth is that we are losers anyway, so why bother? The truth is that God has called us His children. Our value comes from God. He has called us to act in accordance with our calling, embodying what it means to be His children. 2. **Lack of discipline:** Christians have the Holy Spirit within them, empowering us beyond typical human abilities. God has bestowed upon us a spirit of self-discipline. *“For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.”* 2 Tim 1:7. Notice how Paul uses these earthly examples to emphasize the importance of discipline. He approaches everything he does with the prize in mind. *“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”* I Cor 9:24-27 3. **Lack of self-control:** First, we must understand that as Christians, we have the ability to avoid sin. “No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.” I Cor 10:13 The Bible also presents a vivid analogy that challenges those who struggle with self-control. “Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control.” Prov 25:28 4. **Lack of desire** – Our worldly desires conflict with the truth. Jesus summarized these as “worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth.” Some may dismiss the wealth aspect, claiming they are not rich, but the truth is that “People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.” 1 Timothy 6:9-10 Paul shared a broader perspective: “For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.” Gal 5:17 5. **Ignoring the truth**. No one who has experienced Heaven would ever claim that any sin was worthwhile. We do not meditate enough on eternity with a loving God in a place beyond our understanding. 6. **Ignoring the significance of the truth is so common!** This roadblock shackles us to a meager existence. Consider a truth that all Christians know: JESUS DIED FOR YOUR SINS! There is NOTHING more significant. Yet some people seldom think about what that means. We were destined for an eternal existence far away from any love, any good—an existence of eternal suffering. We do not deserve Heaven. The God of Heaven sent His ONLY Son, Jesus, to suffer on this earth as a man. He took on all our sins and was separated from His Father! He died so we might live! At times, we all overlook the significance of this truth, as well as many others. Foundations aims to remind us of these truths and challenges us to apply them to our lives. 7. **Ignoring that the consequences of the truth will apply to them.** Some people create their own belief systems, basing them on their thought processes rather than the study of the Bible. Some think, “If I go to church most Sundays, give some money, and don't do any of the really bad stuff, then I am doing okay.” Thus, when they encounter a truth that contradicts their belief system, they reason that it may be suitable for the pastor and those who wish to be avid Bible readers, but it is not for them. This is the same lie that unbelievers believe, that they can create God and eternity in their minds. This verse should put an end to such thinking. *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord .*“ Isa 55:8 After 35 chapters of Job and his friends debating spiritual matters, God steps in and puts them in their place.“ *"Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand.* Job 38:2-4 |
| **4. THE BATTLE FOR OUR MINDS**  Most people believe that self-care leads to a healthier future. This is why we care for our bodies. The rewards we receive in Heaven, simply being in Heaven, far exceed any struggles we may face here. What holds us back from enduring earthly hardships to achieve a long-term benefit?   1. Instant Gratification: Our flesh cries out for satisfaction, for pleasure. 2. Our minds are filled with the present, encompassing all that our senses perceive. 3. Satan continually tempts us to place our own desires above those of others and to weaken our faith in the unseen.    1. **INSTANT GRATIFICATION**   **Earthly Parallel**  A significant barrier to embracing truth is the notion of instant gratification. The misconception is, “If I don't see immediate results, then it doesn't work.” Or, “If something doesn’t give me pleasure quickly, I won’t spend my time or energy doing it.” Consider the following examples of minimal short-term pain in exchange for substantial long-term benefits.   * Choosing not to save $50 per week, instead spending it on unnecessary items, amounts to over $200 in a month. That may not seem like much, but over the course of a year, it totals $2,600; in 20 years, that adds up to $52,000, excluding interest. * A person who is significantly overweight and has difficulty getting around would not claim that those two sodas or two 150-calorie cookies each day for the past three years were worth it. Consuming 300 calories less per day results in an additional 36 pounds each year. That adds up to over 100 pounds in three years!   Some people may not have considered how repeated actions accumulate over the years. However, it is pointless to learn or be reminded of these simple facts if they are not put into practice. That knowledge is meaningless.  Continuing to engage in damaging behaviors usually stems from a lack of long-term thinking. We live in a society that prioritizes instant gratification. Most valuable things do not provide immediate rewards. Many do not show results for a long time, while others may not seem to yield sufficient results to satisfy most people. Consider that exercising, drinking enough water, avoiding overspending, or reading one’s Bible daily might not significantly change how a person feels in the short term, but consistently practicing these habits will lead to long-term benefits.  **The Spiritual**  Eternal thinking is long-term thinking at its best. All the worldly benefits of long-term thinking are meant to teach us to think eternally.  To help us understand spiritual truths, God has provided earthly examples of the benefits of:   * self-control, denying ourselves short-term pleasure * disciplining ourselves to do physically beneficial things.   Instant gratification can be viewed as the opposite of patience.  *Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.* James 5:7-8  All farmers need to think long-term. Until the past few hundred years, a significant percentage of our population understood that gratification was far from instant. They had to build their homes, grow their own food, cut firewood to stay warm in winter, salt their food, and perform many other tasks that most people do not even consider today. In modern society, almost everything is immediate. Meditating or reading about a life without electricity or running water can enrich the understanding of the passage in James.   * 1. **Our minds are clogged with the present:**   All of our physical senses perceive the present. On the positive side, delightful sights and sounds captivate our eyes and ears. Our mouths savor good-tasting food. Our skin appreciates physical touch and the warmth of the sun. We are attracted to what brings us pleasure like a magnet. The pull is genuine and persists during each waking moment of our lives. On the negative side, our senses also encounter many things we dislike, and we expend our energy trying to avoid them. Our lives are spent moving toward or away from everything we sense. Maintaining a continual focus on eternity is essential to prevent our natural responses to our senses from controlling us.   * 1. **Satan tempts us:**   Satan is the father of lies. We must understand our adversary and the source of his power. Observe how he leads Eve to question what God has said.  *Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "****Did God really say****, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the Garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.' "* Gen 3:1-3  He concludes his temptation with a lie, trying to discredit God’s promises.  *“’You will not surely die,’ the serpent said to the woman.”* Gen 3:1-4  Today, his lie may sound like, “Do you really believe \_\_\_\_\_? |
| 1. **MAKING THE FUTURE REAL**   **Eye on the Prize**  All three battles (instant gratification, clogged minds, and Satan’s temptation) can be won by keeping our eyes on the prize. Some people post written goals or a photo on their refrigerators to remind themselves, making them more willing to sacrifice the present for the sake of the future. An athlete preparing for competition is focused on the upcoming event, not the discomfort of the workout. We must have God’s Word written on our hearts. We must spend time in the Bible, and we must meditate on its truths. If we struggle with applying truth, we would do well to meditate on God's promises for our future, so that the prize — our eternity with God — remains foremost in our minds.  *“However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" – but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.”* I Cor 2:9-10  Spending time meditating on this verse can bring incredible benefits. We feel excitement when visualizing a God who is beyond comprehension, preparing a place for us that is so awe-inspiring it exceeds our understanding. This is eternity, our eternity, promised to all who have received forgiveness through Jesus. We are challenged to maintain an eternal focus:  S*ince, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.*Col 3:1-2  Jim Elliot, a missionary, understood this when he said, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.”  The struggle is that the flesh believes it can cling to what exists in this world, and Satan, the deceiver, chimes in, both attempting to persuade us of the worth of what we hold onto and, at the very least, to undermine the value of what God has promised.  God has given us promises about what life is like after we die. Pay attention to how Jesus introduces this promise.  *"I tell you the truth," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields--and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life.* Mark 10:29-30  **The Three Main Roadblocks Overcome by Focusing on the Prize**  Consider the three roadblocks again.  1. Our flesh cries out for immediate satisfaction, for pleasure. - Our vision of the prize gives us the motivation to overcome our fleshly desires.  2. Our minds are cluttered with the present, encompassing all that our senses perceive. - Our vision of the prize gives us clear rather than cluttered minds.  3. Satan continually tempts us. - Our vision of the prize gives us a truth weapon against Satan’s lies.  We learn what we are and are not to do from what is written in the scripture.   1. The Ten Commandments 2. Jesus's command to love God and others sums up the law and the prophets. We are called to love others. The word "love" can be defined as "Doing what is best for the other person, regardless of how you feel or what the cost may be." In Philippians, we find a formula for the ongoing mindset we should embrace: “Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.” Phil 2:4 3. Not doing so at every opportunity is a sin. “Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.” James 4:17 This passage directly connects the amount of knowledge we have to how much we fall short if we do not apply it. Most of the time, this relates to loving others. It is similar to Jesus equating lust to adultery and anger to murder. (Matt 5:21-22, 27-28) The similarity lies in the fact that it makes us realize that we all fall short.   Most of the time, the command to look out for the interests of others is so simple yet so challenging to put into practice because it requires us to give up our selfishness. The second great commandment from Jesus is to love others. Fulfilling this commandment is necessary to fulfill the first commandment. *“If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.* I John 4:20-21  Everyone faces challenges with this command. It is important to understand the reasons behind our struggles. Perhaps reviewing this list again will help us avoid making these excuses in the future.   1. Lack of belief that one has personal value. 2. Lack of discipline 3. Lack of self-control 4. Lack of desire 5. Ignoring the truth. 6. Ignoring the significance of the truth. 7. Ignoring that the consequences of the truth will apply to them   God’s challenge to us might be expressed like this:  "Will you not listen to My words and live them out? If you turn away, you are turning from your very calling—the reason you draw breath. You have lost sight of who you are in My eyes: My beloved children, chosen and set apart. Do not forget what I have spoken to you." |

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| **2-GOD'S LOVE AND POWER!** |
| **1. ACCEPTING THAT GOD'S LOVE AND POWER ARE SUPERIOR TO OURS**  **a.** **GOD'S POWER**  **b.** **OUR WEAKNESS**  **c.** **TRUSTING GOD**  **2. TRUSTING: GOD OR OURSELVES?**  **3. POINTING US TO JESUS**  **4. DO NOT EXPECT TO SEE CLEARLY**  **5. DIGGING DEEPER YET INTO**[**God's Love**](https://www.yesgod.info/resources/fivewaysgodlovesus.htm)  **6. DO WE REALLY "BELIEVE?"**  **7. GOD HAS EVERYTHING UNDER CONTROL** |
| * 1. **ACCEPTING THAT GOD'S LOVE AND POWER ARE SUPERIOR TO OURS**   The topic of resting in God's love and power can be considered the simplest yet most rewarding foundation to practice. It is a straightforward concept. We are flawed and limited in every conceivable way; both our bodies and minds have imperfections. We are often lulled and deceived into believing we are nearly invincible, especially in our younger years. Letting go of our perceptions of our bodies and, particularly, our minds is frightening for most of us. We rely on both to navigate life, or we become dependent on others. Relying on others leads to a loss of our sense of independence.  **a. GOD'S POWER**  God's power is far beyond our comprehension. He exists outside of time and the physical universe. *"This is what the Lord says--Israel's King and Redeemer, the Lord Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God. Who then is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and lay out before me what has happened since I established my ancient people, and what is yet to come-- yes, let him foretell what will come."* Isa 44:6-7  We gain insight into the physical creation of the universe and the Earth. Nine times in Genesis, we read, "God said," and all that we know came into existence.  *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*.” Gen 1:1  *“And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light.”* Gen 1:3  Meditate on the following verse, noting the word "all." He holds back the oceans, holds up the mountains, and holds every cell in our bodies together. This is the power of our God.  *"He is before all things, and in him* ***all*** *things hold together."* Col 1:17  How can we ever doubt that God's power is both beyond our imagination and more than sufficient to "solve" whatever problems we face?  **b. OUR WEAKNESS**  This is why, when we struggle, feel weak, or, better yet, realize our own weakness and feel frightened, God has already answered. With all his strengths, Paul was given a weakness to remind him of his frailty. God's answer to Paul in the following passage also applies to us.  *"To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong."* II Cor 12:7-10  It is when we realize how weak we truly are that God's power becomes evident. When we think and live as if we have everything under control, our pride and the lie resist God's power at work in our lives. It is not that He cannot do the work (Job 42:2); it is that God will not get the glory, so He does not do the work. When it seems that we are responsible for a positive outcome, whether in our own eyes or those of our observers, we reap the glory. It is not God's purpose in the world for us to be glorified; it is not the purpose for which He created us either. An example in the Bible that illustrates this well is Gideon, who started with 32,000 men to defeat the Midianites.  *"The Lord said to Gideon, "You have too many men for me to deliver Midian into their hands. In order that Israel may not boast against me that her own strength has saved her, announce now to the people, 'Anyone who trembles with fear may turn back' ... "With the three hundred men that lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands."*Judges 7:2-3a,7a  It is simple. God desires glory, and we are here to glorify Him.  We are simply weak. Our weakness presents a stumbling block in two distinct ways.   * We believe we are not weak but rather strong and capable of handling life on our own, with occasional help from God when we think we need Him. * We believe we are so weak, that things are so bad, that the God of the universe isn't powerful enough to fix things.   Believing and thinking about the meaning of Isaiah 55:9 settles the issue of man's power and God's power. Spend at least a couple of minutes soaking in this truth.  *"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."* Isa 55:9  **When we feel capable**, we become prideful. When we see ourselves as too weak, we are also prideful. How can this be? The capable fail to recognize that Jesus is holding their next breath together.  "*He is before all things, and in him all things hold together."* Col 1:17  Take at least a moment to reflect on the meaning of the word "all." What does it not include? Nothing. Without Christ's active power, the universe would dissolve into nothing. How can we possibly take credit for our trivial accomplishments?  **When we feel weak,** we may compare ourselves to times when we felt stronger. At one point, we might have believed we were capable based on certain physical or mental attributes, or the material possessions we owned. In that case, pride becomes evident because we mistakenly think we would no longer be weak if we had those things back. Pride also arises when we perceive our weakness as too great for God. In other words, we assume that the God who created and holds all things together is somehow not powerful enough to overcome our profound weakness. We view our weakness as more powerful than God’s strength.   * 1. **TRUSTING GOD**   Are we willing to accept our humble position and trust in His strength? When we trust in God's love and power, we receive a wonderful gift: peace.  "*You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you*." Isa 26:3  What is it that we are trusting in? In God's love and power. We trust that   * God is loving enough to manage that situation so it turns out for our good. * God is powerful enough to control the situation we face.   We do not experience perfect peace because we lack trust in a perfect God. Our peace grows as our understanding of God's love and power increases. |
| * 1. **TRUSTING: GOD OR OURSELVES?**   Let us simplify it by looking at the big picture. At times, we have shown ourselves to be untrustworthy, incapable, and unloving. Clearly, based on our history, we have proven to be unreliable. God has always demonstrated Himself to be trustworthy, capable, and loving. Even though we currently see only a poor reflection (1 Cor 13:12), our flawed view of God may seem very limited when we are struggling or sinking. With our limited perspective, He is akin to a small life raft in the middle of the ocean. Two false views prevent us from getting into the raft.   * We tend to perceive our abilities as greater than they truly are. Climbing into the raft demands humility, admitting that we cannot succeed on our own. * We perceive God as being limited in love and power. We do not see the raft as capable of saving us.   Both perspectives lead us to flail aimlessly as we sink. However, when we get in and hold on, our eyes will be opened to discover that the raft we are on will soon be picked up by a Coast Guard vessel that has been searching for us.  God does not reveal Himself to us in all His majesty, showcasing His complete love and power. If He did, we would perish in our human form. But even if there were a way, all that God is outshines the majesty of the world so much that people would choose God out of self-preservation or selfishness. In 1 Kings 19:13, God did not reveal himself in the earthquake or the fire, but in the gentle whisper. |
| * 1. **POINTING US TO JESUS**   Before time was created, God established a plan for Jesus to be glorified through His sacrifice for mankind.  "*He has saved us and called us to a holy life, not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,"* (2 Tim 1:9-10)  That plan includes purposefully pointing humanity to Jesus, who revealed God and what love is to the world.  *"This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."* I John 4:10 |
| 1. **DO NOT EXPECT TO SEE CLEARLY**   It is essential to pause and meditate as much as possible on the depth of God's love. In our quest to understand God, we must start with the fact that “we see but a poor reflection.” Otherwise, we might reach the false conclusion that if we cannot comprehend something about God, it must not be true. Few, if any, readers grasp all the complexities of a jet airplane, but that does not prevent them from flying. Paul’s prayer for us is that we would see God more clearly by faith, not because His majesty is revealed to us in a way that diminishes the necessity of faith.  *“so that Christ may dwell in your hearts* ***through faith****. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to* ***grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,*** *and to know this* ***love that surpasses knowledge****--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.* Eph 3:17-19  There is a God, beyond anything we can comprehend, living in eternal time and space, who created Heaven, all of which are beyond our understanding. It is clear why we only see “but a poor reflection.” Yet Paul prays that somehow we will be able to grasp the infinite love of Christ. That love which “surpasses knowledge” is what we are to grasp. We can only stand in awe of the immense love that we cannot see clearly.  Recognizing that anything eternal is well beyond our understanding and reflecting on this truth brings us into a spirit of worship. It is part of acknowledging God's superiority. |
| 1. **DIGGING DEEPER YET INTO**[**God's Love**](https://www.yesgod.info/resources/fivewaysgodlovesus.htm) |
| * + - 1. **Before time began, God, knowing we would sin, planned for our creation and redemption.** Who makes something they know will not fulfill its intended purpose? God. Consider that God knew in advance every sin you have ever committed and those you will commit, yet He created you anyway! That is love! Before God created man, He understood that the outcome would involve immense suffering on His part. He “looked ahead” and chose to do so anyway. We cannot conceive of being all-powerful and possessing such love that we would be willing to endure such suffering for such flawed creatures. It is essential to take some time here to reflect, as much as possible, on the immensity of God’s love. “*He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time”* (2 Tim 1:9-10) |
| **(2) He died for us.** Before Jesus died for us, he endured suffering for our sake beyond our imagination.   * **He gave up the power of God in His human life**. We do not like to humble ourselves before others, much less consider becoming, for instance, a bug. *"Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!"* Phil 2:6-8 * **Jesus gave up being all-knowing, all-powerful, and present everywhere in space and time.**Jesus created time and did not live in it until He was born. * **Jesus took on all of our human frailties**. *"For this reason, he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people."* Heb 2:17 * **Suffered when tempted. "***Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted."* Heb 2:18 * **Jesus took the role of a servant.***"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."* Mark 10:45 * **Jesus was insulted, misunderstood, and ridiculed.** * **Jesus chose to go to the cross.** He did so out of obedience. *"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."* Luke 22:42 He did so out of a desire for reconciliation with us. " *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame,"* Heb 12:2a * **Jesus was tortured and died a horrible physical death on the cross.**(Ps 22:1-18, I Pet 2: 24) * **Jesus had His Father turn His back on Him**. *"And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"--which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*Mark 15:34 The fullness of what happened at that moment is beyond human comprehension. We can only catch a glimpse, perhaps, by envisioning several people closest to us in our lives betraying us and leaving us alone deep in the wilderness, where we are sure to die of starvation. The Father and the Son are, were, and will be together for eternity. They are eternal. Yet, in this moment of created time, both experienced a splitting, a chasm, a separation that, if the universe could have felt it, would have torn it apart. The final scream of Jesus was a final act of love for us on this earth.   Jesus took our place. We deserve punishment, the death penalty, and eternal suffering. We deserve to be separated from God. We cannot begin to fathom the agony Jesus endured when He took ALL the sins of the world upon Himself.  What more could God do to show he loves you? *“He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.” (*I Pet 2:24*) “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. (*1 John 4:10*) Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* (Romans 5:7-8) |
| * + - 1. **He calls us sons.** Jesus, so to speak, took our place in prison. We were not left on the street to start over, fend for ourselves, or find meaning in life. We were adopted into God's family. Most of us, who have never been orphans, can feel the thrill of a family not only welcoming us into their home but also adopting us, giving us their name, caring for us as one of their own, and including us in their will. At times, we might not feel loved as part of God’s family because Satan blinds us to the truth of the immense love it takes to adopt. “*See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”* (I John 3:1-2) |
| * + - 1. **God glorifies Himself in us.** Every one of us is a unique creation of God. When we do the will of God by loving others, we shine with a unique light. When that light shines, God is glorified. (Matt 5:16) Consider that God’s glory shines through broken you! He has chosen you to be the vessel of His love. Wow! What love it takes to use broken vessels to reveal glory when God could choose to do it without us. “*In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.”* (Eph 1:11-12) |
| * + - 1. **He is preparing a place for us beyond our imagination.** Can you even imagine? No! If someone told you that in a year, you would receive not only what you wished for, but something that would be 100 times better, you would feel so excited and so cared for. Not a house, but a massive mansion with a staff of servants. Not a vacation, but months at the world's best resorts. We would look forward to it every day. We would wake up thinking about it, counting down the days. Well, what is wrong that we are not even more excited about a gift that never ends? We are not doing what it says to do in Col 3:1-3. “*However, as it is written: “What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived” the things God has prepared for those who love him”* (1 Cor 2:9) |
| Ask yourself, "What more do I expect God to do so I feel loved?" Can you think of any earthly thing you would trade for any one of the five ways God shows love to us? |
| 1. **DO WE REALLY "BELIEVE?"**   A test for those who answer “yes” is whether one has peace. If we believe, we will trust, and the result is peace.  "*You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you*." Isa 26:3  When we lack perfect peace, we are not fully trusting a perfect God. Our peace grows as our understanding of God's love and power becomes clearer. When we experience imperfect peace, it's essential to identify the underlying issue. We can liken our inner peace to a thermometer that indicates whether we have a fever. While peace is more than just a gauge, it can serve that purpose. The issue is straightforward: we either doubt God's power to care for us or question His love for us. It could be a combination of both. The word "believe" in the Bible holds an additional meaning that we often miss when we use it in English: trust. If a friend has just graduated from aeronautical school and asks if we believe they can fly, we would likely respond with a quick, "Yes." However, if they then ask if we would accompany them on their first flight without an instructor, and we hesitate, we show that we don't believe they can fly in the Greek definition of "believe."  To help understand how the concept of trust is related to the idea of "believe," read through these verses three times, replacing the word "believe" with "trust," then "have confidence in," and finally, "place trust in." This helps us see how these definitions align with much of the intended meaning, not just as we would often mean it in English, "believing in."   * *"Whoever****believes****and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not****believe****will be condemned."*Mark 16:16 * *"I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not****believe****; how then will you****believe****if I speak of heavenly things?"* John 3:12 * *Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to****believe****in the one he has sent."*John 6:29 * *"But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not b****elieve****.*John 6:36 * *Yet because I tell the truth, you do not****believe****me!"*John 8:45   We must decide whether we trust God's power and love. Trusting in God's power is not difficult. We only need to take a moment to contemplate it. He created the entire universe, including time itself, with His word. What more evidence could anyone ask for? When it comes to His love, many struggle to trust for various reasons.   * They lack an understanding of agape love. It involves doing what is best for others, regardless of one's feelings and no matter the cost.. * They know their own love is flawed. * They are aware of others who have disappointed them due to their imperfect love. * They have not taken time to meditate on the many ways God loves them. * They minimize the most important aspect, the death of Jesus on the cross.   We can overcome these roadblocks by recognizing that God's love is perfect, while our love is imperfect. We must strive not to compare the two in order to truly understand His love. When we, like Peter, take our eyes off Jesus and falter, we need to return to the five ways God shows His love to us and ask the question, "What more do I expect God to do for me to trust that He loves me enough to take care of me?"  We either trust God or we trust ourselves. Despite all the evidence against ourselves, we tend to trust ourselves far too much. Despite all the evidence supporting God’s trustworthiness, we don’t trust Him enough. This is well summarized in a popular verse. Instead of leaning on (trusting) ourselves, we should trust in the Lord, and He will make our paths straight!  *"Trust in the Lord with****all your heart****and****lean not****on your own understanding; in****all your ways****acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight."* Prov 3:5-6 |
| 1. **GOD HAS EVERYTHING UNDER CONTROL**   He wants us to understand that He loves us beyond our imaginations and is capable of handling anything that comes our way.  "*I am the Lord, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?*" Jer 32:27  God not only wants us to recognize our limits but, much more importantly, His limitless love and power.  Perhaps, if God were to sum up His response to even the most challenging situation we can ever face in three words, He would say to us**.**  **"I'VE GOT THIS!"** |
| **3-LOVE GOD AND OTHERS** |
| This section discusses our response to God’s love. It is best to read the sections about [God’s love and Power,](https://www.yesgod.info/resources/foundationsofourlives.htm#1)) and [ALL good and all love is from God](https://www.yesgod.info/resources/foundationsofourlives.htm#4)) first.  **Outline**   1. **Introduction** 2. **Overview** 3. **The choice to love**    1. **Atheism and the Natural Man**    2. **The example of love, Jesus**    3. **Two paths before us.**    4. **Most of us are primarily selfish**    5. **The progression of love**  * **Response** * **Obedience** * **Compelled**  1. **Jesus sums up the entire law with love! (Matt 22:37-40)** 2. **All About Love (I John 4)**    1. **Source**    2. **Demonstration**    3. **Commands**    4. **Reason**    5. **Test of adoption** 3. **How do we share God’s love?**    1. **Love defined (I Cor 13)**    2. **Why are we to love**    3. **Love commanded**    4. **Love explained**  * **Loving others** * **Loving enemies**  1. **Love summed up (Phil 1:3-8)** |
| **1. Introduction:** The passages about love are so clear that they require little or no explanation. Therefore, most of your learning will mainly come from reading and reflecting on these passages. Misunderstandings about their meaning often stem from confusion over the word “love.” In English, there is only one word, “love,” which can create confusion when trying to apply common definitions to interpret Bible passages about love. For example, we can love ice cream, our family, our friends, and even romantically love our spouses. Possibly our purest form of love, closest to God’s love, is the love for a little baby. We “agape” and act in the best interest of that baby, regardless of our feelings. We would sacrifice sleep, hunger, and even our lives to ensure that baby’s well-being. When the baby has genuine needs, our immediate needs do not matter at that moment.  The word “love" in the verses below refers to “agape” love. Agape love is defined as “doing what is best for the other person, no matter how you feel or how much it costs you.” [More](https://www.gotquestions.org/agape-love.html#:~:text=Agape%20love%20as%20modeled%20by%20Christ%20is%20not%20based%20on%20a%20feeling%3B%20rather%2C%20it%20is%20a%20determined%20act%20of%20the%20will%2C%20a%20joyful%20resolve%20to%20put%20the%20welfare%20of%20others%20above%20our%20own.)  **2. Overview**  God is love and our source of love. The entire Bible's directives, so to speak, are summed up in our calling to love God and love others. If we do not love others, we prove to be illegitimate children, lacking God’s love within us. There is nothing we can achieve, not even supernatural power, that compares to love. There is nothing we can do, including sacrificing our lives, that surpasses love. (I Cor 13:2-3) We love because we were first loved. Jesus loves us and demonstrated that by coming to earth and dying for us. (1 Jn 3:16-17) |
| **3. The Choice to love**   * 1. **Atheism and the natural man.**   To understand what loving others looks like, it may be helpful to consider the mindset of someone who does not believe in God. The perspective of an atheist reflects our own minds without God's presence. In other words, when we focus on ourselves, our thought processes resemble those of an atheist. Paul described the proper viewpoint of a believer, which stands in stark contrast to that of an atheist, when he stated,  *If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.* I Cor 15:19  He would be pitied because it makes no sense to sacrifice his quality of life to love others if there is no Christ!  The view that an atheist holds is that they have only this life, one life, and one chance at each part of it to make the most of their existence. Every day, they strive to satisfy their physical and emotional needs in whatever way they believe is best for them. At times, their goals may conflict with the interests of others, but that does not matter. These values align with the belief that this life is all there is. For example, what's the purpose of making the entire world a better place if they will not be part of it? If an atheist chooses to do something for humanity, it may be an attempt to fill a God-sized hole in their heart. By continually pursuing something they feel is meaningful and fulfilling, the work may appear selfless, but it is anything but that. It provides the giver with something more significant, such as a sense of personal fulfillment, and they are doing it on their own terms. Paul states, “If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.” I Cor 15:19 It is pitiful to live even part of our lives for others if not for Christ.  The atheist, of course, believes that humans are the highest life forms on Earth because of their intelligence. The next step is that some humans are considered more important than others. The brighter, stronger, and faster individuals tend to survive better. This reflects the ideology of Nazi Germany! This is easier to understand when considering that life also exists in animals and plants. We do not hesitate to harm them to eat. Although some may feel compassion, few truly consider the chicken, cow, or fish prepared for a meal. We give no thought to the carrot being pulled from everything that sustains it. When it comes to plants and animals, we always prioritize ourselves!  Similarly, the consistently living atheist prioritizes themselves in every situation, even when it involves people. Moreover, the atheist perspective reflects the viewpoint of natural man. This is the natural man that resides within each of us, which we must put to death. We accomplish this gradually, each time we choose to love others out of obedience to Christ.  There is no purpose whatsoever for the natural man to do anything for anyone unless he expects to receive something equal or better in return. We naturally want to get the most out of our lives. For example, we go to work and, in return, receive a paycheck that allows us to purchase things we need or want. We trade our labor for what we consider superior. Nobody, living as a natural man while considering their actions and consequences, trades something valuable for something less valuable.   1. **The example of love, Jesus**   We have the example of selfless giving for a greater purpose: Jesus humbling Himself, coming to earth, and ultimately dying on a cross. Some might think, “Well, He’s God. That’s how He did all He did.” That viewpoint is wrong and diminishes the requirement that we follow Christ’s example. The man Jesus, who was fully God, gave up, set aside, so to speak, any powers that a man did not have. “For this reason **he had to be made like his brothers in every way**, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.” Heb 2:17 This means that when he spent every moment of his life meeting the needs of others and being unselfish, he did so as a man overcoming every temptation we face. The man Jesus is the only person who lived on this earth who always gave of himself selflessly. He gave up everything for us. (Phil 2:6-8) He put our needs ahead of His. (Mt 20:28) The topic, “God’s Love and Power,” covers the love of Jesus in more detail.  This example is completely contrary to the natural man, a person's life without God. He lived with a greater purpose than self-fulfillment, striving to maximize his experience in life. For some, it is not easy to even imagine selflessly giving for an entire day. We fall very short of loving God and others. He loved us so that we could have eternal life. Then He tells us to do likewise: give of ourselves for others and love others as we love ourselves.   1. **Two paths before us.**   *“So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.” (Gal 5:16-17)* Many Christians have overcome what are often seen as common sins. However, when it comes to genuinely loving others, whether we realize it or not, we often fall short. One pathway is the sinful nature, which seeks to extract as much as possible from life, sometimes knowing that it comes at the expense of others. The other pathway, living by the Spirit, is the superior pathway and is as much greater as the plant is from the seed. (Matt 13:31-32) The truth is that if we understood the incredible Heaven that awaits us, if we only had a moment there, we would finally grasp the futility of attempts at self-fulfillment on this earth.  *“What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?”* Matt 16:26  Gaining the whole world does not compare to the eternity that awaits us.  *"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"* I Cor 2:9  There are two paths before us every day, every moment. One path is our way, leading ultimately to nowhere. The other is Jesus, the Way. The way of Jesus, which is to serve others, stands in opposition to the way of the world. More accurately, the way of the world contradicts God’s way. God’s path is about giving, even at great personal cost. We can gain insight from the mind of Jesus.  *“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”* Heb 12:2  Even in the midst of the most intense suffering, not just physical pain but also the knowledge that the Father would forsake Him, Jesus looked beyond everything He was losing. In other words, He looked past all that could benefit Him on this earth and allowed Himself to be crucified because He focused on what was far better.  We always have that choice before us: whether to prioritize ourselves in hopes of achieving a fulfilled life, or, as imperfect humans, to allow the love of our creator to flow through us. Like Jesus, we can find victory by focusing on the joy ahead of us, the Heaven that awaits us.   1. **Most of us are primarily selfish**   Some may protest that they would never seek pleasure at the expense of others. It is suggested that, unless you wish to be spiritually convicted enough to see the reality of your selfish living, you skip the rest of this paragraph. We, in the United States, are materially wealthy. We have brothers and sisters in other parts of the world who do not even have access to clean water, let alone enough food. We live in excess while they endure suffering. Almost every reader has all their physical needs met. Needs include things like safety, warmth, and sufficient food to maintain good health. Wants are things that, although uncomfortable, we can survive without. These include going out to eat, having extra clothing, nice furniture, nice cars, or even owning a car and pets. The average American family spends $3,500 per year eating out and $1,000 per year on each pet. Less than 50% of Kenya's population can afford more than two meals daily. The average Kenyan spends $2 per day on food. An extra $1 per day would be enough for them to have three meals. It is easy to ignore that spending what the average American family does on dining out and on one pet would keep 12 people in Kenya from hunger. Almost every person living in the US makes choices that prioritize their wants and luxuries over the basic needs of others. If it is good to take care of those who cannot take care of themselves, and we do not meet those needs, it is a sin. “Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.” James 4:17   1. **The progression of love**   God, the source of all love, initially showed us love, knowing how we would fail yet still choosing to create us. He then demonstrated the full extent of His love (John 13:1) throughout Jesus' life and death, providing the world with a pathway to salvation, which is eternal life.   * **Response:** The natural reaction to a gift is gratitude. We have received far more than we deserve. A fitting response is to spend increasingly more time getting to know this generous God through His word and the work He does in our lives. We follow His example and love others as well. (1 John 4:19) * **Obedience:** Our flesh, which represents our old nature, urges us to prioritize ourselves. Each time we love, we must sacrifice part of our time, possessions, and lives. We put others before ourselves out of obedience. (John 13:34) * **Compelled:** As we increasingly understand the nature of God and the significance of the work of Jesus on this earth, we embody the nature of God as His children. John the Baptist illustrates one who recognized the necessity of diminishing his own significance in comparison to Jesus' rising significance. (John 3:30) As we mature in Christ, our tendency to prioritize ourselves diminishes, while our love for God and others increases. Paul states, “For Christ's love compels us” (2 Cor 5:14a) as he explains his motivation for teaching the truth about Jesus, which reflects Paul’s love for others at his own expense. When we see a need, the compassion of God flows through us, prompting us to give of ourselves for the good of others. Anything less would contradict who we have become. *“If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?* (I John 3:17) When we prioritize the needs of others over our own and follow the example set by Jesus, we demonstrate that we are truly His children. It isn’t about passing a test to be considered “real children;” rather, through our acts of love, we validate that we have a new Father and embrace a new path, which is the way of the Creator. Our acts of love naturally flow from the love we have received. |
| **4. Jesus sums up the entire law with love! (Matt 22:37-40)**  Jesus replied: *"'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."* Matt 22:37-40  **Breaking it down**   * *"Love the Lord your God.”* In simple terms, this means doing what is best for the one in charge (i.e., the Lord), regardless of personal feelings. This is much easier said than done, and it's all too easy to just read this and move on. Are we truly thinking and living as if Jesus is Lord and in charge? What is best for Jesus, and for the Kingdom of God? Further discussion on this topic can be found in the Foundation Topic: It is not about us and our desires; it is about God. * *“with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.”* This means we are to love God with every part of our being. Ask yourself: “Is what is important to God important to me?” Do we care for God in the same way we might care for our spouse or our child? Do we often think about God and what His desires are for us? Jesus clarifies how to love Him: "If you love me, you will obey what I command.” John 14:15 * *“This is the first and greatest commandment.”* We need to pause here and take some time to consider that the command to love God is the greatest commandment. This represents the most crucial aspect of our relationship with God; everything we are and do must be based on this foundation. God made it both simple and challenging at the same time. It is simple because we are to prioritize what is important to God over what is important to us. It is challenging because loving God conflicts with loving ourselves. * *“And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.’This means doing what is best for our “neighbor,” which is defined in the parable of the Good Samaritan. (Luke 10:29-37) As we navigate through life, we are commanded to consider the needs of others alongside our own and to meet those needs with the same importance we place on fulfilling our own. Again, it is straightforward and yet very challenging because our natural instincts compel us to prioritize ourselves first*. * *“All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."* This is excellent news for anyone seeking to understand how to please God. However, it leaves little room for pride of accomplishment, as we will always find ourselves falling short of placing God in the position of Lord and treating others as we would treat ourselves. |
| **5. All about love (1 John 4)**  The following passage clearly explains the source of love, what we are supposed to do, and what it means if we do not. It's so simple and must not be overlooked.  *Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.* I Jn 4:7-12  *And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him.* Vs 16-17  *We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.* Vs. 19-21  Below is part of 1 John 4 reorganized by topics. Consider how important these points are, given that they are repeated so often within the same paragraph.   1. **Source:**  * *for love comes from God.* * *This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins* * *we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love.*  1. **Demonstration:** *This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world* 2. **Commands:**  * *Dear friends, let us love one another,* * *we also ought to love one another*  1. **Reason:**  * *since God so loved us,* * *We love because he first loved us.* * “*that we might live through him”*  1. **Test of adoption:** (Also, John 3:17-18)  * *Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.* * *but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us* * *Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him.* * *If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.*   The most challenging passages above are what could be called the “Test of Adoption.” Verses 8, 19, and 20 may formally condemn those who only pay lip service to their belief system claims. *“Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.” “If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.”* We demonstrate the legitimacy of God’s love working in our lives by showing love to others. It is the fruit, the evidence that we have truly received God's gift through Jesus' sacrifice. One might say, “How could we receive such an incredible gift and not feel so blessed beyond what we deserve that we would not share?” |
| **6. How do we share God’s love?**   * 1. **Love, as defined in I Corinthians 13, the "love chapter,"** clearly discusses and explains love. * **Love is more important than speaking the language of angels, prophecy, the depths of knowledge, and supernatural powers.**   + *If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing”* I Cor 13:1-2 * **Love is more important than sacrifice, even unto death.**   + *If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.* I Cor 13:3 * **Love encompasses all that is good and does not exist in anything bad.**   + *Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.* I Cor 13:4-7 * **Love, the greatest command of all, never fails even when the earth is no more.**   + *Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.* I Cor 13:8 *And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.* I Cor 13:13   1. **Why are we to love** * **Because we were loved first.**   + *My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.*” John 15:12   + *"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."* John 13:34-35   + *This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers*. I John 3:16   1. **Love commanded** * **It is all-encompassing.**   + ***Do everything*** *in love.* I Cor 16:14   + ***The entire law*** *is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."* Gal 5:14   + ***Let no debt remain outstanding****, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.* Rom 13:8   + ***Above all****, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins*. I Pet 4:8   + *“Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will* ***fulfill the law of Christ****.”* Gal 6:2 * **To husbands:** *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her”* Eph 5:25 * **An emphasis on the poor** (Deut 15:7-8, 11 Psalm 41:1 Proverbs 19:17, 22:9 31:8-9 Isa 1:17 58:6-7 Luke 3:10-11 12:33-34)   + *"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'* Matt 25:40   + *Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.* Psalm 82:3-4   + *What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?* James 2:14-16   + *“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”* James 1:17   + *He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.* Prov 14:31   1. **Love explained** * **Loving others**   + *Do to others as you would have them do to you*.Luke 6:31 * **Loving enemies**   + *"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' lend to 'sinners,' expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.”* Luke 6:32-35 |
| **7. Love summed up**  The word "love" is not even mentioned in the following passage. However, this passage summarizes love from start to finish. The verses are rearranged below to follow chronological order.  *“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!”* Phil 2:5-8  Again: *“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.”* Vs. 5  *“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”* Vs. 3-4  **Breaking it down - Phil 2:3-8**   * *“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus”:* This sentence speaks for itself. The following verses explain what that attitude is. * *“Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.”* Can we even truly understand what it was like to be the creator and become the creation, transforming from an eternal spirit to taking on human flesh? No. However, if we are to be obedient to the command to adopt the same attitude as Jesus, we must at least try and keep striving until we reach the end of ourselves, possibly standing or kneeling and crying out in worship to God for this incredible sacrifice. We may ask for a glimpse so we can inherit at least a small part of that attitude. The attitude is clearly one of setting aside our comfort and what is best for us, and being willing to give it all up. * *“And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!”* Can we understand the attitude that would give everything for people who are so undeserving? This is why we should do what is best for our enemies. Because we were enemies of Christ when He died for us. He gave us His all! * *“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.”* This passage could be clearer with some added definitions. Nothing means “Nothing,” which is important to note. Selfish ambition is wanting things our way. Vain conceit is the belief that we are better than we actually are. Our attitude and subsequently our actions should not include either of these. How much of our time with others are we truly interested in doing things the way we want? It should be none. * *“but in humility consider others better than yourselves.”* This is the attitude of Jesus when He came to earth and went to the cross. This is the attitude that we are commanded to have. This should bring us to our knees before God, admitting we can seldom love right. The times we do, we may take pride in our sacrifice, but that is just another sin. We cannot do it on our own, but we can do all things through Christ. (Phil 4:13) * *“Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”* This is a mirror of the second great commandment. *'Love your neighbor as yourself.’* |
| **4 – EVERYTHING IN LIFE IS A GIFT** |
| **INTRODUCTION**  **THE BIG PICTURE.**  **Good and “Bad”**  **The Perfect and the Flawed**  **Good Gifts**  **The View:  Good, bad, and eternal**  **ORIGIN OF GIFTS**  **Given by others**  **Time and place of birth**  **Spiritual gifts**  **GIFTS OR CURSES**  **Genetics**  **Family**  **A DEEPER LOOK AT EXPECTATIONS**  **The leaders in the early church**  **Where will the bar be set?**  **Explaining our pain**   1. **Refocusing exercise**   **GIFTS THAT ARE SPIRITUAL**  **INTRODUCTION**  It is helpful to consider the level at which most of us operate. Most people view things that make their lives easier or more fulfilling than what they had expected as gifts.  They have learned that unpleasant things are part of life, whether it is the need to brush their teeth, complete 12-16 years or more of school, work for a living, or take care of their possessions. They have an “expectation level". That is the level that divides what is acceptable in terms of difficulty in life from what is expected for comfort or pleasure.  **THE BIG PICTURE**  **Good and “Bad”**   * Good and “bad” things happen. * Some earthly “bad” is actually eternal good. (James 1:2-4) * If it is good, it does not come from us or Satan, but from God and is a gift. (James 1:17) * If something is bad in this life, God’s work in our lives uses it for good, whether earthly or eternal. (Rom 8:28)   **The Perfect and the Flawed**   * When God created everything, it was all good. (Gen 1:31) * When man sinned, sin entered into him, and from that point on, man was no longer good. (Gen 2:17) Creation became corrupted, so it was no longer good. (Gen 3:17) Neither flawed man nor flawed creation can be called a “good and perfect gift.” (James 1:17) * That said, our abilities and our wealth are flawed, but they are considered gifts in that we received them.  (I Cor 4:7) So a flawed gift is still a gift even though it doesn’t fit James 1:17.   **Good Gifts**   * That which is in the world that is good cannot come from us, so it is a gift from God. * Good can be seen as good in the short term (our time on this earth) or eternal. From an earthly perspective, “good” seldom exists in both time frames. *“If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.”* I Cor 15:19. * God uses difficulties caused by sinful man and a flawed earth for our good. (Rom 8:28, Heb 12:7, I Thes 5:18) The pain from these difficulties is a direct result of sin, which is not a gift. The gift is that God uses all hardships to shape us to be more Christlike than the difficulty itself. Therefore, hardships can be considered gifts because they help us become more Christlike.   **d. The View:  Good, bad, and eternal**  **1. Good:**  **2. Bad: That which we:**   1. **believe is less than what we are entitled to.** 2. **take for granted,** 3. **find uncomfortable yet good for us** 4. **view as normal in a broken world**. 5. **see as harmful to us.**   **3. Eternal: Earthly bad but eternally good?**  We often categorize things in our lives, usually without thinking.  **1. Good:** Everything we have is a gift. Most people expect how life should treat them and believe they are entitled to certain things. Everyone has a different standard, or a bar, so to speak. Anything received that is above that bar is seen as a "good” gift.  **2. Bad:** Everything that we do not view as good.  **a. We believe we are entitled.** Each person creates a “bar of expectations” based on their view of life and themselves. This bar represents what a person feels they deserve. They deserve everything equal to or below the “bar of expectations,” and it may have very little to do with reality. It reflects our level of perceived entitlement. The truth is that there is no ability we have, nor anything we “own,” that we can take credit for, not even the pay for the work we do.  *“For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?”* I Cor 4:7  When we grasp the truth of this passage, we conclude that we are not entitled to anything, and our “bar of expectations” should be on the ground. The outcome of adopting a proper perspective is a profound sense of thankfulness and humility.  **b. take for granted.** Many aspects of our lives are gifts, yet we often fail to recognize them as such. We may take for granted the circumstances of our birth, the availability of clean air and water, the absence of significant pain, our teeth, vision, access to food, medical care, a comfortable temperature, electricity, friends, family, and freedom. The list goes on. These are all earthly gifts to us. Anything that humanity, in general, has not enjoyed over the last several thousand years is a gift. What a spirit of thankfulness we can show! What an attitude of gratitude toward our God we can cultivate in our hearts by not taking for granted those things in life we have become accustomed to. Most people overlook the compensation they receive for their work, as well as the outcomes of their efforts. The truth of this passage completely shifts that perspective.  *“You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me. But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.”* Deut 8:17-18  **c. uncomfortable yet good for us.** We may not enjoy exercising, going to work, brushing our teeth, or drinking enough water. People around the world and throughout history would love to have a job, healthy teeth, or access to clean drinking water. Everything that is good for us is a gift, regardless of whether we like those things or not. The things in our lives that enhance our quality of life, even if they are uncomfortable, are gifts. Consider a life-saving operation that may cause temporary pain. Painful and very uncomfortable experiences can be gifts.  **d. view as normal in a broken world**. Minor health issues, rain on a picnic, traffic, and unkind people are events we can expect. From an earthly perspective, none of these are favorable. Typically, none would be viewed as a gift. However, from an eternal perspective, where God is in control, these things ultimately benefit us. The most important lesson we can learn from experiencing the outcomes of living in a broken world is an increased desire to escape this world and be with Jesus in glory, in perfection, free from pain or tears. For more about God’s work in our lives in a broken world, read the topic, “God Often Uses the Consequences From the Fall to Draw Us Closer to Him.”  **e. see as harmful to us.** Unquestionably, many things that happen to us are detrimental to our earthly existence. The effects of aging are harmful because our bodies gradually do not function as they used to. On a more dramatic scale, significant health issues affecting those close to us bring no earthly benefit. Ultimately, the death of our loved ones, along with our own death, offers no worldly good. Paul puts the earthly and eternal in a neat package. “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.” Phil 1:21  **3. Eternal: Earthly bad but eternally good?**  Gifts can be seen as valuable from both an earthly and an eternal perspective. People who struggle to be thankful for what is “visible” will find it extremely difficult to appreciate what holds only unseen, eternal value. It is crucial to recognize earthly gifts for what they are: gifts. Those who have adopted an eternal perspective will overflow with a spirit of gratitude.  If we believe that God’s purpose in our lives is to mature us for His eternal plans, then we focus less on what we perceive as good from an earthly standpoint, trusting that God is genuinely working all things out for our benefit. Consider marriage, which God called good, and what Paul’s perspective is.  Paul prioritizes the eternal good over the earthly good. Seven times in the first chapter of Genesis, God calls His creation good. “*God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.* Gen 1:31 In the second chapter, God notes that aloneness is not “good,” which indicates that companionship, specifically marriage, is good. *The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."* Gen 2:18  Paul, while recognizing the good in marriage, also notes that it can be a distraction from focusing on the Lord.  “*I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs--how he can please the Lord. But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world--how he can please his wife- and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world--how she can please her husband.*  I Cor 7:32-34  **ORIGIN OF GIFTS**  **Given by others**  People give us things, including their time. A definition of a gift is something we receive that we do not deserve. Most people view what they receive as a gift and appreciate it. At the same time, however, many forget that every good and perfect gift comes from above; therefore, every gift originates from God. (James 1:17) They thank the person, but often forget to thank God. When we see God as the source, we can avoid leaning too heavily on those who give us things or time. Otherwise, if they stop giving us things or are no longer in our lives, we feel an additional loss because we believe we have lost the source of our gifts. If we recognize all the gifts from God, we can trust that if and when He wishes to give us similar gifts, He will.  **Time and place of our birth**  This category of giftedness is completely beyond anyone’s control. Few people spend much time understanding what life is like around the world or what it was like 200 years ago. We generally take our position in the world and the historical era we inhabit for granted, adjusting our expectations accordingly. For instance, we come to believe we should have running water and electricity. We expect to be comfortable and entitled not only to medical care but also to quality medical care. If one is fortunate enough to live in areas with access to many of these resources, it’s worthwhile to consider what it would be like to live without them for an extended time. Think about living in regions of the world that lack these essentials. If we did, we would recognize many of the things we now take for granted as gifts.  **Spiritual Gifts**  The gifts described in 1 Cor 12 and Rom 12:6-8 are given to us by God for the building up of the church. Although we can “desire the greater gifts” (1 Cor 12:31), we cannot do anything to deserve any of them. There is no place for pride.  **GIFTS OR CURSES**  **Genetics**:  Those gifted with good looks or athletic ability receive extra attention from the opposite sex. They can be “liked” not for who they are, but for how others feel around them. They serve as “eye candy” to many. Most people desire a compatible spouse. They must discern whether the person they wish to be with likes them for who they are or for their appearance. Looks and athletic abilities will fade, 100% of the time. Being born with what some may consider “less than good-looking” physical traits can be seen as a gift. If someone is attracted to that person, they can have much more confidence that it is because of who they are, rather than their appearance. It is typically appreciated that those marriages did not start on superficial foundations. They also do not have to spend their lives watching themselves lose those good looks. That is a gift!  **Family:** Being born into a wealthy family can be seen as a gift, a blessed life, and a life free of worries. This person has everything money can buy. However, there is another side to it. They may find it harder to grasp the value of money, understand the importance of hard work, and learn how to work with their hands. It's easy to grow up spoiled and entitled. Furthermore, when someone of the opposite sex shows interest, it can be challenging to determine whether it is for the riches or for who they are as a person.  A marriage built on one spouse desiring what makes them feel better, whether it is “eye candy” or riches, can lead to significant struggles or even divorce. Therefore, what one may see as a gift — good looks or wealth — may very well be a curse.  For many people, it is not until they are elderly that they can look back and, with wisdom, see the gifts they were given that they may have seen as curses in earlier years.  At the deepest level, as adopted children with a loving heavenly Father, we can be assured that everything we receive and all that happens to us are gifts, whether we recognize them as such or not.  **A DEEPER LOOK AT EXPECTATIONS**  Often, older generations look at younger generations and think about how entitled they are. Many young people seem to want everything without putting in the effort. Give a moment to think about what our great-grandparents might say to us. What would happen if we were taken back to a farming society? One only eats what they raise or grow. There was no electricity. Less than 100 years ago in North Montana, that was the case. Children younger than 10 years old were gifted with the morning chores. To survive, the cows needed milking, eggs needed gathering, and clothes were washed by hand and dried near the pot belly stove, which had to be stoked. Rocks were warmed and placed in the bed, so the bed was not freezing. There was no such thing as a warm shower. Hot water was heated on the wood stove. Water came from a well. Kids walked to school or rode there on a horse. This is just a taste of how it was, just 100 years ago, in some parts of our country. People worked extremely hard to survive. Most did not complain. That is just the way life was. It is the way it was expected to be. The bar of expectations was very low. If people only saw what their life could have been like by being born a century or two earlier, they would see every day, with just electricity and running water, as a tremendous gift.  **a. The leaders in the early church**  What kind of “bar” did the apostles have? What did they expect regarding earthly pleasures? Paul’s view minimized some of the worst aspects that the world had to offer. He details some in 2 Cor 11:23-29. One could feel quite fortunate not to have to endure any of them.  *I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.* Rom 8:18  For the great masses at that time, there was no such thing as a pain-free existence. They had no medical care, and many probably had rotting teeth. The basics of clean water and sufficient food were things they hoped to find daily. The apostles considered anything they received, whether it was financial or other types of help; everything was viewed as a gift. (Phil 4:10-18) To that hard life, the apostles added mistreatment as a gift. They were joyful for suffering for the sake of Christ. They considered it an honor. The bad stuff, the pain, they saw as a gift because of their perspective. Their Savior had suffered, and if they were able to suffer as well, for His sake, that was an incredible gift. (Phil 1:29) Their bar of expectations for earthly pleasures and comfort seemed to lie on the ground.  **b. Where will the bar be set?**  It is not difficult to determine where the bar is set in a person’s life. Life events that fall below that threshold result in happiness fading away. There are bars for many aspects of life, including the amount of pain one experiences, their financial outlook, or how family members treat them. There may also be bars for how good food tastes or how much time they can spend watching TV or browsing the internet. The individual sets the bar for all categories, and that bar determines the amount of enjoyment they derive from life. It shapes their expectations and, if exceeded, what they view as gifts. When an event surpasses the bar, people feel happy. There exists an unspoken, and most of the time subconscious list of what belongs below that bar.  For some, any discomfort at all falls below the bar. This means that for that person, any pain or discomfort leads them to believe that life is not good enough for them to be happy. If they feel uncomfortable, none of the other gifts they receive will be enough to compensate for it.  **c. Explaining our pain**  We might feel ashamed and struggle to articulate our unhappiness at times to people living in impoverished conditions. For example, think about a time when you were stuck in traffic. “We're wasting 20 minutes extra getting to where we want to go.” Many times, we feel upset about enduring what we perceive as unnecessary traffic. Consider this: we could not even explain our unhappiness to someone in Africa who has never driven a car. We could not explain why sitting for an extra 20 minutes felt so horrible. They might wonder if we were in pain or what awful things happened or were going to happen. There are millions of people worldwide who must walk for water, grow their own food, and live a subsistence lifestyle. They barely survive, and many are in pain. It would be challenging to convey to a person in a primitive society nearly everything that makes us unhappy. If we recognized as gifts what they would view as gifts, we would be overflowing with happiness amid most situations that currently lead to our grumbling.  **d. Refocusing exercise**  A great exercise for someone who is unhappy about an event is to write a letter explaining the reason for their unhappiness. The intended recipient of this letter will be someone who is just surviving. This is not a letter of complaint, but rather an explanation of the basis for the unhappiness. It may be a challenging task to develop ideas that a person living a primitive lifestyle would understand. This exercise should lower the level of expectation for most people.  **GIFTS IN THE SPIRITUAL REALM**  Up to now, a substantial amount of time has been spent discussing physical gifts. If we are unable to appreciate all that surrounds us, it becomes difficult to be grateful for the things we cannot see. Spiritual matters are invisible.  God loves us. God is love. That said, we can be thankful that God loves us. Review the five ways God loves us and thank Him for His love. The question to ask when you do not feel loved is, “What more do I expect out of God than what He has already done for me?” Consider just the second of the five: Jesus died for us. If you have trusted in Christ alone for your salvation, you are guaranteed a place in heaven with God for eternity. You, a sinful, messed-up, selfish human being, will be able to spend eternity with a love beyond your imagination. (1 Cor 2:9) We do not value that enough as a gift because we are not following the Scriptures, as it says in Colossians 3:1-2.  *“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.”*  People can become so caught up in being unhappy with life at times, or so engrossed in enjoying life, that they forget their spiritual blessings. Consider the sayings of Agur:  *“Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.*” (Prov 30:8-9)  One reason we do not appreciate spiritual gifts is that we fail to understand the futility of life. When people are young, most of life lies ahead of them, and everything feels exciting. They anticipate having a family, building a career, and going on vacations, finally doing all the things they have longed for but couldn’t pursue because they were too young or living at home with their parents. As people enter their later years, they experience more pain and suffering, and more loved ones pass away. Often, they suffer physically from the effects of aging. Simply getting through the night without pain feels like a blessing. For many, just walking around becomes a chore. The pleasures of this world seem to fade away. They gain the opportunity to see a bit more clearly and find it easier to yearn for heaven.  *“Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.  So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”* 2 Cor 4:16-18  How can one achieve this proper mental outlook when they are not in pain and feel disillusioned with life? Follow the commands quoted above from Colossians 3.   * *“Set your hearts on things above,”* * *“Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.”*   Take time each day to focus on what is real; what lasts.  *So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.* 2 Cor 4:18  Remember that you are not just a vapor (James 4:14), but that God is eternal.  Consider the spiritual gift that the God of the universe has bestowed upon you when He called you His child. (1 John 3:2)  He has welcomed us into his family, and nothing can separate us from that family.  *The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings so that we may also share in his glory.* Rom 8:16-17  Consider the five ways God loves us. Each way is spiritual. Reflecting on each one requires you to focus your mind on things above, rather than on earthly matters.  **A Biblical List of Gifts**  **SALVATION**   * *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast.* (Eph 2:8-9) *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.*  Rom 3:23-24 * *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Rom 6:23 * *But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification.*  Rom 5:15-16 * *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*  John 3:16   **THE HOLY SPIRIT**   * *Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*  Acts 2:38   **SPIRITUAL GIFTS**   * *We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith.*  Rom 12:6 * *Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms*.  I Pet 4:10 * *There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.* I Cor 12:4-11 * *But eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most excellent way.*  I Cor 12:31   **PEACE**   * *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.* John 14:27   **WISDOM**   * *If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.*  James 1:5   **CIRCUMSTANCES**   * *Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.* (I Thes 5:18)   **HARDSHIPS**   * *Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?* (Heb 12:7) * *Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. (*James 1:2-4)   **HAPPINESS AND SATISFACTION**   * *I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. That everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil-this is the gift of God.* Eccl 3:12-13   **WEALTH, POSSESSIONS, AND ENJOYMENT**   * *Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work-this is a gift of God. He seldom reflects on the days of his life, because God keeps him occupied with gladness of heart.*  Eccl 5:19-20   **WEALTH AND ABILITIES**   * *You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.* (Deut 8:17-18)   **HOUSING**   * *"Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."  (*Matt 8:20)   **EVERYTHING WE HAVE**   * *For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?* (1 Cor 4:7*)* * *And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.* I John 5:15   E**VERY GOOD AND PERFECT GIFT**   * *“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.”* (James 1:17)   **ALL THINGS**   * *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*” (Romans 8:28)   **LIFE**   * *Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.*  I Peter 3:7   **DEATH**   * *For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain*. (Phil 1:21)   **GIFTS GIVEN TO THE APOSTLES**   * *So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given.*  2 Cor 9:5 * *As it is written:  "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever."  Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God*. 2 Cor 9:9-12   **GOD’S GIFTS ARE GOOD.**   * *If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!*  Matt 7:11   **GOD’S GIFTS ARE IRREVOCABLE**   * *for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable*.  Rom 11:29 |

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| **5 - ALL GOOD AND LOVE IS FROM GOD!** |
| **INTRODUCTION**  **GOD IS LOVE!**  **THERE IS NO ONE GOOD BUT GOD.**  **TRUTH, PART OF GOD’S GOODNESS**  **GOD IS TRUTH**  **WHAT TRUTH SHOULD BE LEARNING?**  **AN EXAMPLE OF A SIMPLE TRUTH**  **PRIDE IS THE ROADBLOCK**  **I Already Know All I Need to Know**  **I know I’m right**  **I’m smarter than the person sharing information, so they cannot teach me anything.**  **All my experience has led me to believe that the new information cannot be accurate.**  **WE LEARN THE TRUTH FROM:**  **God, by the Holy Spirit and reading the Bible,**  **Our experiences and observations**  **Others: Through books and conversation**  **PASSING ON TRUTH.**  **ROADBLOCKS TO SHARING THE TRUTH WITH OTHERS.**  **a. Credibility lost**  **b. Other people’s business**  **c. Fearing Rejection**  **d. Selfishness**  **8. SUMMARY**  **INTRODUCTION**  This section explores the origins of love and goodness. It’s best to read the section about [God’s Love and Power](https://www.yesgod.info/resources/foundationsofourlives.htm#1)) first.  The passage below requires neither introduction nor explanation, just meditation.  *“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.“* 1 Jn 4:7-11  Before reading further, take at least 2-3 minutes to reread and reflect on the passage above. It couldn’t be clearer here, stated and repeated for emphasis: Love comes from God, not us. The origin of love: “*Love comes from God*.” “*This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us*…”  **GOD IS LOVE!**  *“And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.”* I John 4:16  **All good comes from God.** Once more, the Bible could not be clearer about the source of goodness, as this passage starts with a warning against being misled into thinking otherwise.  “*Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. Every good and perfect gift is from above…*” James 1:16-17a  **THERE IS NO ONE GOOD BUT GOD.**  *“As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good--except God alone.“* Mark 10:17-18  Someone might argue that Jesus is implying he is not good in these verses. However, that is not the meaning of this passage. Jesus asked why the man called him good. The man did not realize that Jesus was God. From the man’s perspective, there is no confusion in this passage.  The critical takeaway is Jesus' statement that there is no one good except God alone. While we may accept this statement as true, ensuring it aligns with our view of ourselves is essential. Many people, including many Christians, consider themselves to be “good.” Nobody is good. Period. Let us examine what integrating this truth into our lives looks like. Most importantly, we will be humble, not seeing ourselves as better than we are. Romans speaks directly to our view of ourselves.  *“For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.”* Rom 12:3  Our view of ourselves should be that we are sinful, broken people with no good in us whatsoever. Any good we do, any good we have ever done in the past, is God’s good in us and through us. This may be hard to take, to believe. Thankfully, God is so clear about everything important for us to know.  *“In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.’* Matt 5:16  If there is any hesitation in accepting the source of good in our lives, this should clarify it. When our light, our good, is evident to mankind, we do not receive the praise. God does. God does so that His goodness is revealed through broken, sinful people.  Our attitude, then, is one of humility, acknowledging that we are not the source of any good or love. While we may feel like we are nothing or useless without God, that is not the whole picture. The fuller picture is that the God of the universe uses our broken, sinful vessels to demonstrate His goodness and love to the world. We are ambassadors of Christ (1 Cor 5:20), and God glorifies Himself in and through us (Eph 1:11-12).  As we walk through life and find ourselves expressing love for others by doing what is best for them and serving them, we can be excited that the God of the universe chose to use us, who are lowly, for His glory. When someone does something kind for us and shows us love, we can look up and thank God for loving us through that person. Having a truth-based perspective saves us from much heartache when people fail to meet our expectations.  The reality is that, for a season, God demonstrated His goodness and love through a person to touch our lives. When someone disappoints us, at least in that moment, they are no longer acting as vessels of God in our lives. God has promised neither to leave nor forsake us; He is still present. He does not want us to rely on anyone so heavily that when they cease to be vessels, we fall. We first need to look up and recognize how much God loves us. The topic, “God’s Love and Power,” covers this in depth. We can wonder, with each person we meet, whether they will be the next vessel of God’s love in our lives. Perhaps the person who let us down will again become that vessel.  Living in this truth helps us live in the truth presented in [It is not about us, and our desired way; it is about God.](https://www.yesgod.info/resources/foundationsofourlives.htm#7))  **TRUTH, PART OF GOD’S GOODNESS**  The revelation of truth is an important part of God's goodness.  **1. GOD IS TRUTH.**  God not only reveals truth as part of His goodness, but He is truth. *“Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life.”* John 14:6a The more we see truth, the more Christlike we become. “*But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.* 1 John 3:2b The revelation of all kinds of truth can fit under the category of “good.” It is good to know the truth. Truth is that which corresponds to reality. God, who created all things and holds all things together, is the essence of reality. Everything that we see, hear, and feel that seems like reality will disintegrate. (1 Pet 3:10)  Satan is the father of lies. He wants us to believe the opposite: that this world is the essence of reality and God is merely an idea. Satan does not want anyone to seek any truth because when one continues to pursue truth, one ultimately finds God. Much of modern society shows significant resistance to truth, even when it is right in front of them. It is wise to expect a battle when pursuing truth.  Truth remains unchanged, regardless of the vessel. John 3:16 holds the same validity whether spoken by a seasoned pastor or a 4-year-old child. While we should rightly give more credibility to those with greater experience, God can deliver truth to us through anyone or anything. He desires us to maintain a teachable spirit, which might express itself as, “What do you want to teach me today, Lord?”   * + **WHAT TRUTH SHOULD BE LEARNING?**   It is neither necessary nor possible to learn the entire truth. This study focuses on the truths relevant to the individual. We need to learn the truth about:   * God * Relationships * Health * Finances * Other subjects (e.g., occupation, home maintenance)   We can learn about various aspects of certain occupations. However, no one has mastered the first four categories. There is always more to discover about God, relationships with others, health issues, and finances. A healthy balance exists between learning new information and applying what has been learned. If application is a challenge, it is important to explore the truth behind the reasons for the resistance to doing so. “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.“ Jam 1:5 That wisdom, that truth may come from others who have found victory.   * + **AN EXAMPLE OF A SIMPLE TRUTH**   There is a saying in the dental community: “Only floss the teeth you want to keep.” It serves as a reminder to floss all of your teeth. Maintaining good dental health, including healthy teeth and gums, is essential for overall well-being. Information that encourages us to adopt healthy habits is valuable, and all good comes from God. “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights,” Jam 1:17a.   * + **PRIDE IS THE ROADBLOCK**   The main obstacle to accepting that we might be mistaken about our beliefs is pride. This same pride exists in both the natural and spiritual realms, so both will be examined. When reflecting on the importance of being open to truth in the natural world, consider how this also applies to learning spiritual truths.  We are vessels, not sources of truth. We should never become prideful about the amount of accurate information we have gathered. Each piece of knowledge we possess is a gift from God.  **I Already Know All I Need to Know**  Pride is a sin. It comes before failure. “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.” Prov 16:18. Pride can prevent us from realizing that not only do we not know everything about relevant issues, but we also do not even know what we do not know. Pride keeps us from being teachable. Some people may think or say that they know enough about these subjects to get by. This is prideful because the individual believes they have, so to speak, mastered part of their life, and that “getting by” is their purpose. The mastery of our lives is not ours; it is the work of God.  Many people believe that they have learned not only everything necessary about matters concerning them but that they have also learned it accurately. They have the answers and often dismiss the information presented to them, whether through reading or conversing with others. The thought might use the dental example: “If flossing were so important, I would have learned about it by now.”  **I know I’m right**  The most important part of this section is the challenge of adopting a humble attitude, which is a matter of the heart. The issue of the mind is also significantly important. Unless we are absolutely sure about a specific piece of information, we should always consider the alternative views presented by others. Many people mix what they know to be true with what they are reasonably sure is true in the same mental category. Anything we believe we are certain is true but is not is like building that part of our life on sand. Depending on the severity of the issue, this can be fatal. Not flossing can lead to a lower quality of life, and believing that cars will always stop at red lights and crosswalks can result in death. It is extremely beneficial to take the time to scrutinize everything we think is true to determine if we are 100% certain of it.  **I’m smarter than the person sharing information, so they cannot teach me anything.**  If an individual perceived as less intelligent presents the concept of flossing, the idea might be dismissed. Prideful people often disregard most of what is shared by anyone they consider less intelligent than themselves. Since accurate information is part of the truth that comes from God, He can use anyone at any time to convey that truth to others. This truth may be offered in the form of advice. A little child could say to a couple who have been married for over 50 years and are having a fight, “Why don’t you talk nicely to each other?” Even if they don’t express it, countless little children around the world watching adults fight hold that thought, and the children are right! God is not limited in whom He has speak to us; He even used a donkey. (Num 22:28)  **The Mature Perspective**  When we recognize that truthful information can come from any source and understand that we cannot be certain the information presented is incorrect, it is wise to investigate. For example, someone who hears about flossing, even from what they might consider an unreliable source, should conduct further research on the topic or consult their dentist for confirmation.  **All my experience has led me to believe that the new information cannot be accurate.**  Limited experience, whether in terms of the amount of our knowledge about a particular subject or the number of others who share similar experiences, is referred to as anecdotal. The conclusions we may draw from our experiences might not be accurate. For instance, some individuals, perhaps even an entire family, can reach their 90s while smoking and drinking regularly. They, along with some observers, might conclude that neither practice is detrimental to health. This is entirely misleading. Regardless of how long they live, they would have been healthier if they had not harmed their bodies. Furthermore, what holds true for them due to their genetics may not apply to most people. Relying solely on personal experience can lead individuals to accept false beliefs.  Many people rely on anecdotal information: “I seldom or never floss, and I have never had a problem, so I don’t believe it matters,” or, “It may be true for others, but it doesn’t apply to me.” The truth is that there are numerous things we can get away with in our younger years that will lead to severe consequences later in life. Some people, when young, jump off a one-story roof for fun. At 70 years old, jumping down 2 feet could be catastrophic. While most people are aware of how their bodies change, what was once true is no longer the case. Many remain unaware of how some of their experiences can lead them to false conclusions for various reasons.  There are reckless and dangerous actions we can take even hundreds of times without facing consequences. Most people have witnessed someone walking into the street without looking. There are no harmful consequences if no cars are coming or if the oncoming car stops for them. Regardless of how often or how long someone has managed to engage in an activity seemingly without consequences, it doesn't guarantee that the activity won't eventually lead to consequences. It’s not uncommon for people to say something like this: “I’ve been doing it this way my entire life and never had a problem.” That mindset can lead to disaster. In any case, it does not establish the truth.  Anecdotal information is seldom a reliable means of determining truth. Believing that brushing one’s teeth is sufficient does not equate to understanding what is true. Failing to consider the ideas presented by a specific individual can lead to poor health, pain, and financial loss. When considering the spiritual realm, just because individuals live their lives as Christians in a certain way does not necessarily mean it aligns with God’s best, which is His desire for them. Holding the belief that life has turned out as it should is an expression of pride. The truth is that the course of our lives is determined by God, not us. Personal experience is an inadequate substitute for spiritual truths.  **The Mature Perspective**  We should adopt a humble attitude, recognizing that we have much to learn and that a good God is trying to teach us through various methods. It is beneficial to understand what we are absolutely certain is true. Everything else consists of what we think we know. When we read or encounter information that conflicts with our “not sure” category, we must consider it carefully. This applies not only to the physical realm, such as flossing one's teeth, but also to spiritual truths. Be teachable. Be aware that God may introduce information into our lives that He wants us to recognize. The ultimate source of truth is the Bible, and it is wise to continually measure one's life against it. Most people reading this are at least somewhat teachable, or they would not take the time to read it. The concepts presented in this section on truth may assist the reader in helping others who may not be as open to learning.   * + **WE LEARN THE TRUTH (in a flawed manner) FROM:**   **a. God: by the Holy Spirit and reading the Bible,**  It is not unusual for people to say, “God told me to do this.” We are to “test the spirits.” (1 Jn 4:!) There are several ways to do this. Ask others to evaluate what you believe you have heard against scripture. Ask yourself,   * + Is what I believe I am hearing consistent with what the Bible teaches?   + Is it loving?   + Is it sinful?   + Does it build others up?   + Does it bring me closer to Jesus?”   We can misunderstand the Bible either by failing to grasp the meaning of a word or by taking a passage out of context. An example of a misunderstood word is the word love. Some people think that when it says to love your enemies, you are supposed to like them. A brief definition of the word 'love' is to do what's best for the other person. The two definitions have entirely different meanings. Many verses, when we overlook the context before and after, and fail to understand who is being addressed, can lead us to false conclusions.  **b. Our experiences and observations**.  It benefits us not to trust our conclusions completely. While God teaches us through our experiences, we can still arrive at incorrect conclusions.   1. Our situation may be unique. 2. The duration of our experience may be insufficient to understand the long-term effects. 3. Other factors may also contribute to our conclusions.   **c. Others: Through books and conversation**  While books are generally more accurate than casual conversation due to the extensive effort put into their creation, they can still be flawed. Even knowledgeable and experienced individuals can be mistaken about various subjects.  Listening to other people talk can lead to encountering a myriad of conflicting information. Much of what they share with us may be anecdotal. That said, we can learn a great deal about God and life from conversations with others. If someone is open to learning, people are more willing to share and teach. They are much more likely to share the truth with others if asked. “What do you think about \_\_\_\_\_\_?” Just like with books, we should give more credibility to those with greater experience in the subjects they are teaching us about. It takes time and quality conversations with others to learn from them.  **The Mature Perspective**  If we remain humble about everything we are uncertain of, we can continue to learn. This applies to spiritual matters as well. For the unbeliever, scripture is compelling. “There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.“ Prov 14:12 When we hear a sermon, read something, or receive information from any individual, we must give it consideration. Failing to do so undermines God’s effort. One of God’s primary goals is to help us become humble. He also seeks to guide us into truth. A man in his early 90s, who had been a Christian for many decades, was engaged in a friendly debate with a younger man about a spiritual truth. He paused and said, “Okay, you are right.” Many listeners might think he was tired of the discussion. However, he clarified, “I’ve been wrong for over 50 years. I don’t want to be wrong going forward.” That is precisely the attitude we need to adopt. We should cultivate a mindset of not trusting ourselves and valuing, as well as pursuing, truth. We should feel no shame in admitting our past mistakes. We want the phrase, “You always want to be right,” to reflect our future rather than our past. We need to understand that God can reveal truth, both in the physical realm and the spiritual realm, to anyone at any time.   * **PASSING ON TRUTH.**   Sharing helpful information with others is a way to pass on God’s goodness. There are only three things we can do to share God’s goodness.   * 1. Physically help them   2. Communicate with them   + Share truth   + Be a listener   1. Pray for them   Sharing the truth can be lifesaving.  7. **ROADBLOCKS TO SHARING THE TRUTH WITH OTHERS.**   * 1. **Credibility lost:** One has presented information in the past, claiming to be “sure” of it when it was incorrect. As a result, the listener no longer considers them a valid source of truth. This should motivate one to understand what they know and what they do not know for certain. There are ways to present information that we are almost sure about, but not positive about.   + I heard…   + I read…   + I think…   + It seems to me…   + I’m not entirely sure, but I'm almost certain that…   1. **Other people’s business**: It is not our business to try to control others. That said, if we have information (truth) that we believe would improve the quality of another's life, why wouldn’t we share it? Somebody could start the conversation, “Would you like me to share with you something I learned?” Most people, when they see someone with a physical need, would step in and help. Most of the time, sharing truthful information that is unknown to the other person is far more helpful in their lives.   2. **Fearing Rejection**: Some people may reject the messenger if they are unwilling to consider information that conflicts with their lifestyle. The Bible commands us to, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom,” Col 3:16a. At the same time, if it seems that the listener is rejecting the message, it may not be beneficial to continue. The receptivity of the listener can be assessed by starting with less significant issues and asking questions like, “Was that helpful?”   **d. Selfishness**:  It takes time and energy to teach people.  **8. SUMMARY**  God’s goodness has not only revealed truth to us but has also allowed us to be vessels of truth, benefiting the lives of others. Truth can set people free. For the unbeliever, it sets them free from sin and death. For all, it can lead them into a better relationship with God and others. It can set them free from unnecessary physical and financial suffering. “Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding,” Prov 3:13. Our good God reveals more truth about wisdom in Prov 3:13-28. |

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| **6 - IT IS GOD'S WILL THAT YOU GET TO KNOW HIM** |
| Here are a few more quotes from J.I. Packer’s book, "Knowing God," which may be the best read for anyone who wants to deepen their understanding of God. The quotes below not only provide a glimpse into the book but also serve as a challenge and a pathway to developing a closer relationship with God. Taking time to meditate on one or a few sentences or phrases at a time will be beneficial.  “The modern way with God is to set him at a distance.  **THE STUDY OF GOD**   * He who often thinks of God will have a larger mind than the man who simply plods around this narrow globe. * Nothing will so enlarge the intellect... as a devout, earnest, continued investigation of the great subject of the Deity. * Would you lose your sorrow? Would you drown your cares? Plunge yourself in the Godhead's deepest sea... you shall come forth... refreshed and invigorated. * Disregard the study of God... sentence yourself... no sense of direction and no understanding of what surrounds you. * Godliness means responding to God's revelation in trust and obedience, faith and worship, prayer and praise, submission and service. We shall have to take note of what pleases Him, what offends Him, what awakens His wrath, what affords Him satisfaction and joy. God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. * Knowledge puffeth up. * Our aim in studying the Godhead must be to know God Himself the better. (We must) enlarge our acquaintance... with the living God. * We must seek, in studying God, to be led to God. * Turn each truth... into matter for meditation before God. * Its effect is ever to humble us, as we contemplate God's greatness and glory, and our own littleness and sinfulness.   **EFFECTS OF KNOWING GOD**  Those who really know God... never brood on might- have- beens; they never think of the things they have missed, only of what they have gained. A little knowledge of God is worth more than a great deal of knowledge about Him.   First, one can know a great deal about God without much knowledge of Him.   Second, one can know a great deal about godliness without much knowledge of God. We have known God, and that because we have known God the unpleasantness we have had, or the pleasantness we have not had, through being Christians does not matter to us. We have said that when a man knows God, losses and 'crosses' cease to matter to him; what he has gained simply banishes these things from his mind.  **Qualities of Those Who Know God**   * Those who know God have great energy for God. * Those who know God have great thoughts of God. * Those who know God show great boldness for God. * Those who know God have great contentment in God.   First, we must recognize how much we lack knowledge of God.  Second, we must seek the Savior.  **KNOWING GOD**   * What were we made for? To know God. * What aim should we set ourselves in life? To know God. * What is the 'eternal life' that Jesus gives? Knowledge of God. * What is the best thing in life, bringing more joy, delight, and contentment than anything else? Knowledge of God. * Once you become aware that the main business that you are here for is to know God, most of life's problems fall into place.” |

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| **7 – LEARN FROM THE PAST, GLORIFY GOD IN THE PRESENT,**  **TRUST GOD FOR THE FUTURE.**  **OUTLINE**  **1. INTRODUCTION**  **2. THE PAST**  **a. Regrets often arise from past actions that bring us or others present pain. It is wise to seek wisdom.**  **b. We have sinned against God and wish we could, so to speak, take it back.**  **c. Learn From Mistakes**  **d. It was an Accident**  **e. Learn from the successes and mistakes of others.**  **3. THE PRESENT**  **4. THE FUTURE**    **INTRODUCTION:**  Earthly examples are presented because:   * If we are not responsible in the earthly realm, we will be less effective in serving God’s Kingdom. * A similar pattern of engaging in the earthly realm typically carries over into the spiritual realm.   *“Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,” (*Phil 3:13)  Here is Paul’s example of forward-thinking. He acknowledges that his past is full of sin and recognizes his shortcomings in the present. He strains and leans forward in the present, looking ahead to his future. Like someone climbing a mountain, each step is a laborious effort. Each step brings the hiker closer to his goal. He strains with every step, lifting not only his weight but also everything he has brought with him, higher and higher, closer and closer to his goal. Every moment of our lives brings us closer to glory in Heaven God.   1. **THE PAST**   When we reflect on our regrets, we often wish we could change the past. Here, we will explore the implications of hypothetically being able to alter our past actions. Hopefully, this will dispel any conscious or unconscious beliefs that can lead to an unhealthy fixation on the past and time spent in regret.  **Regrets often arise from past actions that bring us or others present pain. It is wise to seek wisdom.**  In “Knowing God," J.I. Packer stated: “Those who really know God... never brood on might-have-beens; they never think of the things they have missed, only of what they have gained.”  It is incredible how many expend so much mental energy wishing to change the unchangeable. Mankind has overcome obstacles that nobody would have believed possible in earlier centuries. While jet airplanes and rocket ships exemplify human invention, no matter how far science advances, the past can never be changed.  Even if we could change the past, more problems would arise. Years ago, there was a movie about a man who could travel into his past. When he saw how certain events in his life had resulted in suffering for him or someone he cared about, he returned to a time when he believed the problem began. Each time he made a change, something else negative occurred in the new future.  Changing an event in the past to alleviate suffering for oneself or a loved one can have unforeseen consequences. Consider someone who played the lottery and was one number off but wishes they had won. If they could change the past, the outcome would be that someone else who won in the “old past” would no longer win in the new present. Many changes one might make to benefit themselves could, in turn, harm someone else. We cannot know if altering the past to prevent a minor calamity could lead to a greater one in the future. Some negative impacts of our choices may not manifest until after we have died. We would spend our lives in endless scenarios trying to find the one that results in the least pain.  Even the ability to go back to the past and change things would leave us far short of creating a life for ourselves and those around us that turns out right. We would need to live hundreds of lives to try to balance the positive and negative aspects of each situation, resulting in everyone’s lives being affected by the changes we made.  Our standards for what is good for ourselves or others are flawed. Our attempts to reduce suffering for ourselves and those we care about typically result in weakness instead of cultivating personal character and focusing on spiritual matters. The challenging experiences, not the easy ones, provide opportunities for personal growth.  We live in a fallen world. Even if we could change the past, we cannot repair what is broken.  God placed humanity in the dimension of time for a reason. One way to view the desire to change the past is to recognize that, in reality, we are wishing to take the place of God. Even if we could change the past, we lack the intellect to improve it. We do not possess the proper love for everyone involved. We simply need to leave the past in God’s hands.  So the next time we think, "If only I had not,” instead, learn from our mistakes and let the “if only” fade away. It comes down to what God has allowed to happen. God promises that all things will work together for good, and that includes the past, present, and future. God is timeless. God holds our past, present, and future in His hands.  *“And we know that* ***in all things*** *God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?”* Rom 8:28-32  **b. We have sinned against God and wish we could, so to speak, take it back.**  It is a good thing to regret having sinned against God. It shows a good heart toward God. We are told what to do with that sin.   1. Confess it! “I did \_\_\_\_ and it was wrong.”    * *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”* 1 John 1:9 We are forgiven. 2. Understand that our past sins, along with all the sins we have committed, are behind us; they in no way alter God's plan or purpose. Reflect on this. Are we truly capable of changing God's plan?    * *God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?* Num 23:19 3. Sometimes we may regret what we perceive as a “bad” sin. It can be helpful to recognize that one sin is not worse than another because all types of sin put Jesus on the cross. All of our sins are fully paid for and entirely forgiven. 4. *What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? (*Rom 7:24) We are all wretched. We are all flawed. Confession means admitting that what we have done is wrong. Paul illustrates this by admitting his flaws. As soon as he does, he looks forward—to the point when he will no longer be flawed. We should grow weary of our sins, weary of being flawed and falling short. God desires our focus on the present and the future He has prepared for us, where we will no longer be flawed. *Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.* I Jn 3:2 5. Like all actions we regret from our past, our energy gets wasted on those regrets. Instead, it should focus on what led us to those mistakes and our commitment to do our best in the future to walk in the Spirit as much as possible.    * *“So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”* Gal 5:16 6. We can transform our past sins into a present sacrifice that pleases God by approaching Him with a broken and contrite heart of repentance.    * *“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”* Ps 51:17 7. **Learn From Mistakes**   The concept of experimentation, which has led to scientific achievements, is based on the idea that scientists learn from their mistakes. Experiments would not be necessary if they could get it right the first time. Inventing something that has never been created before often involves mistakes. The mistakes exist only in the past. For advancement to occur, inventors must learn from history. They discern what does not work, which narrows the possibilities of what might succeed. For individuals to grow, they must learn from their experiences. It is the only thing that can be done with the past, and it must be done. Unless we learn from our past mistakes, we are almost certain to repeat them. Often, if mental effort is applied, learning from the past is straightforward. For example:  We walked away from something on the stove, and dinner got burned. We learned that it is best to set a timer if we step away from the stove.  Many people overlook the more challenging aspects of learning. Often, there is a deeper lesson to be understood, and it is crucial to recognize it. In the above example, we realize that we can easily become distracted.  When we learn about ourselves and what we may have done that led to an undesirable outcome, we create a stronger foundation that helps us avoid not only that mistake but similar ones as well. For example, we can learn not just to set a timer but also to recognize our tendency to get easily distracted, even when engaged in an important task. We will then know to set reminders for various activities, not just when cooking.  Some people do not learn from their mistakes for a variety of reasons.  When they made mistakes as children, the consequences were emotionally painful. If their parents reacted with anger, as adults, they might associate making mistakes with pain.  Their parents linked their mistakes to being bad, which can lead to some people tying their self-worth to their performance. Pain often comes with admitting mistakes. Because admitting a mistake can be quite uncomfortable, one might deny it, blame someone else, or argue that it was not a mistake but rather an accident.   1. **It was an accident**   It is a common excuse that leads to an inability to learn from mistakes: “It was an accident.” Accidents are rarely the cause of failures. Car “accidents” are seldom “accidents.” They almost always involve one or more drivers who do not drive carefully. For something to be an accident, it should be unforeseeable and, for the most part, unavoidable. Hitting a boulder that just rolled into the road or an animal that just darted out are examples of situations that could genuinely be called an “accident.” These are good questions to ask oneself when labeling a failure as a mistake:   1. Could others avoid what just happened to me? 2. Is there something different about me that has kept me from being like most people, making it still an accident for me? 3. Is there anything I could have done differently, moved more slowly, or paid closer attention to avoid what happened?   One might think it is silly to do this exercise as an adult. “What is the big deal?” An example of a mistake that catches many off guard is “accidental” falling. This is especially true for the elderly. They may stumble and dismiss it as an “accident” when, in reality, due to aging, they are slowly losing their balance. Rather than reflecting on the cause of the stumble, it is labeled and viewed as an accident. If not ignored, those struggling with balance could improve it through exercise. “Accidental” falls plague the elderly, and many are life-changing. Failure to ask similar questions to those above can have disastrous consequences for our lives.  If we struggle to admit mistakes or acknowledge being wrong, it is essential to understand why this may be problematic. Seek the truth. The truth is that our identity has been given to us by God. We are a child of God first. Our value cannot be increased or decreased by anything we do or do not do.  Let’s return to the concept of sin, which means missing the mark, or reflecting on the mistakes we make in our relationship with God.   * Sin is not an “accident.” * Sin is not justifiable. * Sin cannot be blamed on others or anything else. * Sin does not only fall under the 10 Commandments. * Sin can be encompassed by the two great commandments that summarize the law and the prophets: love God and love others. * Sin may fall under the command that can “haunt” us and prove us guilty nearly every day. “*Everyone who knows the good he ought to do but doesn’t do it, sins.*” James 4:17 If we do not find ourselves breaking this one, we may be insensitive to the needs of others.   We are all flawed humans. God loves us as we are ([Five Ways God Loves Us](https://www.yesgod.info/resources/growth/godslove.htm)). Nothing we can do makes us more or less valuable in His sight; that is all that matters.   * Accept the flawed nature. * Confess the sin. * Repent. * Learn how to avoid the sin. * Move on in victory.   Reflecting on our earthly mistakes is quite similar to examining our sins. For example, we might speak rudely to someone. We can come up with all sorts of excuses:   * They had it coming because of their behavior. * We were tired. * Everyone does it. * We are only human.   Rather than making excuses for our actions, we should confess our sins to both the person and God, and strive to avoid repeating those actions in the future. Similar to the above earthly example, seeking wisdom about the deeper issue proves beneficial.  Pride:   * We view ourselves as superior to others, which gives us the right to be rude. * We consider ourselves to be above the way they acted when we were rude.   Focus:   * Are we focused on being the best sons or daughters of Christ? * Is it on being God’s ambassador to the unbeliever or one who tries to build up the other believer? * Are we walking in the Spirit? *“So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”* Gal 5:16 * Have we taken time to be alone with the Lord and communicated with Him throughout the day?   If these elements are not in place, they point to deeper, more fundamental issues that have led to our rudeness, for example. Confess the root issue to the Lord. Perhaps ask another believer for guidance on how to overcome these obstacles. The Foundation, “[It’s not about you; it is about God](https://www.yesgod.info/resources/foundationmain/08mainnotaboutus.htm),” helps refocus.   1. **Learn from the successes and mistakes of others.**   *These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.* (I Cor 10:11)  We are warned to avoid pitfalls by those wiser than we are and by observing the consequences of others' mistakes. Scripture is clear that the lessons and history serve as examples for us to learn from. We need to heed these warnings. We are happy to rely on the experiences of others when we travel by car or airplane. Indeed, we wouldn’t want to try to build anything from scratch when something that works so much better is available. Yet, with much more important matters, such as our relationships with God and others, we often live as if we are starting from scratch, believing that figuring it out on our own is a viable way to live. Step back and think about how much value we place on Scripture and wise, godly people who guide us.  **3. THE PRESENT**  The present is less complex but more challenging to master. It is the moment we are in. The shorter the time frame we can think in, the better. If we can reach the point where we are thinking solely in the present moment, just that one second, we can learn to live in the moment instead of dwelling on the past or the future. If this feels difficult, we can begin by committing to focus only on what has happened or what we believe will happen on that particular day. The Bible says, *“This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”* Ps 118:24  We can reflect on everything about “this day” that we consider good. Thank God for those things. Now, think about the aspects we view as bad. Then, consider how God transforms bad into good. Reflect on whether what we perceive as bad relates to discipline, because God disciplines those He loves. (Heb 12:6) Is God teaching us something through this? God has a purpose for us.  If our minds are focused on serving God and doing His will, our day can be guided by the thoughts that come to us, leading us toward His desires. Conversely, if our thoughts are elsewhere—perhaps on our own plans—God may be using difficulties to redirect us back to what He wants, which is ultimately what’s best for us.  Each day, each moment, is a gift. The Lord made that moment. We are given this moment to live for Christ. The gift of this moment does not depend on our past but on God. God wants us to seek Him, thank Him, and be joyful in the gift of our salvation. He wants us to love Him and others in this moment.  “Just keep doing our best.”  There are lyrics in an old Keith Green song. Just keep doing your best, pray that it’s blessed, and God will take care of the rest.  He may have devised that phrase by putting these two verses together.   * *“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men,”* Col 3:23 * *“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”* Rom 8:28   **Worry**: The present may indicate that the future will be emotionally or physically painful. Many people worry about what they expect the future to bring. Worrying, in itself, does not help anything. In fact, it consumes time that could be better spent considering solutions that may make the future less painful. Worrying runs our present because by worrying, we experience emotional pain in the present.  When we worry, we do not trust God. The Foundation, [God’s Love and Power](https://www.yesgod.info/resources/foundationmain/02maingodsloveandpower.htm), covers worrying.   1. **THE FUTURE:**   There are two aspects to consider regarding the future. One is that what we do in the present has a significant impact on our future.  There is a science to predicting what might happen in the future. Insurance actuaries and oddsmakers for various sporting events calculate the likelihood of different outcomes occurring. People who invest in the stock market do the same thing. The point is that none of them truly know. Nobody expected 9/11. Nobody expected COVID-19. 9/11 had a significant impact on financial markets and the lives of many people. COVID-19 affected almost everyone.  The Bible states that it is boastful to make plans without acknowledging that God is sovereign over those plans. It is seen as presumptuous to plan for the future without recognizing and maintaining the understanding that those plans will only come to fruition if it is the Lord's will.  *”Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. ”* James 4:13-16  Sadly, some people think they know what will happen tomorrow or at some point in their lives. We can be lulled into believing everything will continue as we expect, much like a cow wanders through life blissfully until the day of its slaughter. While some may find that a strange analogy, consider that God extends this idea further when we are described as a mist, perhaps as fleeting as a bit of steam hovering over a hot drink on a cold day. It is wise to recognize that nobody knows the day of their death in advance. We can take the best care of our bodies, but an accident or natural disaster can end our lives in an instant.  In our minds, our lives can seem very long. A 10-year-old child can look at someone who is 20, which seems like a lifetime apart. An 80-year-old can look at someone who is 90 and know it is only 10 summers away if they make it that far. We should recognize, every day, every moment, how fleeting not only our lives are but also our plans. Our lives are held in God’s hands, every molecule. Our futures are also in His hands.  Thinking inconsistently about God being in control leads to many problems, the most significant of which is pride. The verse following this is James 4:16*: “As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil.”* God directly states that it is boasting if we believe we can control our future. There is no doubt about its significance, as He concludes by calling it “evil.” We would be wise to reconsider our attitude toward our plans. Are we genuinely trusting God for the outcome?  When we trust God for the future, and that future eventually becomes the present but does not unfold as we planned or expected, we may worry about it. However, if our attitude aligns with the passage mentioned above, we can trust that this was the future God envisioned. God wants us to have faith in Him for our future.  Planning is wise. The Bible emphasizes the value of planning with the phrase, *"even the ants store up in the summer for the winter"* (Prov 6:6-8). Planning with a desire for a specific outcome can be boastful and, therefore, sinful. It reflects pride to think we have control over our future. It's misleading to assume that performing particular actions now will ensure a specific event later.  It is boastful because it implies that God is not in control, which is a lie. Satan can use this lie to discourage us. We can plan for the future and do all the work, but things often do not turn out as we expected, and we turn to God, questioning how He could not have rewarded us for our efforts. The truth is, He never guaranteed that He would reward us in the same manner as our work. We are to work hard for the Lord, not for men. It is Christ Jesus we are serving. Our reward will be in heaven. (Col 3:23-24) Now that is a future we can have confidence in!  *“Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.” (*Rom 4:20-21)  Faith is being sure of what is not yet seen. We either believe (put our full confidence in) the promise of God for our future, or we stay lost in the lie that the future is random, in our control, or controlled by others. There are no other options. Who is more trustworthy? Have we proven ourselves trustworthy enough to affect the future? If not, and since there is no one else out there who can guarantee a particular future, we have no choice but to trust the Creator.  Our job is to be responsible and always remember that, no matter how much we plan, the future is ultimately in God’s hands. The concept of long-term thinking is covered in more detail in the Foundation: [The deception in our lives most often comes from worldly thinking.](https://www.yesgod.info/resources/foundationmain/13maindeception.htm)  The opposite of planning with certainty is worry. In one sense, they are similar because both assume a certain present will lead to a specific future.  Generally, past trends carry into the future. We are all aging. As we do, we tend to become more frail. At some point, death is inevitable. So, how should we perceive such a bleak future?  This passage speaks for itself.  *“Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”* Matt 6:34  Two pathways will guide us to victory in shaping our vision of the future.  One must acknowledge and accept our complete inability to control what will happen later in the day. Catastrophe could be around the corner, just moments away. People who do their best to take care of their bodies can develop fatal illnesses that claim their lives at a young age in a very short time. Car accidents can lead to life-changing injuries or death. Houses can burn down, and people close to us may die. It can happen in an instant. We are fragile beings, and we need to admit that. In God's eyes, we are like a mist. We have no power over what happens in the next five minutes.  The second part of victory is understanding God's power and love. He knows the end from the beginning; He is the beginning and the end.  The goal is to meditate on truth. Even if there were no God, we still would not have control over the future. We can only improve our odds of what we perceive as a good life. The truth is that not only is there a God, but there is a personal God who loves us and has called us His children; He has shown us immense love. He holds our future in His hands. While the earthly future is unknown, our Heavenly future is promised to be beyond anything we can imagine!  In summary, we can only learn from the past, and we must do so. All we can do regarding the future is trust God, and we are to glorify God in the present.  An additional resource outlining our perspective on the future, along with numerous Bible references, is available at [Bible Reasons](https://biblereasons.com/bible-verses-about-future/). |

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| **8 - IT IS NOT ABOUT US, AND OUR DESIRED WAY;**  **IT IS ABOUT GOD!** |
| **OUTLINE**   1. **INTRODUCTION** 2. **THE FUTILITY OF LIFE** 3. **"INCLUDING" GOD IS NOT ENOUGH** 4. **THE WEDDING DAY ILLUSTRATION** 5. **APPLICATION** 6. **MEDITATION**    1. **MAN'S WEAKNESS**    2. **GOD'S POWER** 7. **PLEASING OURSELVES AND PRESERVATION** 8. **OUR SIGNIFICANT INSIGNIFICANCE** 9. **THE INTENTIONAL ASPECT**    1. **TWO COMMANDS**       1. **LOVING EVERYONE**       2. **LOVING THE UNBELIEVER** 10. **THE REACTIONARY ASPECT** 11. **SUMMARY IN WORSHIP** |
| **INTRODUCTION**  The idea of living life as if it is "all about God" instead of "it is all about us" needs to be our underlying attitude. You are either a man or a woman; it is something you just know, and you never have to remind yourself. Even though a man may exhibit some feminine mannerisms or a woman may feel like a tomboy, your physical attributes reveal your identity. In the same way, when you were born again, you were given an identity—a new one—that you belong to God. Crying easily or being tough does not identify us; they are what we do or feel, not who we are. Similarly, the experiences we have in the world do not define us either. The identity that God has given Christians is that they are His children.  *"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known."* I Jn 3:1-2a |
| **THE FUTILITY OF LIFE**  What does a discussion about the futility of life have to do with it being all about God? For many people, it takes seeing one's frailty and the futility of life to come to the realization that there is an immense difference between them and God. The futility of life apart from God is a profound truth that one should embrace.  How can we reach a point where we can embrace anything? We can learn by:   * listening to others who have studied. * listening to others who have experienced something more than we have. * observing the success or failure of others. * experiencing something ourselves to a degree that we become convinced.    When it comes to the most important life issues, we simply don’t have enough time to learn solely from our own experiences. Thankfully, regarding spiritual matters, we have the Bible. If we only trusted the Bible completely... Consider the experience of Solomon. We must recognize that our lives are futile without God.  Solomon was much wiser than most and shared his wisdom with us. He spends much of Ecclesiastes describing life on earth without focusing on living for God. That said, James was able to sum up Solomon's "ramblings" and answer the question about life in just one sentence.  "*What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.*" James 4:14b  In Ecclesiastes, what does Solomon call meaningless? **Everything**! *"Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless."*1:2 This includes:   * **Labor:** *"What does man gain from all his labor at which he toils under the sun?"* 1:3 * **Pleasing our sense of sight and hearing:** "*All things are wearisome, more than one can say. The eye never has enough of seeing, nor the ear its fill of hearing."* 1:8 * **Leaving a Legacy**: *"There is no remembrance of men of old, and even those who are yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow."* 1:11 * **Wisdom:** *"For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief."*1:18 * **Pleasures:** "*I thought in my heart, 'Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good." But that also proved to be meaningless."* 2:1 * **Laughter:** *"Laughter," I said, "is foolish. And what does pleasure accomplish?"* 2:2 * **Wine, Projects, Success, Wealth, Many Wives:** *"I tried cheering myself with wine, and embracing folly--my mind still guiding me with wisdom. I wanted to see what was worthwhile for men to do under heaven during the few days of their lives. I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them." 2:3-5 "I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired men and women singers, and a harem as well--the delights of the heart of man."* 2:8 * **Working to Leave an Inheritance: *"****I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me. And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the work into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun. This too is meaningless."* 2:18-19   Throughout the Bible, people reasoned with one another in an effort to seek truth. If trusting in Solomon's conclusions is not convincing enough for you, consider what gives meaning to life. We can observe others who have more than we do to determine whether achieving what we desire has brought fulfillment to their lives.  Celebrities, for example, have significantly more popularity, talent, influence, and material possessions than most people in even the wealthiest countries in the world. Along with all their "successes," they experience a markedly higher-than-average divorce rate. [(sourced online)](https://marriagefoundation.org.uk/research/rock-n-rollers-twice-as-likely-to-divorce/) They also face serious issues with drug and alcohol abuse. [(sourced online)](https://americanaddictioncenters.org/entertainers) How does someone who is rich, attractive, or famous know who their real friends are? It is much more complicated than it is for the average person. Their earthly accomplishments, which much of the world strives for, clearly do not provide answers to fulfillment. Often, for this group, it has brought more heartache.  Since we do not have enough life and resources to learn many important lessons, let us reflect on what brings fulfillment. Most people do not and cannot possess Solomon's perspective. Many feel they need to be rich to see the futility of riches. Those without the pleasures of the world often think, "If only I had this or that, my life would be good." It is when one either achieves all one desires or can visualize having achieved it that one realizes those things do not fulfill one's desires. What purpose does man have on this earth if not for God? Is it to please oneself in the highest possible manner? Or is it to sacrifice one's life for others to reduce suffering or improve their quality of life? To what end? Is it so humanity as a whole can enjoy the earth with the least amount of suffering and the most amount of pleasure? What will that generation and the next do with more pleasure? What do celebrities do with it? They fight with each other (divorce) and medicate themselves more than those who lack those commonly desired luxuries of life.  Perhaps life would be more fulfilling if we taught everyone to show kindness and love to one another. Wouldn't humanity be better off if we did our best to emulate the life once had in the (from an unbeliever's perspective, "story of") the Garden of Eden? Consider the likelihood of that happening. Mankind has proven that even with the presence of God and God's people in the world, it tends to lean toward evil and corruption rather than good. We only need to look at the wars of the past century and the corruption from those in power, including both elected officials and dictators, to realize that humanity struggles to get along, much less work toward a utopian society—a society full of love. Without the good and love that comes from God, we cannot even approach the life of the Garden of Eden. Mankind without God is ultimately doomed to have people striving to become more selfish at the expense of others. So, why would we ever think that we as individuals can have a purpose that fulfills us throughout our lives without God? |
| **"INCLUDING" GOD IS NOT ENOUGH**  Most Christians would agree that God must play a role in our lives for us to have purpose and to love others. If only part of us strives for what is eternal, while a significant portion of our being lives for what lacks purpose, we become divided within. It is either about us or about God. We need to consider the focus of our lives and the actions we take that are not "all about God." What are the outcomes of the parts of our lives that center on us? When we clearly recognize our identity as one whose life belongs to God, our decisions and reactions are influenced by our commitment to live for Him. When we choose to act, we do so as individuals fulfilling the desires of our leader or boss. When we face challenges, we see them not only as being under God's control but also as serving His ultimate purpose.  *"Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs--he wants to please his commanding officer."* 2 Tim 2:3-4  A significant fallacy among many Christians is the belief system described in this manner:   1. God is powerful. 2. He died for me so that I can go to Heaven. 3. He wants me to give Him my time on Sundays, attend Bible studies when I can, read the Bible, and pray. 4. I should try not to sin the rest of the time. 5. Most of my problems will be resolved if I trust Him. 6. As long as I’m not doing anything wrong at other times, I live the way God wants me to.   What is the problem with this list? It is the fifth item, particularly the final one. It indicates that this believer perceives their Christian life as a life of doing rather than a life of being. The final item could be better stated like this.   * The rest of the time, every moment I can, I think about how I can please God. I ask God to guide me in my decisions and reactions. I ask God to show me how to love others and how they need to be loved. When I encounter an unbeliever, I ask God to tell me what to say. When things are pleasant, I give thanks to God. When they are not, I recall how much God loves me and His past faithfulness, and I trust that God will turn the things I see as bad into something good. I belong to God. My life belongs to God, so I strive to live each moment as His servant.   The most significant difference between these two points of view is that one sees a "God time" and a "me time." The other views all one's time as belonging to God. The fact that we are here for His glory and His purpose should be as indisputable to us as our identity as either a man or a woman. |
| **THE WEDDING DAY ILLUSTRATION**  The illustration of the bride's wedding day demonstrates how our lives should revolve around God. For those few hours, it would be considered unconscionable for someone to do anything to upset the bride or to refuse any reasonable wish she may have. Most friends and family would not only jump at the chance to help, but they would also be delighted to do so and feel honored to assist. In fact, some would later boast about how the bride had asked for their help. When entrusted with an important task, someone who loves the bride does not think about what they are missing while serving, but only about how to please the bride.  This is the attitude that God wants us to embody as His children: to live in a way that shows that everything in our lives is about Him, not about us. We behave differently when "it is all about God" compared to when "it is all about us." Our attitudes, and ultimately our actions, reveal who we are living for. Many people fail to grasp the idea that it is "all about God," not "about them." Even those who do often forget this over time, as worldly distractions lead them to think that living in this world is entirely, or at least mostly, about themselves. Everything in the world, on a horizontal level, tends to focus our attention inward. It requires continuous discipline, looking vertically to remind us of who we truly are. This concept is discussed in more detail in ["Remembering and Forgetting."](https://www.yesgod.info/resources/foundationsofourlives.htm#14)) |
| **APPLICATION**  Consider the two extremes and what living in between looks like. The first extreme is that we live our entire lives for God. The other extreme is living for our own pleasure, disregarding the well-being of those around us. It doesn't matter how much suffering others endure, as long as our own life is enjoyable. That may sound harsh, but for some unbelievers who see humans as merely advanced animals, this view is consistent. The in-between part is that we all embody this to some degree. Every time we sin in a way that hurts others—most sins do—we are, to some extent, focused on ourselves, ignoring or perhaps intentionally not caring that we may be causing harm to others. In God's view, Jesus spoke about how "little" things are big. *"But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell."* Matt 5:22 Instead of judging those who appear to live solely for themselves, we should reflect on our own lives to see how we might be doing the same in some way. Each time we choose to pursue our own pleasure at the expense of others, we must acknowledge this selfish act and recognize it as inconsistent with our identity as individuals who belong to God. Rather than concentrating on ourselves, we can dedicate our entire lives to pleasing God, and in our relationships with others, we choose to follow the teachings that…  *"Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others"*. Phil 2:4   "*Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things."* Col 3:1-2  First, we need to instill the right attitude, plant the seed of truth, so we can catch a glimpse of what it looks like for our lives to be all about God. It takes more than just reading the Bible. Many unbelievers have read the Bible, and it has not helped them. It takes meditating on its meaning along with the illumination of the Holy Spirit, who guides us into all truth (Jn 16:13) |
| **MEDITATION**  Meditate on passages like these that depict God as infinitely beyond us. As we grow more aware of the immense gap between God's power and our own, it follows naturally that the only purpose that truly matters in our lives is His..   * **MAN'S WEAKNESS**   *"To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken****; for dust you are and to dust you will return****."* Gen 3:17-19   * **GOD'S POWER**   ***"I am the Lord, and there is no other; apart from me, there is no God.****I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me, so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting men may know there is none besides me. I am the Lord, and there is no other. I form the light and create darkness, I* ***bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the Lord, do all these things."***Isa 45:5-7  ***"To whom will you compare me or count me equal****? To whom will you liken me that we may be compared? Some pour out gold from their bags and weigh out silver on the scales; they hire a goldsmith to make it into a god, and they bow down and worship it. They lift it to their shoulders and carry it; they set it up in its place, and there it stands. From that spot, it cannot move. Though one cries out to it, it does not answer; it cannot save him from his troubles. "Remember this, fix it in mind, take it to heart, you rebels. Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other;****I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. Say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please."*** Isa 46:5-10.  For more about God's power, read Job 38:1-14.  Meditating on these passages should inspire an attitude of awe and a deep understanding that God is superior to anything we can conceive. Close your eyes and do your best to grasp a glimpse of His glory, His power, and His everlasting nature. It is mind-boggling and beyond comprehension. We need to hold this memory as best as we can. Return to it often, especially when you notice either the pleasures or the pains of this world. We will find ourselves in a spirit of thankfulness and or peace. Come back to it daily and evaluate the things you do each day, including your thoughts, and assess whether you are living as one who serves an unimaginable God. Reflect on the ultimate futility of serving yourself. |
| **PLEASING OURSELVES AND PRESERVATION**  The Bible says that we are a mist in the air, coming from dust, and when we die, we return to dust. Stop and consider your life. Think about how the smartest and most loving people in the world, just a hundred years ago, are largely forgotten. What is your life? For someone without a relationship with God, life revolves around self-preservation and self-pleasure. It makes little sense within their worldview to show love (doing what is best for the other person) to others unless they receive something of equal or greater value in return. As a result, they are left to pursue the goal of maximizing self-pleasure, which Solomon describes as meaningless. It is God who gives us purpose, which is to glorify Him by how we live our lives. We still need moments of self-preservation, and God blesses us with times of pleasure. In those instances, especially, we must express our gratitude to God. The primary focus of our lives is to please Him by getting to know Him better and loving others. |
| **OUR SIGNIFICANT INSIGNIFICANCE**  Examine the line representing human history and note the dot.  ---------------------------------------------------------------------.--------------------------------------------  Think of that dot in relation to a line representing 5000 years of human history as your life. Viewing that dot as your life might help provide a perspective of your existence as fleeting.  God has granted you that dot, a specific amount of time that He has ordained for you. Even though, in one sense, you may seem insignificant, Christ died for you, adopted you, and desires a relationship with you. There is no other dot like you. Reflect on this verse.  *"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men,****that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."*** Matt 5:14-16  The pathway to living, focusing entirely on God, is clearly expressed in Col 3:17  " *And****whatever you do****, whether in word or deed,****do it all****in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."* |
| **Two aspects of our lives are the intentional part, which is our focus, and our reactions to events.**  **THE INTENTIONAL ASPECT**  The intentional aspects of our lives—holding onto truth and acting on it—are crucial for living for God instead of for ourselves. This is the purposeful part of our existence, where our choices are made without significant outside pressure.  When we look horizontally at the world, we see darkness, even though the devil, who disguises himself as the "angel of light," makes it seem attractive. When we look up to God as the giver and sustainer, and the one who gives purpose to our lives, we naturally live like the children of God that we are. His light shines through us, and people glorify God. That is our purpose.  In addition to Col 3:17 above, the Bible clearly outlines how living in the world and living for God can be done simultaneously.  *"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart,****as working for the Lord****, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward.****It is the Lord Christ you are serving."*** Col 3:23-24  This passage teaches a lesson that many Christians often miss. It all comes down to the word, "whatever." That covers everything.  God desires all our time, hearts, and minds. He wants to be the focus of everything we do and think about. Our Sunday mornings, Bible study sessions, and prayer times are crucial. Just as we don’t have occasional moments each day when we know if we are a man or a woman, God wants us always to remember that our lives belong to Him.  What do we do? First, work HARD, as the Bible says, with ALL of your heart. Work hard at your job, take care of your possessions, and strive to be the best spouse, parent, child, and employee you can be. Work hard to be responsible with the money, health, possessions, and time the Lord has given you. Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. It is the vehicle that takes you through your life. Do you put enough energy into keeping it healthy? If not, consider what change in your thinking is needed so you will make that change. Your time on this earth is a blessing from God. It cannot be said better than this:  "*Be very careful, then, how you live--not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is."* Eph 5:15-17   * Prioritize your work according to what you believe is important to GOD, not based on your earthly desires. And do all of these FOR God. * Again, prioritize your work for each of them based on their importance to GOD, not your earthly desires. And do all of these FOR God. * And finally, prioritize the work based on what is important to GOD, not your desires. Then do all those tasks FOR God.   Hopefully, repeating this important point will help it become more ingrained in your mind.  **TWO COMMANDS**  Jesus kept it simple for us. Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' Matt 22:37-39  The proper attitude to maintain at all times is one of seeking to please God. Part of how we please God is to love others (do what is best for them, regardless of how we feel).   * **LOVING EVERYONE**   Consider each person you meet, especially those you spend a lot of time with. Seek to discover their true needs and love them with God's love by meeting those needs. Sometimes, others' needs are obvious. We can show love by helping them carry something or assisting with chores. Often, their needs are not clear at all. Many husbands struggle to know how to love their wives at any given moment. Giving money when someone is in a tough spot might not be loving them. They may need to face consequences to motivate positive changes. They also need time to learn and be encouraged not to waste resources or to work harder. Many actions people call love can actually keep individuals in unhealthy situations. Our ongoing prayer should be, "Show me how I can love others with your love today." This prayer demonstrates how this often-misunderstood verse can be practiced. *"Pray continually,"* 1 Thes 5:17  Another example that helps us understand how to love others properly is Solomon's example. He asked God for a discerning heart.  *"So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?"* 1 Kings 3:9  Following the guidance in these passages helps us focus on God, understanding that everything is about Him. Many husbands have been brought to their emotional knees by not looking upward for the answer on how to love their wives. Recognizing that it’s all about God, not us, is very freeing. A husband's role is not to fix his wife or their relationship, but to be the best husband he can be, not for his wife's sake, but for the Lord's. The same is true for wives concerning their husbands. When we live our best for the Lord, two things happen.   1. God is pleased. *"And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices****God is pleased.****"*Heb 13:16. 2. We are rewarded. See Col 3:23-24 above. Also, consider,   *' Serve wholeheartedly,****as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone****for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.'* Eph 6:7-8  The wonderfully freeing part is that we KNOW God is pleased and rewards us for our obedience. So, when we do any act of service or love for another, whether we receive a thank you or not, it doesn’t matter. At a job, if we help out another employee, who would prefer a thank you from that person over a pat on the back from the boss and a paycheck? We work for the paycheck, not for the thank you from coworkers. In the same way, our work on earth is for God, not others. We’ve already received the most important affirmation because our Heavenly Father is pleased. So, there is no disappointment when we do whatever we do, knowing it is for the Lord.   * **LOVING THE UNBELIEVER**   The greatest need of an unbeliever is salvation. There are countless ways to show love to others, and such acts can vary widely. If you have only five minutes with someone, it might be an opportunity to share the Gospel or, if you've already helped them, to let them know in some way that you are a Christian. For a close friend or family member who has heard the gospel message, it may involve living like Christ in their presence each day, demonstrating love even if you never talk about spiritual matters. However, the gospel can ONLY be shared with words. |
| **THE REACTIONARY ASPECT**   The reactionary aspect is divided into three categories.   1. When we do our best and do what is right, we somehow face attacks. 2. When something happens to us. 3. When we have done "wrong" and received a reprimand.   The way we respond to what happens to us will be examined in detail in the topic: [10) God often uses the consequences of the fall to draw us closer to Him.](https://www.yesgod.info/resources/foundationsofourlives.htm#9))  God ordains everything that happens to us. God uses everything that occurs, yes, everything, to give us an opportunity.   * to learn more about Him, * to get to know Him better * for Him to be glorified as we learn to respond in a way that pleases God. |
| **SUMMARY IN WORSHIP**  A worship song you might want to sing is Heart of Worship. Below are some of the lyrics.  I'm comin' back to the heart of worship,  And it's all about You  It's all about You, Jesus  I'm sorry, Lord, for the thing I've made it  When it's all about You  It's all about You, Jesus  King of endless worth  No one could express  How much You deserve?  Though I'm weak and poor  All I have is Yours  Every single breath |
| **SUMMARY**  Let's sum it up briefly. It is ALL about God, not about us. All means all, everything we own, every relationship we have, every material possession we have, every talent, every gift, and perhaps most importantly, every bit of time we are given. We are here to be as much as a human can be and, beyond that, by God's power, serve as vessels of God's love. When we stop chasing what won't last and focus on living each moment for God, we get as close as possible to becoming who we were created to be. |

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| **9 - DIFFICULTY IN OUR LIFE COMES FROM THE FALL** |
| 1. **LIFE BEFORE THE FALL**   **Difficulty undefined**  **It is beyond our comprehension**  **Protection was not needed in the Garden of Eden.**   1. **RESULTS OF THE FALL**    1. **Broken world**    2. **Nothing lasts**    3. **Perspective for today** 2. **RESPONSES TO THE FALL - ATTEMPTS BY MANKIND**    1. **To Recreate the Garden of Eden**    2. **To Slow Aging**    3. **To medicate the pain of failure** 3. **FINDING PURPOSE**    1. **Balancing worldly and spiritual focus**    2. **Living in the broken world**    3. **Some Find Fulfillment Despite Brokenness**   **LIFE BEFORE THE FALL**  **Difficulty Undefined**  A top athlete can easily jump a five-foot fence, while most people would find it nearly impossible to clear a three-foot one. We tend to judge how difficult things should be based on our personal experiences. We wouldn’t be impressed by extraordinary physical feats if we didn’t compare them to our abilities. Even when we think life is easy, we often don't realize what a truly easy life really is.  **It is beyond our Comprehension**  We cannot fully grasp what life was like before the fall. Usually, when we think about or experience the effects of sin in the world, we compare it to what we might call “the good times.” Physically, we might contrast our current aches and pains with those from our younger days, when they were less frequent and less severe. We might wish, “If I could only feel as good as I did back then.” Most teenagers haven't realized how much less limber they are compared to just a few years earlier. For example, most 2-year-olds are limber enough to wrap their legs around their necks. Even pre-teens have lost significant flexibility. Although our bodies functioned better when we were younger, they were still far from perfect—far from what Adam and Eve’s bodies were like before death entered mankind.  Similarly, we cannot imagine the closeness of relationships with others and God before the fall.  **Protection was not needed in the Garden of Eden.**  We have found it necessary to build walls everywhere we hide behind to survive. Those walls did not exist in the Garden of Eden. Walls surround our homes, keeping us physically comfortable and shielding us from others who wish to sin against us. We wear clothing as a wall. We also put up invisible barriers in our interactions because we fear revealing our true selves or the reactions we might see in others if we were fully transparent. We are so accustomed to these walls that we accept them as normal. They are the result of sin, of the fall of man.  Because of our inexperience, our best view of life without the world's corruption may be recalling the happiest moments of our lives physically, and times when we felt loved by others. During moments like that, some have exclaimed, “It does not get any better than this!” But they are wrong. It was much better and will be much better again when we see Jesus!  *“Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”* I John 3:2  **RESULTS OF THE FALL**  Mankind has encountered many challenges since the fall.  One of the curses Adam received was that nothing would come easy anymore, and he would have to work hard. The soil had to be tilled, and weeds needed to be pulled.  We have to work to produce what is needed to live, to prevent everything from degrading. Weeds grow, paint fades, and everything wears out. Nothing in the physical universe lasts forever.  Fewer than 100 people in the world can remember every event in their lives, including specific dates and times. This shows that, at least for some, the human brain is capable of such detailed recollection. Our memories are significantly flawed because of the fall. Some might see this flaw as a gift. Memories of our many sins may haunt us.  The following self-explanatory passage explains the corruption we face and the vast difference between life on earth and what awaits those who have received Christ.  *“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.”* Rom 8:18-23  The “present sufferings,” “frustration,” “bondage to decay,” and “groaning as in the pains of childbirth” all began after and as a consequence of the fall of man, that is, original sin.  This view on life’s struggles, caused by the fall, can be well explained by Romans 8:18-23. This “Digging Deeper” perspective helps us clearly see the link between the fall and the condition of the world, as well as how we should live in this world.  There is a huge difference between paradise and the world we live in.  **A Broken World**  **Nothing lasts**  No lasting fulfillment can be found in a broken world where everything, absolutely everything, fails. Our bodies, our governments, and even our relationships fail us. Our bodies may be the clearest reminder of this world's brokenness. For most, the teenage years were relatively pain-free. Most who exercise during those years find great satisfaction in their performance and, perhaps, also in how they see their physiques.  Although physical changes occur slowly enough not to be noticeable in one’s 20s, without vigorous exercise, the decline in ability becomes more apparent. Children sprint all the time. Although 30 may seem young to most, only one in 20 people over 30 can still sprint. As we age, regardless of our efforts, performance declines, and the risk of injuries and pain increases.  This downward progression did not occur in the Garden of Eden. When Adam sinned, the part of him that was meant to live forever died. Death entered him. Although a 20-year-old might not notice the changes, Adam and Eve definitely did. The invincibility of their bodies was no longer a reality.  **Perspective for today**  Living in truth means living in freedom. Satan’s power is in lies. So, what is the truth about our world? Every time we face a difficulty, whether physical or relational, it stems from the fall. Recognizing this helps us hate sin and yearn for Heaven. That is the “so what” of this topic.    **RESPONSES TO THE FALL - ATTEMPTS BY MANKIND**  **To Recreate the Garden of Eden**  We naturally try to correct what we see as wrong. We aim to improve the taste of meals and encourage kindness among people. When we witness horrific events in the world, whether caused by human actions or natural disasters, we inwardly complain and think, “That should not be!” If someone walks into a mostly clean living room and sees their shirt on the floor, most would pick it up because it doesn’t belong there. We have established standards for how life should be.  Some people have obsessive-compulsive disorder to the point that if anything is out of place, they become upset. To some extent, we all share this tendency. We find comfort in order. However, all the order we cling to is meaningless in achieving lasting peace. It’s like a drug, numbing us to the corruption and constant decay around us. We desperately work to surround ourselves with things that provide only temporary peace.  The reality is that, although suffering did not exist in the Garden of Eden, it is a common experience on Earth. Our thoughts and feelings that “this should not be” come from God having put eternity in the hearts of men. (Eccl 3:11) God also created us in His image. (Gen 1:27) So, we long for what is right, often longing for Heaven without even realizing it. (2 Cor 5:2)  Many people spend a lot of time trying to make this fallen world resemble heaven more. Solomon shared wisdom about that.  *"Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless." What does man gain from all his labor at which he toils under the sun?* Eccl 1:2-3  **To Slow Aging**  Many elderly people often say they feel mentally young. For men, this belief can sometimes lead to injuries. If someone could go back to their 18-year-old body, they'd probably say, “Wow, things have changed!” The truth is that all our bodies are aging and changing. Some men and women become obsessed with preserving their youth. Beautiful young women eventually see wrinkles and sagging skin that can't be hidden anymore. Strong, well-built men find that what used to be easy now becomes difficult. Many go through what’s called a ‘mid-life crisis.” Some men try to ease the pain of aging by spending time with younger women, hoping to feel young again. This desire to stay young is clear in celebrities who get so much facial surgery and Botox that they don't even look natural. It’s all a struggle against aging caused by sin. It’s a fight against a broken world, and an effort to create a little heaven on earth.  **Medicating the pain of failure**  Some feed their stomachs to excess, medicating the pain of the broken world with the pleasures of the taste of food.  *All man's efforts are for his mouth, yet his appetite is never satisfied.”* Eccl 6:7  Some individuals misuse drugs or alcohol. Some medicate themselves with unbiblical sexual pleasure. Many people today cope by spending hours in front of screens every day.  *“I thought in my heart, 'Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good." But that also proved to be meaningless. "Laughter," I said, "is foolish. And what does pleasure accomplish?"* Eccl 2:1-2  *“I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labor. Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.”* Eccl 2:10-11  Others medicate by doing everything possible to slow the aging process. Some worship their bodies by trying to look and feel like they did when they were younger.  Self-medication to ease the pain of this world is a way to either   1. try to ignore the consequences of the fall, or 2. achieve victory over the fall.   Both of these lead to failure by mid-life. The overweight and under-exercised person suffers from their previous lifestyle. The one trying to stay young has no choice but to admit they fall far short of their younger self, both in appearance and physical ability. Those who retire often find that they no longer find fulfillment in their careers.  **FINDING PURPOSE**  **Balancing worldly and spiritual focus**  There is a balance in our perspective on all of this. We could take an extreme stance and do nothing to improve our lives. Some people do this with their bodies. A lack of discipline and self-control causes the effects of aging to take a toll much faster than they would if we took care of ourselves. Some individuals rarely brush their teeth, don't drink enough fluids, or neglect exercise. Nearly all of them will suffer and die much earlier than they would have if they had cared for their physical health. Some might think that if the world is decaying, why stay in it any longer than necessary? Why not let it run its natural course? This way of living can stem from laziness, a lack of long-term thinking, or resignation to what is inevitable.  The opposite mindset is to chase as much pleasure as possible, aiming for the longest, most comfortable life filled with enjoyment, even if it comes at the expense of others. With this kind of thinking, harming others will be the outcome.  People don't fit neatly into the above categories. Instead, there's a spectrum from those who neglect self-care to those who are very aggressive about it. Regardless of how much effort someone puts into staying healthy, nature and the corruption of the world eventually take their toll on the body.  Outside of our bodies, we have possessions that we enjoy and try to protect from damage or wear. It is interesting that, if properly taken care of, our belongings generally will outlast us.  What perspective should we have, then, about our lives, our bodies, and the things around us? The Bible is the best place to find those answers.  *“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your body.”* I Cor 6:19-20  *“For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.”* 1 Tim 4:8  *“I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.”* Phil 1:20-24  Paul provides us with a healthy perspective. The body enables us to fulfill the work God has assigned to us on Earth. However, our bodies can fail to the point where we are unable to continue that work. Therefore, in this imperfect, decaying body on a fallen world, it is wise to extend our healthy life as much as possible and to make it fruitful, so we can serve others with God's love. Original sin pushes us toward death and causes us to focus on caring for our bodies and surroundings, which can distract us from our true purpose.  Both the pursuit of pleasure to recreate the Garden of Eden and the avoidance of pain can distract us from God’s goal for us.  **Living in the broken world**  We must accept that we live in a broken world, like a boat taking on water every day. No matter how many years we have left, those years are limited. It has been said, “Until a person identifies that they will die, they do not start to live.” The boat has a hole in it. Time is limited. So, how should we live?  We must first accept that the hole in the boat can't be fixed and that it's only a matter of time before it sinks and we perish. It's time to accept that rearranging the parts of the boat to make them look better has no lasting value.  On one hand, some people do everything they can to work as little as possible. There are also consequences to this.  *“If a man is lazy, the rafters sag; if his hands are idle, the house leaks.”* Eccl 10:18  Those who do this try to avoid the curse of the fall by making others bear additional consequences. They, so to speak, force others to work harder to carry the load that was meant for themselves. This goes against the examples set by Christ and the apostles. It also contradicts the teachings of scripture, especially the second great commandment to love others as Christ loved us. Love involves meeting the needs of others.  A person who neglects self-care not only struggles to meet the needs of others but also inevitably forces others to take care of them. In our country, the government and charitable organizations provide financial help to those who do not earn enough to support themselves. People who pay taxes and donate to these groups also support many who are unwilling to work. Besides helping those who cannot work, they sacrifice to support those trying to recreate the Garden of Eden by refusing to work as they are able.  *“Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.”* 1 Thes 4:11-12  Conversely, many people seek to find meaning in their work. Just as there is a healthy amount of exercise, there is a healthy amount of finding meaning in work. The problem occurs when, instead of seeking pleasure, someone looks for lasting fulfillment in their occupation. An indicator of a person’s priorities is what they spend most of their time thinking about.  **Some Find Fulfillment Despite Brokenness**  They take care of themselves, stay disciplined in their exercise, and are self-controlled with their eating so they can support others who struggle instead of needing help themselves in this broken world. This is the only choice that brings fulfillment.  All of us should pay attention to Solomon's words in Ecclesiastes on how to live in a world full of futility. It does not seem wise to try to expound on the writings of the wisest man to have ever lived. It is important to compare this advice to one’s attitudes and thought life.  *“A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment?”* Eccl 2:24-25  *“He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men, yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to End. I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. That everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil-this is the gift of God. I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that men will revere him.”* Eccl 3:11-14  *“Then I realized that it is good and proper for a man to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in his toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given him, for this is his lot. Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work; this is a gift of God.”*Eccl 5:18-19  *“When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider: God has made the one as well as the other. Therefore, a man cannot discover anything about his future.”* Eccl 7:14  *“So I commend the enjoyment of life, because nothing is better for a man under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany him in his work all the days of the life God has given him under the sun.”* Eccl 7:15  *“Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun- all your meaningless days. For this is your lot in life and in your toilsome labor under the sun.”* Eccl 9:9  *Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.* Eccl 12:13  Jesus summed up “his commandments.’  *“Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest Commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'”* Matt 22:37-39 |

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| **10- GOD OFTEN USES THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE FALL (SIN AND CORRUPTION), WHICH RESULTS IN OUR HARDSHIP TO DISCIPLINE US AND TEACH US ABOUT HIM.** |
| 1. **Trials are to be expected.** 2. **God limits our trials for His purposes.** 3. **Eternal View**    1. **Enduring trials results in a longing to be with Christ.**    2. **An eternal view of trials results in peace.**    3. **Peace during trials comes from trusting in Jesus's power.** 4. **Trials reveal a false foundation in self-confidence.**    1. **Trials remind us that we are not in control of our lives.**    2. **Trials take away our self-confidence.** 5. **Trials are meant for our good.**    1. **God controls the discipline in our lives.**    2. **Trials are designed to lead us to a better place.**    3. **God uses our suffering for our good.** 6. **No trial can separate us from the love of Christ.** 7. **Results of suffering when right**    1. **Suffering when we are right helps us know God.**    2. **Suffering when we are doing right results in rewards.**    3. **Persevering through trials results in eternal rewards.** 8. **Trials prove our faith is genuine.** 9. **The way we handle trials is a witness of God’s work.** 10. **We must keep the purpose of trials foremost in our minds.**   Some of the topics listed below don't have a narrative with the quoted scripture. Those scriptures stand alone as the best explanation of the topic. |
| **1. Trials are to be expected.**  Many people enjoy life stages where trials are minor and almost unnoticed. For example, young people seldom experience physical pain. Most of the time, those who invest effort into caring for their bodies, finances, and relationships tend to experience fewer trials than others. The absence of significant trials can easily lull people into a false sense of security. They can believe their lack of trials is due to the way they live. There is some truth in that. Generally, people who take care of their bodies tend to live healthier and longer lives. The keyword here is “generally.” If we could always influence our outcomes through our actions, we would essentially be like God. Thinking that we can control our results means believing we have God's power and that a specific part of our world is within our control. But that is not how the corrupt world functions, nor is it the perspective God wants us to hold. It is a lie. Avoiding trials is similar to trying to succeed when reading the following passage.  *“Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.” As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil.”* James 4:13-16  So, it is boastful to think we can avoid trials by living wisely. We are in a corrupt world. God wants us to understand that He, not us, is in control. When life seems free of trials, use that time to discipline yourself. Take the energy you might have used to face trials and invest it in studying scripture, serving others, denying yourself to save money, and maintaining your health. Choose to do what is difficult in this world because that pleases God. You will always recognize that life can be tough because you are making it difficult for yourself by being unselfish—serving others and giving up pleasures now in hopes of future rewards. When challenges arise, you will be trained by them and won't see them as extraordinary.  *“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.* 1 Pet 4:12   1. **God limits our trials for His purposes.**   It is apparent in the following narrative about Job that God, so to speak, stands between Satan and the world. Satan, although he is the god of the world (2 Cor 4:4, Luke 4:6), does not have free rein. Jesus, while in the Garden of Gethsemane, said that angels could protect him (Matt 26:53), and before Pilate, Jesus made it clear that Pilate’s power to do evil was given to him from above. (John 18:10-11) We cannot fathom how evil the world would be if God did not hold Satan back. So, when we face evil of any kind, we can trust that it is allowed by God for our ultimate good, not something out of control. We also need to understand that our “ultimate good” as God envisions it may be very different from our earthly good.  *“Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil." "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face." The Lord said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger." Job 1:8-12*   1. **Eternal View**    1. **Enduring trials results in a longing to be with Christ.**   It is simple, but sometimes we need to experience difficulty to wake us up to the realization that much of the time, we are putting our faith in sand. We may have wrongly depended on our bodies, savings, government, or even friends and family members not to disappoint us. When they do, we realize that the foundation we believed was solid was not solid at all. Many observe events, personal encounters, or world happenings and proclaim, “That is just not right.” God has placed eternity in the hearts of men (Eccl 3:11). He has given believers a partial glimpse of what a perfect world, that is perfection, looks like. (I Cor 13:12, I John 3:2) As you read the following passage, consider how your dissatisfaction with life is actually a groaning to be with Christ.  *“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.”* Rom 8:18-27  If it was difficult for you to see or feel a glimpse of what it will be like to be with Jesus in Heaven, consider how much of your day you are applying the following passage. If a person spends most of their day thinking about earthly things, it becomes hard to maintain a Heavenly perspective when a trial suddenly arises.  *“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”* Col 3:1-4   * 1. **An eternal view of trials results in peace.**   Paul discusses both the temporary and the eternal. Reading the Bible and gaining insight into Paul’s perspective and life is one thing, but fully understanding its meaning in our daily lives is another. It’s easy to get caught up in what’s right in front of us. On this earth, we spend most of our time in school, at work, and for leisure. Right now, it often feels like that’s all life is about. We can quickly become discouraged when any of those things seem to go “wrong” in our eyes. We forget that we were created so that our temporary mortal lives will be swallowed up by life; that life is Jesus. (John 14:6). Read the following passages slowly, visualizing these words as a way of understanding your view of life.  *“Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”* 2 Cor 4:16-18  *“Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile, we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling. because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. Therefore, we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body, we are away from the Lord. We live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it.”* 2 Cor 5:2-9   * 1. **Peace during trials comes from trusting in Jesus's power.**   As the world presents us with difficulties, Jesus encourages us to understand that the only peace to be found amid these problems is in Him. We live in a world that has been subjected to corruption and is flawed on every level. Scripture says, *“So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!”* I Cor 10:12. We often need to experience that corruption when our expectation of how life is supposed to be is unmet. That wakes us from trusting in our misplaced faith and redirects us back to the only solid foundation: Jesus, the rock, the beginning, and the end. That which will last forever has already overcome that which cannot last.  *“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."* John 16:33  **4. Trials reveal a false foundation in self-confidence.**   * 1. **Trials remind us that we are not in control of our lives.**   The purpose of trials is to show us that we are beyond our own strength. After the fall, even if people believe they have control or victory over parts of life, that control is an illusion created by Satan's lie. The lie seeks to build confidence in ourselves, others, and the earth, rather than in God. At the fall, death entered mankind. It doesn't matter how much we try to protect ourselves and care for our bodies; there are no guarantees of success, only assurances that we will fail, that we will die, and that we cannot control when it will happen. For example, even though up to two-thirds of cancer deaths can be prevented by a healthy lifestyle, the remaining lives are lost despite efforts to stay healthy. Some viruses kill healthy people at the same rate as unhealthy ones. When we consider the destruction of the physical earth, hurricanes, fires, earthquakes, and other natural disasters can instantly end our lives or harm our quality of life. A sinful person can take another's life through drunk driving, murder, or war. So, again, it’s an illusion to think we are ever truly in control. However, our bodies and finances are gifts from God. They do not belong to us (I Cor 6:15), and generally, we bring additional trials upon ourselves when we neglect to care for them.  Paul endured many levels of suffering and explains the reason for it in the passage below.  *“We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death.* ***But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God****, who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us,”* 2 Cor 1:8-10   * 1. **Trials take away our self-confidence.**   The other obstacle to living as if it’s all about Jesus is that we, our flesh, and our earthly desires must decrease. We naturally oppose anything that means “less of us.” John the Baptist recognized this truth. *“He must become greater; I must become less*.” Jn 3:30 God’s power is most evident and we are most used by Him when our flesh, including our earthly confidence, is out of the way. Trials can wake us up and help us to see what is and is not important, in other words, what lasts and what does not.  *“To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”* 2 Cor 12:7-10   1. **Trials are meant for our good.**   God’s discipline, which redirects our lives to be Christlike, is often carried out by allowing the consequences of sin in the world to touch our lives. This discipline is intended for our benefit, leading to growth and maturity.  People struggle to varying degrees with letting their habits control their lives. We, so to speak, take charge of our lives in two ways: self-control and discipline. Eating is a good example for most people. Self-control involves saying no to more food than is necessary for our health and resisting unhealthy options. Discipline includes eating healthily, such as consuming plenty of vegetables and drinking enough water. Exercise also requires discipline. Good money management involves both self-control and discipline. Most of the time, putting ourselves through short-term trials by practicing self-control and discipline results in fewer difficulties later in life. Sadly, far too many people struggle to practice them.  Spiritual self-control and discipline are similar to their earthly counterparts. Say no to sin and yes to righteousness. While most people do not struggle with understanding what sin is and what it looks like to resist it, many are unclear about what self-discipline looks like in a righteous life. We are instructed to focus our hearts and minds on things above, not on earthly things. (Col 3:1-2) This, like exercising or drinking enough water, requires intentional thinking and actions. It requires discipline. What do most Christians do more of when circumstances worsen? They pray! They read their Bibles! Their focus shifts from the temporary to the eternal. God’s purpose for discipline in our lives extends far beyond simply encouraging us to read our Bibles and pray more. God desires our hearts and minds to be centered on Him, on who He is. He wants to help us deepen our relationship with Him and continue growing in our knowledge of Him throughout our lives. He is a God of love, Agape love, and sacrifices Himself for the good of humanity. He disciplines both the weak and the mature to foster growth in Him. Even when we don’t want what’s best for ourselves, He still desires what’s best for us. Even when we are hesitant to do what it takes to become our best, He allows events to happen in our lives to guide us. Sometimes, it takes a lot of effort to refocus.  Think of it this way: People involved in sports do not hesitate to complete strenuous workouts because they focus on their gains. We must understand and keep that parallel in mind when facing hardship. Winning the biggest sporting event ever, our eternity with God is ahead. It is eternity with God that we need to be focused on. Jesus, being fully man, had to suffer in every way we suffer. Just as Jesus focused on the joy beyond the cross while enduring its pain, so too, when we are suffering, we need to focus on the incredible Heaven that awaits us. (1 Cor 2:9)  *“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”* Hebrews 12:2   We need to trust that God is the perfect coach who can train us properly. To reach our goal, we must focus on the goal, not the pain.  **a. God controls the discipline in our lives.**  *“Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the Lord your God disciplines you.”* Deut 8:5  *“See, I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.”* Isa 48:5  **b. Trials are designed to lead us to a better place.**  *“Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”* Hebrews 12:7-11  *Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.* James 1:2-4   * 1. **God uses our suffering for our good.**   *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.* Rom 8:28  **6. No trial can separate us from the love of Christ.**  *“What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* Romans 8:31-39  **7. Results of suffering when right**   1. **Suffering when we are right helps us know God.**   When we suffer for what is right, we do so in the same way Jesus did, which is as an innocent person. It is a special badge of honor, as we are privileged to, so to speak, suffer alongside Jesus. God’s primary purpose in our lives is for us to get to know Him. When we suffer for what is right, we gain a deeper understanding of God's ever-loving heart.  *“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.”* 1 Pet 4:12-16   1. **Suffering when we are doing right results in rewards**   At times when we stand against the world, standing for truth, and standing for Jesus, we will suffer. God promises that we will be rewarded. Persecution not only happened to the prophets who came before us, but also to Jesus after he said the words in the scripture below. remember, when we go through suffering, we better understand His suffering and grow closer to Him.  *“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”* Matt 5:10-12   1. **Persevering through trials results in eternal rewards.**   *“Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.”* Jam 1:12   1. **Trials prove our faith is genuine.**   We do not know how substantial anything is until it has been tested. Unless we recognize them, we wouldn't be able to tell the difference between a football or basketball star and someone of similar size who has never played the game. It would take a test to determine the quality of their talent. The same principle applies to relationships. Imagine you're in a relationship with someone, and you're unaware whether they've overcome difficulties with others, and they haven't had any issues with you. In that case, you can't predict whether your relationship will last if problems arise. It's not only others that we're unsure about, but ourselves as well. And really, it's not about how strong we are; it's about who we place our trust in. We find peace during trials when we trust God, His power, and His love.  *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.* John 14:27  The trust we place in God is confirmed when we endure hardships while resting in His peace. Our confidence in God’s power grows each time we see our trials from an eternal perspective.  *“In this, you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”* 1 Pet 1:6-9   1. **The way we handle trials is a witness of God’s work.**   God’s work in our lives through trials reveals Jesus in us. When there are earthly losses, a Christian's attitude compared to an unbeliever shows that we see a greater purpose beyond what this earth offers. The power of Jesus is displayed in our lives. Many people have never heard of or given enough thought to the Foundation Principle, “It’s not about you. It is about God.” It’s about Jesus! Living and thinking often about this truth helps many things fall into place rather than fall apart. When we understand that God's ultimate goal is for Jesus' life to be revealed in us, what once seemed senseless now makes sense.  “*But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus,* ***so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body****. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body.”* 2 Cor 4:7-11   1. **We must keep the purpose of trials foremost in our minds.**   It requires focus to remember the purpose of trials. The tempter, Satan, will do everything he can to make you lose sight of the fact that trials will happen.  *“We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God's fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, so that no one would be unsettled by these trials. You know quite well that we were destined for them. In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you well know. For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter might have tempted you and our efforts might have been useless.”* I Thes 3:2-5 |

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| **11-MOTIVES MATTER** |
| The houses built on rock and sand look alike. When we do what we do for God, living our lives for Him, we build our lives on a rock. When we live for ourselves or to please others, we build on sand. |
| 1. **ROCK OR SAND**   **Reading the Bible**  **Prayer and Acts of Service**  **Performing Those Disciplines for the Lord**   1. **THE SIN THAT MANY DO NOT KNOW ABOUT**   **Withholding Love**   1. **Not Serving** 2. **Poor use of time** 3. **SUMMARY** |
| 1. **ROCK OR SAND**   If we practice the idea that everything is about God, not about us, we will naturally build on a solid foundation. Jesus' illustration about building on the rock instead of sand teaches us the importance of applying God's word. Jesus challenged the religious leaders of his time for their hypocrisy and for trying to follow the letter of the law while ignoring its spirit. There is no indication in this parable that the houses differed in how well they were built. This section helps us examine parts of our lives that may look the same on the outside but have different motivations and foundations.  .  "*Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.**But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."* Matt 7:24-27  Building on rock or sand falls into two main categories.   1. Tasks that we choose to do for the Lord 2. Tasks that we choose not to do for the Lord   The only subcategory that fits only one of these is sin; it always falls into #2. Many actions we take can fit into either category, and our purpose makes all the difference.   1. **Reading the Bible**   One might assume that reading or memorizing the Bible is always done for the Lord. However, Jesus clarified this in His response to the Sadducees, who studied God’s word extensively.  *Jesus replied, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God.”* Matt 22:29  *He also silenced the Pharisees. He said to them, "How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him 'Lord'? For he says, "'The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet."' If then David calls him 'Lord,' how can he be his son?"* Matt 22:43-45  If you are reading because you want to please God or get to know Him better, you are doing the right thing. If you read to boast to others about how many chapters you've completed, or simply to feel good about your reading, it is built on sand.  We should read God’s Word with the goal of knowing Him better. We might read just one verse a day, meditate on it, and let it become meaningful to us. This is more valuable than reading two or three books daily without understanding. We understand God's Word through the power of the Holy Spirit. To build on the rock when reading our Bibles is to read intentionally, aiming to know God more and understand what He expects from us.   1. **Prayer and Acts of Service**   Matthew 6 expresses how even what may be considered godly activities are not necessarily so.   * Prayer. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. Matt 6:6 * Giving and service to others *"Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. "So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.”* Mt 6:1-2  1. **Performing Those Disciplines for the Lord**   So, how can we build on the rock when even good activities like reading, praying, and giving to others can be done without reward or purpose? The answer is found in Col 3:17: *“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him*.” When we serve, we do it as unto the Lord. What does that look like? It’s so simple and yet so foreign to many. We must think, “The service I am providing to this or that person is for the Lord, to please Him.” That’s it!  *“For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.”* I Cor 3:11-15  Two people may be doing the same thing: one building on sand and the other on rock. One might serve others to feel better about themselves, to please someone else, or in hopes of gaining recognition or a reward. The other serves to please God, and none of what the first person hopes for matters.  There are some activities that most people would not see as sin. Stop reading here if you do not wish to be convicted. |
| 1. **THE SIN THAT MANY DO NOT KNOW ABOUT**    * + 1. **Withholding Love**   The scripture says, *“Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins”*. James 4:17. Wow, that covers a lot. For example, it includes withholding love, or Agape love, which can be defined as choosing to do what is best for others, no matter the cost. Jesus summed up the law by commanding us to love God and love others. We might be upset with someone and justify not being vengeful if we are not doing anything to hurt them. But if we hold back the love we normally would show, we are withholding the good we know we ought to do, and that is revenge, which belongs to the Lord. This is challenging: continuing to give when we are treated poorly. However, if that service is best for the other person at that moment, and we want to obey James 4:17, we must keep serving despite how the other person behaves.   * + - 1. **Not Serving**   Living with others often offers many opportunities to serve. For those who live alone, there is always someone who could benefit from a phone call of encouragement, a visit, or some help. If anyone is unsure about how they can contribute, calling the church secretary can quickly lead to a solution. Anyone who cannot help physically and does not see themselves as someone who can encourage others can still do something very important: spend time praying for others. Everything we do is for the Lord.   * + - 1. **Poor use of time**   There are countless activities we participate in. Many of them are not sins by themselves. However, when they become unbalanced or we neglect a good we could be pursuing, and instead spend time watching TV or surfing the internet, it becomes a sin. Using our time for God is explained in detail in the section, “It’s not about us, it is about God.”  *“Be very careful, then, how you live--not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.”* Eph 5:15-16 |
| 1. **SUMMARY**   We may do many “good” things during the day. Examples include reading the Bible, praying, caring for our bodies and finances, performing household chores, doing yard work, and attending to our work responsibilities. We build on the rock by having an attitude that we are doing it for God and God only. |
| **12- NOTHING AND NOBODY IN THE WORLD ARE ENTIRELY TRUSTWORTHY. OUR ONLY SOURCE FOR GUARANTEED TRUTH IS THE BIBLE.** |
| **OUTLINE**   1. **WHO OR WHAT IS TRUSTWORTHY?** 2. **THE PHYSICAL WORLD** 3. **THE BIBLE: SUPERIOR SOURCE OF INSTRUCTION** 4. **JESUS IS TRUTH** 5. **THE BIBLE IS TRUTH** 6. **LINKS TO PROOF OF BIBLE’S VALIDITY** |
| **WHO OR WHAT IS TRUSTWORTHY?**  What is trustworthy? Begin by examining yourself. Have you ever let yourself or someone else down? If you answer no, you may want to repent for being dishonest. Sadly, some people believe they are trustworthy. That means they always keep their word. And we give our word not just to people but to God. When we sin in any way as Christians, we show ourselves to be untrustworthy. We might have a family member we believe will always be there for us, and they may genuinely want to be. However, regardless of their intentions, at some point, they will let us down simply because they can't help it. Many people trust the government. Sadly, they fail to see that it is filled with people chosen mainly for their popularity, and many are corrupt. Politicians are not the most competent or honest individuals in our society. So, who or what can we trust? Is there a group of brilliant people who know the truth? Maybe there are, and they are working hard to blind and distract others from it. They fear the truth. Is there a reputable book other than the Bible? The Bible is the most published and most read book in the world. What better way is there for God to communicate with mankind? We cannot even trust our minds because we know they have failed us at times. |
| **THE PHYSICAL WORLD**  The entire physical world fails us. It began with Adam’s sin.  “To Adam he said, 'Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.” Gen 3:17  *“For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.”* Rom 8:20-22  Many people have lost everything—and sometimes their lives—from tornadoes, hurricanes, tidal waves, earthquakes, and volcanoes. What they believed to be completely secure turned out to be anything but. |
| **THE BIBLE: SUPERIOR SOURCE OF INSTRUCTION**  We have no valid foundation for directions outside the Bible regarding how to live our lives before God and others. Many people rely on their reasoning. When it comes to the most important reasoning someone can have about their salvation, the Bible clearly shows what the outcome of earthly reasoning is. “*There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.”* Prov 14:12 We tend to trust our thinking and reasoning. When we engage with professionals in their fields, for good reason, we don't trust them completely. Sometimes, we feel lost, uneducated, or lacking the skills to solve a problem. For example, a contractor we trust might claim they can fix something. Even if we don’t believe their solution is the best, we would give in and say, “Please, just fix it.” How much more should we trust God, who is so much more capable!  *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”* Isa 55:8-9  It’s an illusion to think anything is truly trustworthy. Some things and some people are more reliable than others. It is wise to believe that the best the world offers is the lesser of two evils. The Earth is subject to corruption and cannot be fully trusted. People, even Christians at times, live according to the flesh. The Bible, inspired by God, is the only trustworthy source we have on this planet. |
| **JESUS IS TRUTH**  We often say that something “is” true. Jesus takes it a million steps further when He says, “I am the way and the truth and the life.” John 14:6a *Jesus, answering Pilate, said, “For this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."* John 18:37b Pilate replied appropriately, as someone who does not know God might, *"What is truth?"* John 18:38a We must all come to terms with who Jesus is. “Liar, Lunatic, or Lord.” If He is Lord, He fulfilled and validated the Bible. He left His Apostles behind to record history and give us the New Testament, inspired by God. |
| **THE BIBLE IS TRUTH**  *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,” 2 Tim 3:16*  It is important to pay close attention to the word “all.” As we read God’s Word, we come across passages that are hard to accept. They are challenging for two reasons. Since God’s ways are above our ways, some things do not make sense to our “natural” self. Additionally, some passages are difficult because they ask us to set aside earthly pleasures to please God. We do not want to twist or ignore scripture that reveals uncomfortable truths. The Bible is our only source of pure truth on this earth. Absorb its truths. Treasure it as what it truly is—a revelation of the infinite God of the universe and His desires for us. |
| **LINKS TO PROOF OF BIBLE’S VALIDITY**   * <https://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-reliable.html> * <https://www.redemptionofhumanity.org/proof-for-the-reliability-of-the-bible/> * <https://peterpilt.org/2012/05/24/compelling-evidence-of-the-authenticity-of-the-bible/> |

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| **13- The Deception in our Lives Most Often Comes From Worldly Thinking** |
| **OUTLINE**   * 1. **WORLDLY OR ETERNAL?**   2. **PLEASING OURSELVES**   3. **THE SHORT-SIGHTED AND THE PLANNERS**      + 1. **THE SHORT-SIGHTED**   **Command for Eternal Thinking:**  **Paul’s perspective on comparing this world to eternity:**  **The perspective of Jesus as He neared the cross.**  **We are also challenged to think about the future of our earthly lives.**  **a) Work**   * + 1. **Not working hard or long enough**     2. **Work so we will not be dependent on anyone.**   1. **Use of Material Things**      1. **We give God what He already owns.**      2. **Our use of worldly wealth truly matters!**      3. **Planning results in financial security.**      4. **Excesses and Waste**   **Save so that we will not think about money.**  **Difficulty now or difficulty later.**  **Learn from our mistakes**  **Use of Time**  **THE PLANNER**   * 1. **Planning with certainty is boasting**   2. **Being in and not of the world**  1. **PRACTICING FUTURE THINKING IN A GODLY WAY** 2. **OUR IDENTITY** 3. **OUR TIME ON EARTH**    * + 1. **Horizontal versus Vertical thinking**        2. **Where is the deception?**        3. **The Solution to Deception** 4. **FOCUSING ON PEOPLE CAN ALSO LEAD US TO BE DECEIVED.** 5. **SUMMARY OF LONGING FOR WEALTH OR BEING WEALTHY** 6. **SEEING JESUS CLEARLY DISSOLVES EARTHLY DECEPTION** |
| * 1. **WORLDLY OR ETERNAL?**   2. Worldly thinking can be simply defined as thinking that excludes Heaven. It’s the pursuit of pleasure that conflicts with God’s will.   That pleasure also conflicts with who we are eternally because it is God’s will that we are who He created us to be. We were created, among other things, to be perfect vessels of His heart. We can visualize how we look in those vessels by imagining ourselves full of the fruit of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit flows out of us when we are not deceived by worldly thinking but instead maintain an eternal focus.   “*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”*   Gal 5:22-23a   |  | | --- | |  | |
| **PLEASING OURSELVES**  Occasionally, pleasing ourselves in the moment leads to challenges for our future (earthly) selves. Enjoying life through unhealthy activities or ignoring healthy ones often results in poor health for our future selves. Not working hard enough or overspending leads to a harder life for our future selves. We are not the only ones who suffer from our excesses. Usually, when people live in a way that disregards their earthly future—whether due to health or financial reasons—others end up having to “suffer” by taking care of them. When considering pleasing ourselves, we should put into practice Phil 2:4.  “Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”  Anything else is prideful because it suggests we are more important than others.  **THE SHORT-SIGHTED AND THE PLANNERS**  People can be divided into two groups: planners and short-sighted individuals. They have different focus areas that can lead their attention away from the truth. Planners often believe they can control their futures and spend considerable time and effort thinking and working early in life to “assure” a good life later on. In contrast, the short-sighted may be so absorbed in today’s pleasures that they ignore the future altogether.  **a. The Shortsighted:** God wants us to think eternally. The scripture speaks about this very clearly on its own.  **Command for Eternal Thinking:**  *“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.”* Col 3:1-2  **Paul’s perspective on comparing this world to eternity:**  *“Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”* 2 Cor 4:16-18  **The perspective of Jesus as He neared the cross.** He did so out of a desire to reconcile with us.  *“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame,” Heb* 12:2a  **We are also challenged to think about the future of our earthly lives.**  A command directed toward believers is:  *“For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: 'If a man will not work, he shall not eat." We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat.”* I Thes 3:9-12  This requires forward thinking, even if only for a few hours. The person needs to work first to earn money for the meal.  Long-term thinking is illustrated with an example of a small, relatively unintelligent bug that considers its future months ahead.  *“Go to the ant, you sluggard, consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest. How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest-- and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man.”* Prov 6:6-11  **a) Work**  Poverty and scarcity (such as being out of money) occur among those who do not save, are lazy, or both. When it comes to financial scarcity (not security), it usually results from:   * 1. **Not working hard or long enough**   There is no 40-hour workweek in the Bible. Although the passages below talk about resting one day each week, we can clearly see that God has not promised to provide for all our physical and financial needs if we demand He do so when we choose to work only 40 hours a week.  *“Six days you shall labor, but on the seventh day you shall rest; even during the plowing season and harvest, you must rest.”* Exod 34:21  The command to work six days and rest on one is also found in Exod 16:26,20:9 31:15, Deut 5:13  *"'There are six days when you may work,”* Lev 23:3a   1. **Work so we will not be dependent on anyone**.   *“Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.”* 1 Thes 4:11-12  Make special note of the phrases, “*work with your hands”* and *“so that you will not be dependent on anybody.”*  We are to work hard (Col 3:23) and live our lives so that we save for our future, thereby avoiding dependence on others. This concept cannot be much more straightforward in scripture.   * + - 1. **Use of Material things**   This also fits nicely into the “It’s about God, not about You” Foundation. Everything we “have” does not belong to us. Let that sink in. It belongs to God. We are stewards. We could compare it to working at a job where we are provided a vehicle, computer, break room, etc. When using them, we know they are not ours. We have a responsibility to care for them properly, as that is part of our job.   * + 1. **We give God what He already owns.**   *“I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills.”* Psalm 50:9-10  *'The silver is mine and the gold is mine,' declares the Lord Almighty.* Hag 2:8  *"But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.* I Chr 29:14   * + 1. **Our use of worldly wealth truly matters!**   *"Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So, if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?”* Luke 15:10-12   * + 1. **Planning results in financial security.**   *“The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty.”* Prov 21:5   * + 1. **Excesses and Waste**   • **Excessive Spending**  Many, especially in the United States, spend excessively on wants, mistaking them for needs. For example, they might dine out even if they haven't saved a month’s income. They may buy more expensive goods than necessary. Such spending, along with subscribing to more than basic internet, cable, or cell phone plans, can lead to financial hardship in the future.  *“In the house of the wise are stores of choice food and oil, but a foolish man devours all he has.”* Prov 21:20  • **Wasting Resources**  Overall, the United States wastes resources. Edible food gets thrown out, water flows without purpose, and heat and lights are left on when unnecessary. Poor planning results in multiple unnecessary trips to the store. When we are tempted to leave water, heat, or lights on without reason, we should think about whose money we are wasting. When we discard good food or other items, we should consider who owns them.  • **Consequences of Excesses and Waste**  Families can easily waste $100-$300 each week, and some even more. Some families with no savings spend over $200 weekly on fast food. In twenty years, without interest, saving $200 per week results in $200,000 more in savings. If the ant can work harder during the summer and save for months ahead, we can do the same and save for our futures.  *“Dishonest money dwindles away, but he who gathers money little by little makes it grow.”* Prov 13:11  The second part of this verse clearly supports the principle above. Consistent savings lead to growth.  **Save so that we will not have to think about money**.  *“Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”* 1 Tim 6:10b  Note the phrase “eager for money.” Clearly, this doesn't just refer to wealthy individuals trying to become even wealthier. Poor people often spend a lot of time thinking about money.  How will bills be paid? How will this or that be afforded? What will happen in the future? Those who never seem to have enough would do well to see that this passage applies to everyone, rich and poor, who are “eager for money.”  Some people simply cannot work harder or cut expenses. The majority of the poor in the United States do not fall into this category. By working harder, working more, and spending less, there will always be more money in savings, and most people will no longer have to wonder how the next bill will be paid. They won’t be “eager for money.” They will be able to focus more on what God wants us to focus on.  **Difficulty now or difficulty later.**  God blesses us with the health and money we have. God has designed it so that, no matter how well we do our jobs and planning, there are no guarantees. Our reliance must be on God. That said, there are principles. Most of us face two choices: difficulty now or difficulty later.  Taking care of our health requires effort to ensure our bodies function well in the future.  When it comes to money, again, we need to work harder and spend less to save for the future. It's a mindset of thinking beyond today. This is not only a worldly parallel to wasting time and energy that could be better spent on what is eternal, but it also often results in the reversal of one's life's purpose. Instead of becoming the person in later years who has an abundance and can share, one ends up as a burden, a recipient for others to give to.  Generally, if we don’t delay some pleasures early on, necessities can be hard to afford later. We either practice self-control and discipline in our eating and exercise habits, or we will have to exercise just to manage daily tasks when we’re older. There's no way around difficulty.  **Learn from our mistakes**  Sadly, some people continue to suffer the consequences of not working hard enough or overspending, and they keep making the same mistakes. We should not be foolish!  *“As a dog returns to its vomit, so a fool repeats his folly.”* Prov 26:11  **Use of Time**  This passage, although it speaks of so much more, can be applied to how we manage our time and money, always considering our earthly future.  *“Be very careful, then, how you live--not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.”* Eph 5:15-16  The earthly results of the rewards we usually gain from being responsible with our health and finances are similar to spiritual ones. Consider the following passage, which clearly explains how using our time wisely provides some earthly benefits and how dedicating it to godliness on earth results in benefits both on earth and in Heaven.  *"Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come."* I Tim 4:7-8   * 1. **THE PLANNER**   There's another perspective on considering our earthly future. It occurs when we believe that we are in control of what lies ahead.  We can think that if we are responsible with our money and our health, we will be SURE not to depend on anybody. This is a short section, well handled with a four-verse passage.   1. **Planning with certainty is boasting.**   *“Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, if it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil.”* James 4:13-17   1. **Being in and not of the world**   How does this balance work? How do we live? We live in the present as if we have a future self on this earth. Be responsible with our health and money, and recognize that it is by God’s power that each of them is sustained. If they are not sustained even after we do our best, it is for a greater purpose in our lives.  We should do our best and trust the outcome to God.  We should not treasure our bodies or our money. We should view them as we would view our vehicle. It is what gets us from one place to another. We want it to work properly and not break down so it can serve us well. Our money and our health are meant to serve us as we serve God on this earth.  **PRACTICING FUTURE THINKING IN A GODLY WAY**  In summary, we practice future thinking on this earth by being responsible and viewing our money, health, and possessions as tools to navigate life so that we can serve God more effectively. As we grow older, we either become a blessing to others because we're healthy and have extra money, or we turn into a burden. If we become a burden but have done our best, but because of financial setbacks, inability to earn a living due to health, genetics, or accident, we can trust God and thank Him for the care of the body of Christ.  The future eternal thinking that God wants us to have is usually easier for those who struggle with scarcity or health issues than for those who “have it all.” For those who are blessed in the physical realm, heavenly thinking entails being generous with money and abilities in the lives of others in order to please our heavenly Father. What a blessing to be a vessel of help to those in need! God wants us to have Heavenly thinking for both those who are blessed and those who are not blessed in the physical realm. Both those who have physical blessings and those who do not are to incorporate Col 3:1-2 into their thinking.  Those blessed in the earthly realm must also keep in mind that everything they own is a gift, including their ability to earn.  *“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights”* James 1:17a  *“For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?”* I Cor 4:7  The Short-Sighted and the Planner both face the pressures of worldly thinking, which misleads them and blinds them to the truth. Agur prayed for balance.  *“Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the Lord?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.”* Prov 30:8b-9  **OUR IDENTITY**  We have an identity as “a chosen people.”  *“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”* 1 Peter:2:9  This is our true identity that has nothing to do with worldly things. It isn’t based on our appearance, health, intelligence, talents, or possessions. Our identity is eternal.  It is easy to lose sight of our identity when:  • we are thinking about money or material things  • we are focused on pleasing ourselves.  • we think life is going well by our definition of good.  • we react when others mistreat us.  • we experience earthly losses, and they appear devastating.  • we feel like we lack a purpose.  • we experience worldly successes. Agur highlights this when he says, *“I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the Lord?'"*  • worldly successes can deceive us into thinking that this life is good, that it is the real thing.  **OUR TIME ON EARTH**  Our time on Earth and forever is all about God and His glory. While we are here on Earth, we might describe our relationship with God as a vertical relationship. The horizontal is what we touch and feel, and what affects us. All of our earthly senses soak up earthly things. They generate, so to speak, noise for our senses that tries to drown out the voice of God saying that we belong to Him and that all we are is for Him. Once Adam sinned, just as it takes effort to till the soil and manage all our possessions, it also takes effort to keep our focus upward. It requires constant remembrance of who God is, who we are, and what our purpose is. It takes reading God's Word and specific parts of it repeatedly to remind us of the truth. It takes times of meditation on those truths, especially when we find ourselves being pulled into the world. Jesus explained this battle as he talked to the Father.  *“My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.”* John 17:15-16   1. **Horizontal versus Vertical thinking**   Perhaps the clearest example of the huge difference between vertical and horizontal thinking is Peter’s.  *“Lord, if it’s you,” Peter replied, “tell me to come to you on the water.” “Come,” he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water, and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!”* Matt 14:28-30  Peter walked with Jesus for years. But as soon as he took his eyes off of Jesus, he faltered. Should we expect any more success than Peter trying to live life on our own power?   1. **Where is the deception?**   It’s everywhere. It's in every sense that brings us pleasure or pain. It is in every emotion that we don’t bring to God. How do we avoid deception? When we experience pleasurable emotions, we should give thanks to God because He is the giver of all good things.  *“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights” James* 1:17a  If we fail to, whether intentionally or as a general attitude, truly recognize that all good comes from God, then we are easily deceived. The deception has already taken hold when we believe that we create the good in our lives. That builds our pride and distances us from God. We can also be deceived into thinking that others are the ones who produce the good we receive through them. Sure, other people are vessels of good to us, but if we are deceived into thinking they are the source, we will lean on them, and sooner or later, they will fail us. And then, because we have leaned on them, we fall.  When we experience undesirable emotions and do not think vertically, knowing God was in control of the action that preceded our emotion, our minds are deceived into believing that things are out of control. We can be misled into thinking that, at least for a period of time, the value of our lives is diminished by the thing or person that caused our life not to be the way we wish it would be.   1. **The Solution to Deception**   The way to overcoming the world's deception is simple yet challenging. The key that prevents us from being fooled is not to love the world.  *“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world--the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes, and the boasting of what he has and does--comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.”* I Jn 2:15-17  We should see the world as a passing thing — a tool, so to speak, that is needed for now, but once the building is complete, it is no longer needed and will be discarded. If we become too attached to the world, whether by being poor and longing for riches or being rich and obsessed with riches, we deceive ourselves.  1 Timothy 6:6-10 provides clear guidance about deception. It tells us  • what real gain is. *“But godliness with contentment is great gain.*  • how we should view the “tool” of the world. *“For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.”*  • what should our view be? *“But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.”*  • about the deception that happens when we think horizontally. *“People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”*  • that both worrying about what we don’t have or treasuring what we do can lead to deception, especially since the truth of the Word of God is “choked*.” “but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.”* Mark 4:19  Deception arises either from the desire for material things we wish we had or from loving the material things we already own. In either case, loving material things is like the silver on the back of a mirror reflecting our image, which tricks us into thinking it is about us.  If our difficulty is from trying to hold on to material things, we are challenged to  *“Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."* Heb 13:5  God has promised to take care of us. When our love is for God instead of the world, the silver is not there, and we see clearly.  **FOCUSING ON PEOPLE CAN ALSO LEAD US TO BE DECEIVED.**  When people bring trouble to us and we react horizontally, we are deceived into believing that someone has the power to diminish the worth of our lives. Instead, we must confidently know that the Lord is our helper and that no one can take our worth from us. If we focus on the person, we get caught up in worldly matters and arguments, and we are easily deceived. If we focus on God’s control over everything and His care for us, our vision becomes clear. When it is a person we think is diminishing the quality of our lives, God provides us with words to speak.  *“So we say with confidence, The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me*?" Heb 13:6  The way to overcome the world's deception caused by the action of others can be found in Hebrews 13:5-6. |
| **SUMMARY OF LONGING FOR WEALTH OR BEING WEALTHY**  There are certain habits we can develop that help us avoid being deceived. Once we establish them, they become part of our lives. Then, without even thinking, we respond as if we are in the world but not of it.  When we experience pleasure, we need to “go vertical,” look up with our hearts and minds, and thank God. “*Every good and perfect gift is from above*,” so God is the giver of that gift.  When we experience hardship of any sort, whether financial, physical, or relational, we also “go vertical.” Ask God what it is all about. He may answer, and He may not. But we can rest and trust in His words in Hebrews 13:5-6. |
| **SEEING JESUS CLEARLY DISSOLVES EARTHLY DECEPTION**  Two passages reveal to us that our current thinking is clouded. *“Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.”* I Cor 13:12  *“Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”* I John 3:2  When Christ appears, we will see clearly without any deception or deceiver. Why? Because we will see Him as He truly is. We can't do that perfectly now, but we will when we see Jesus. Truly knowing God as He is and knowing Jesus perfectly eliminates all deception.  Although we cannot fully know Him on this earth, we can always know Him better. Knowing God requires maintaining a vertical relationship. When we look horizontally, loving the world, we become deceived. When we look vertically, seeking to know the heart of God and His ways, the deception, even though not entirely, begins to fall from our eyes. The solution is in the passage this section began with; its simplest message is to practice looking vertically, which is the opposite of what leads to deception.  *“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.”* Col 3:1-2  A chorus from a popular hymn also summarizes the cure for deception.  "Turn your eyes upon Jesus  Look full in his wonderful face  And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,  In the light of his glory and grace" |

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| **14- WE NATURALLY FORGET. WE FORGET BOTH PEOPLE’S UNFAITHFULNESS AND GOD’S FAITHFULNESS.**   1. **INTRODUCTION** 2. **THE UNFAITHFULNESS OF OTHERS** 3. **REMEMBERING GOD’S FAITHFULNESS**    1. **Forgetting**    2. **Solutions** 4. **ROADBLOCKS TO REMEMBERING THE TRUTH - THE “PRETTY” THINGS**    1. **Our eyes and ears**    2. **Physical Pleasure**    3. **Physical Pain**    4. **Riches** 5. **EMBEDDING THE TRUTH**    1. **Through Repetition**    2. **Through Meditating**       1. **Events**       2. **Derived Truths**       3. **Personalizing the Truths**       4. **Using God’s love as an example**    3. **Connecting to Life** 6. **DIRECT FROM THE BIBLE**    1. **Commands to Remember**    2. **Result of Not Remembering**    3. **God’s Nature**    4. **God’s Acts of Wonder**    5. **God’s Faithfulness & Purpose**    6. **Our weakness**    7. **Remember In Times of Difficulty**    8. **Meditating**   “If we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.”         2 Tim 2:13  *“Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws, and his decrees that I am giving you this day. Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God, who brought you.”*  Deut 8:11-14   1. **1. INTRODUCTION**   A movie, “50 First Dates,” was about a lady who lost her memory every time she slept. This presented a significant problem for her and her husband. They couldn’t have intimacy or a relationship without a memory. They found a solution.  He started each day by showing her videos and photos of their life together.  Our days would definitely feel different if God started each morning showing us videos that remind us of what we've learned about who He is, everything He's done for us, and what He wants from us. Without a doubt, it would be life-changing.   1. **2. THE UNFAITHFULNESS OF OTHERS**   Most people tend to forget others' failures quickly. Some readers might argue, often remembering others’ faults easily. When we react emotionally to someone’s failure, it’s because we expected a different outcome. If we truly “remembered,” we would quit expecting to get proverbial water from a typically dry well. This often happens with those closest to us. We rely on them (expecting they will act a certain way), and they let us down. We feel hurt and sometimes demand better treatment.  Some people might see themselves as good at not trusting those who have let them down. They may look around and find very few people they would trust. However, most people keep trusting someone, no matter how many times that person fails. They keep trusting themselves. If we realize we don't trust most people but always trust ourselves, we are being quite prideful, seeing ourselves as better than almost everyone around us.  The proper attitude is to understand that we are flawed and untrustworthy. It is only because of the grace of God that we keep our word and abstain from sin.  The right way to trust people is to remember that they are only supported by God. When we depend on others, we realize that anyone can let us down at any time. Understand that every time we rely on someone, we are actually trusting God, who can ensure that a person does not fail us. Therefore, if they do fail, it is for His greater purpose in our lives. Instead of trusting in fallible people, we trust God to take care of us through those who fail, in a way that God knows is best for us.   1. **REMEMBERING GOD’S FAITHFULNESS**   **Forgetting**  Three causes of forgetfulness   1. Age! Almost everyone's memory fades as they get older. 2. The memory is not vivid enough. 3. Other memories overshadow the memory. 4. **Solutions**   No matter the cause, the solution that works for all three is for us to regularly meditate on God.   1. His nature (who God is). [His love and power](https://yesgod.info/resources/foundationmain/02maingodsloveandpower.htm). 2. His acts of wonder, all that he has done for us.    1. General acts of wonder    2. All the good in the world. [Everything is a gift](https://yesgod.info/resources/foundationmain/04maingift.htm)    3. Specific things he has done for us 3. His Promises to Us   God wants us to remember our:   1. Frailty - “*You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.*”  James 4:14b 2. Unfaithfulness 3. Purpose: what he expects from us.  [Love God and others](https://yesgod.info/resources/foundationmain/03mainlovegodothers.htm) 4. **ROADBLOCKS TO REMEMBERING THE TRUTH - THE “PRETTY THINGS”**   Our time is either spent remembering, thinking of God, or contemplating other things. This section explores what can partially or completely divert our attention away from God, hindering us from recalling everything we should about Him. Most people recognize that sin of all kinds distracts us from God. Most Christians are not tempted by sins like murder, adultery, or theft. Satan’s tactic, then, is to shift our focus away from the “mark.” The definition of sin is “missing the mark,” the bull’s eye. Many would say that the enemy of what is best is what is worst. Instead, the enemy of the best is what is good. God has gifted and called each of us to live as victorious children. Using our time to do even good things can distract us from doing the best thing. Sadly, most people spend a lot of time doing things that are hard to call “good.”  Everything we do falls into one of three categories:   * + Profitable   + Enjoyable   + A waste of time   That which wastes time detracts from what is profitable and enjoyable. It has absolutely no value. We need to assess how we spend our time and reduce the wasteful parts of our lives. Regarding enjoyment, we would be wise to ask God what the balance should be.  Satan’s main goal is to divert our attention away from God, from remembering, and especially from forming new memories. Our senses can easily distract us, even when our thoughts are focused on God.   * Our eyes * Our ears * Our physical pleasure.   + - 1. **Our eyes and ears**   The eyes are our main way of being distracted, mainly because we constantly observe the world. We enjoy looking at “pretty” things. There are sinful, pretty things we can look at, and that is by choice. But many other pretty things, by themselves, are not sinful; we might not realize how they distract us. These include cars, houses, and yards. Some people are captivated by their appearance. Many things in the world please our eyes. One of the biggest distractions in recent years is media of all kinds. We love watching the pretty things on TV and the internet. Not only are our eyes dazzled, but our ears are also filled with music and the voices of others talking. Between our eyes and ears, people can become mesmerized by hour after hour of living vicariously through those who act out fantasies created for our enjoyment. Some people stay informed about the news, but how much time is necessary to learn about major events? What do we gain from having extensive knowledge of world affairs? Does it make us wiser? It might be wise to exercise self-control and carefully choose what and how much information is beneficial to listen to or read. .   1. **Physical Pleasure**   Both physical pleasure and pain are highly distracting. We experience them through taste and sensations. Pleasures, although they last for shorter periods, tend to be more intense and therefore create memories that we can recall throughout the day. An extreme example is those who struggle with substance abuse. The next time they use is almost always on their minds. It would be wise to think about how much time a person spends contemplating the physical pleasures of life.   1. **Physical Pain**   Although not one of the “pretty things” in life, it is worth examining how the opposite of pleasure impacts God’s position in our minds. The distraction caused by physical pain can lead to various outcomes. People can become:   * obsessed with reducing it to nothing. * angry with God for permitting it. * aware of life's futility * more interested in the afterlife.   We naturally do so, and it is healthy to do so, to avoid physical pain. That said, it often helps us see the futility of life because during those times, the things we take in with our eyes and ears provide less temporary fulfillment. That pain can often draw us closer to God rather than push us away from Him.   1. **Riches**   Although a large bank account may not be considered “pretty,” for some, it can be a distraction. Without a doubt, the material possessions that money can buy can divert our attention. It is not just the achievement of wealth but also the obsession with riches that pulls our minds and hearts away from God and His will for our lives.  *“People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”*  1 Tim 6:9-10  *“But the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth, and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.”* Mark 4:19  Agur expresses concern that wealth may lead him to disown God. Wealth can affect our ability to remember and meditate because the bright and shiny objects of our affection distract us from God.  *“Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the Lord?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.”* Prov 30:8-9  Spiritual things are spiritually discerned. (1 Cor 2:14) To remember, we so to speak need to shake our heads, close our eyes, and remember that we are aliens and strangers here. (1 Chr 29:15, Heb 11:13) That gives us the perspective to see clearly and look to the source of wisdom. (Jam 1:5)  This section started with the three uses of time.   * Profitable * Enjoyable * A waste of time   Our use of time is central to our walk with God. Time is the only resource with a quantifiable limit, which is the same for everyone: 120 years. Wasting time that could help us know God better and understand what He expects from us is a poor use of this gift.  Imagine having a side job where the boss tells you what to do but allows you the freedom to implement their goals.   1. Read the manual about    1. the kind of person I am    2. your job description 2. When working with customers, follow the established guidelines for how to treat them. 3. Take some time to enjoy quality activities so you can feel refreshed and perform your job effectively.   Now, imagine your boss returns and asks for a report on how you spent your time. You mention the time you spent reading the manual, helping customers, and having fun. How likely is it that your boss would be pleased if, out of 10 hours, you spent 15 minutes reading the manual, 45 minutes assisting customers, and 9 hours on leisure? How would you answer if asked about the quality of your leisure time? If you spent eight of those nine hours mindlessly staring at a screen, could you justify that as “quality” enjoyment that recharges you for work? Can you justify spending that much time in front of a screen compared to the minimal time spent reading the manual?  We should take control of our time and use it in ways that align with God's desires. He has granted us incredible freedom. Unfortunately, most people don't spend their extra time having as much fun as they possibly can. Whether it's hours of news, binge-watching a series, playing video games, or other similar activities, they are not fulfilling. None of these include meaningful interaction with others, and one’s life isn't improved after days or even months of doing them. Instead of calling it enjoyment, it’s better described as “wasted time.”  This topic involves remembering God’s faithfulness. If someone struggles with negative emotions, it's probably because they don’t spend much time reading God’s manual. Sadly, many waste the time that could be used to read and meditate on the Bible.  **5. EMBEDDING THE TRUTH**  To memorize something, repeat it aloud or read it until it becomes ingrained in your mind. The more times you hear or see something, the stronger that memory becomes.  The time we spend uploading information into our minds directly influences how well we remember things. Without a doubt, the physical world takes priority over the time spent observing or hearing spiritual matters. Even if someone spends ten hours weekly on church services, Bible reading, studies, prayer, and meditation, it still leaves over 100 waking hours each week for other inputs. So, even for the spiritually disciplined, the world offers ten times more opportunities for input.  This is why it's important to meditate on spiritual truths throughout the day.   * 1. **Through repetition**   How can we possibly “remember” what gets minimal input? The solution is simple but requires discipline to implement. The answer is to embed that memory through repetition. For example, if someone wants to memorize a scripture verse, they could initially repeat it 10-50 times to be able to recite it without looking. If that verse is repeated even once a day over the next week, it would most likely solidify the memory, possibly for life. Most other life events would not receive the same level of input and could not compete with that memory.   1. **Through Meditating**   **i. Events**  If we apply a similar method to things about God, the outcome will be successful.  Rather than memorizing words, this step requires meditating on concepts. Some facts are easy to establish in our memory. For example, “God is the creator of all things.” It does not take long to have this truth embedded in our minds. Another fact that we never forget is that “Jesus died on the cross for our sins.”  **ii. Derived Truths**  Truths that are more difficult to remember are ones like “God is all-powerful.” And, even more challenging, “God is all-loving.” Depending on one’s maturity in Christ, the confidence in these truths can vary from uncertainty to being willing to die for them.  **iii. Personalizing the Truths**  The next step is essential for solidifying the memory. One must meditate on the meaning of the memory. A method of interpreting the Bible can be applied to understanding biblical truths.   * What does it say? * What does it mean? * What does it mean for me?   One of the most often overlooked truths is that God is all-loving. What does that mean?  When one carefully considers the answers to this question, the truth becomes ingrained in one’s mind. Understanding the definition of God’s love is essential. Agape love can be defined as “doing what is best for the other person, no matter how you feel, no matter the cost.”  Many people have “memorized" false information. That is clearly counterproductive to living a fulfilled life. If we want to embed accurate information, we must start with the Bible.  **iv. Using God’s love as an example**  The Bible teaches that God showed the full extent of His love by sending Jesus to die for us.   * *“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”* John 15:13 * *“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* Romans 5:8 * *“He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?”* Romans 8:32   It is best that one memorizes these verses. More important than memorizing the exact words is to meditate on the meaning. The first two verses make clear that God shows love for us by sending Jesus to die for our sins. The following is part of the outline found in [God’s Love and Power](https://www.yesgod.info/resources/foundationmain/02maingodsloveandpower.htm).   * He gave up the power of God in His human life. * Jesus relinquished being all-knowing, all-powerful, and present everywhere in space and time. * Jesus took on all our human weaknesses. He suffered when tempted. Jesus also took on the role of a servant. * Jesus was insulted, misunderstood, and mocked. * Jesus chose to go to the cross. * Jesus endured torture and died a terrible physical death on the cross. * Jesus had His Father turn His back on Him.   Spending just two minutes on each of the above truths will significantly enhance understanding of God’s love and embed a memory that could be summarized as, “Wow, God surely is a God of love to go through all that.”  Meditating on the answer to the final question, “What does it mean for me?” can be life-changing. The strongest memories are usually those that stir powerful emotions. Saying the below preferably aloud, visualizing it as vividly as possible, and really feeling it can be very effective in embedding the memory.   * Jesus gave up all of his powers for me. * Jesus came to Earth and went through all the suffering people experience for me. * Jesus endured torture for my sake. * Jesus endured a terrible death for me.   Besides understanding what they mean for you, try to visualize—perhaps by making a movie in your mind—what your life would be like without the death of Jesus. You would have no hope, no future, no value, and no purpose. You wouldn’t know what love is. There’s so much more to reflect on regarding a life without Jesus, so much more to remember in the future when we might take it for granted. It requires time and effort, but it is worth the work.  That God loves us is a crucial truth. If living according to truth results in a fulfilled life, and it does, then it is worth spending time embedding this truth in our lives. We put significant effort into our education, learning English, math, and many other subjects. We still remember many of those learned things. Even if we haven't used them for decades, most people remember their multiplication tables. We must also put significant effort into “remembering” who God is and what he has done.  The most important qualities and works of God are simple enough for an adolescent to understand. There is no limit to learning and experiencing God’s love.   1. **Connecting to life**   Once truths are firmly established in our minds, the final step is to connect them to everyday situations. Meditating is similar to athletes preparing daily for competition. Their goal is to perform well in the game. Our “game” is our everyday life. We are on offense when we pray, read the Bible, and meditate on God’s Word. Satan will try to distract us and take our focus away from God. We could view the rest of our lives as being on the defensive. Satan is on the offense, trying to take away everything that is truly valuable.  Our emotions serve as powerful signals to reconnect with the truth. Athletes recognize the importance of maintaining a steady stance, subtly bending their knees, and engaging their core muscles to avoid being pushed out of position. Our “stance” is standing on the truths we have firmly anchored in our minds.  Situations will come up that trigger emotions in us. If the emotion is negative, maybe because someone has been unkind to us, it's important to remember the truth: “God loves me.”  Top athletes anticipate the expected actions of their opponents and mentally prepare for their responses. They visualize the interaction and imagine themselves successfully executing everything they have practiced. We should do the same. Reflect on past events that you expect to happen again. Picture yourself stopping time. Take a moment to meditate on God's love for you. Engage your spiritual core, knowing that God’s love is greater than anything you face. Then, envision yourself at peace despite the other person’s unkindness. By doing this, you train yourself to consistently return to the truth as you navigate daily life.  We have a strong biblical example of someone looking to the past, recognizing, in this case, God’s faithfulness, and applying that same faithfulness to the future. David, when told he was unable to defeat the giant Goliath, responded,  “*Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God.*” 1 Sam 17:36  Whether you've trained yourself or not, each time you experience a strong emotional reaction, pause and reflect on God’s great love for you. For example, consider the meaning of this verse for you.  *“He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?”* Romans 8:32  It is at this place where you connect the truth to your life that victory happens. It is when you become an “overcomer” (John 16:33). It is when you find yourself getting closer to “perfect peace” (Isa 26:3). It is when you taste the “victory” in Christ (1 John 5:4).  The path to remembering God, like nearly everything God asks of us, demands discipline.   1. Read the Bible to understand more about God. 2. Reflect on what you have already learned or know to be true. 3. How does that meaning apply to your life? 4. Reflect on how your thoughts and feelings about past events might have changed with a new understanding of God’s nature. 5. Imagine yourself in a similar situation in the future with that new understanding.   **DIRECTIONS ABOUT REMEMBERING FROM THE BIBLE**  Reading through the passages below makes it clear that remembering is   1. commanded. 2. crucial. 3. requires effort.   We remember through   1. habit: Daily reading and prayer times 2. lifestyle: We have developed the habit of turning to God. 3. ongoing prayer:  *“Pray continually.”* 1 Thes 5:17 Those who do this will most probably already have success in this topic.   Take some time to meditate on the passages below.   * 1. **Commands to Remember**   *I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things, things from of old - what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done. He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands.* Psalm 78:2-7  *And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”* [Luke 22:19](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+22%3A19&version=ESV)*.*   1. **Result of Not Remembering**   *When our fathers were in Egypt, they gave no thought to your miracles; they did not remember your many kindnesses, and they rebelled by the sea, the Red Sea.* Psalm 106:7  *Then they believed his promises and sang his praise. But they soon forgot what he had done and did not wait for his counsel.* Psalm 106:12-13  *They did not keep God's covenant and refused to live by his law. They forgot what he had done, the wonders he had shown them.* Psalm 78:10-11   1. **God’s Nature**   We are commanded to remember God’s attributes. This may be the most important remembrance. Our relationship with God is similar to that of a young child with a parent. The child is aware of the parents' love and power.  *"Remember this, fix it in mind, take it to heart, you rebels. Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. Isaiah 46:8-9*  *“Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, 'I find no pleasure in them”—* [Ecclesiastes 12:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ecclesiastes+12%3A1&version=ESV)   1. **God’s Acts of Wonder**   *Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced,* [Psalm 105:5](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+105%3A5&version=ESV)*.*  *Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.* Deuteronomy 4:9  *I remember the days of long ago; I meditate on all your works and consider what your hands have done.* [Psalm 143:5](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+143%3A5&version=ESV)  *And Joshua set up at Gilgal the twelve stones they had taken out of the Jordan. He said to the Israelites, "In the future, when your descendants ask their fathers, 'What do these stones mean?’ tell them, 'Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.' For the Lord your God dried up the Jordan before you until you had crossed over. The Lord your God did to the Jordan just what he had done to the Red Sea when he dried it up before us until we had crossed over. He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the Lord is powerful and so that you might always fear the Lord your God."* Joshua 4:20-24  *Be careful that you do not forget the Lord, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. Fear the Lord your God, serve him only, and take your oaths in his name.* Deut 6:12-13  *I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. I will meditate on all your works and consider all your mighty deeds.* Psalm 77:11-12  He continues to list God’s faithfulness.   1. **God’s Faithfulness & Purpose**   *Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.* [Deuteronomy 8:2](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deuteronomy+8%3A2&version=ESV)  *Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits--* Psalm 103:2   1. **Our weakness**   *Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel, and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.* Ephesians 2:12  *Remember this and never forget how you provoked the LORD your God to anger in the desert. From the day you left Egypt until you arrived here, you have been rebellious against the LORD.* [Deuteronomy 9:7](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deuteronomy+9%3A7&version=ESV)   1. **Remember In Times of Difficulty**   God wants us to remember him. We can do it the easy way or the hard way. When attacked by Satan, part of our overcoming is to REMEMBER the word of our testimony, God’s faithfulness in our lives.  *When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, LORD, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple.* [Jonah 2:7](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jonah+2%3A7&version=ESV)  “They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the **word of their testimony**; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.” Rev 12:11  **Meditating**  *Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.* Joshua 1:8  *I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways.* Psalm 119:15  *On my bed, I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night.* Psalm 63:6  *I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. I will meditate on all your works and consider all your mighty deeds. Your ways, O God, are holy. What god is so great as our God?* Psalm 77:11-13  **Renewing One’s Mind**  *“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed*  *by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing, and perfect will.”* Rom 12:2  *“But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.”* Psalm 1:2  *“I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes.”* Psalms 119:99 |

**STUDY GUIDE**

**1 – KNOWLEDGE WITHOUT APPLICATION IS USELESS**

●  *Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that we all possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know. But the man who loves God is known by God.* (I Cor 8:1-3)

●  *If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.* (I Cor 13:2)

●  *"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."* (Matt 7:24-27)

●  *He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."* (Luke 11:28)

●  *Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and does not do it, sins.* (James 4:17)

●  *Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.* (James 3:13)

●  *If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.* (1 John 1:6)

1. Consider 1 Cor 8:1-3 and 1 Cor 13:2. What change in your thinking do you experience, if any, when you realize that all the knowledge you have and seek is worthless and useless unless you love God and love (do what is best for) others? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. What areas of your life are you not applying truth? (Be honest) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. Read and reflect on the rest of the passages above. How might your perspective change?

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1. When truth is revealed to you, ask yourself what the meaning of the truth is and how it applies to your life. If possible, recall a time when someone shared a new truth with you.

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1. List a few beneficial facts about overall health that you know but do not often put into practice. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. List a few things about money management, spending less, or working extra, for example, that you know but do not often put into practice. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. Review the list of foundations. Select a few you already knew about but haven't applied effectively. Do your best to identify what has prevented you from applying these consistently.

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1. Review the list of foundations again. Pick a few that you struggle with most in integrating into your life.

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1. What specific actions can you take to improve each of the items in list #7? Examples include: spending 5 minutes each day meditating on some truths, placing a reminder note with the truth on your desk at work, or doing an act of kindness for someone.

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**2 - GOD’S LOVE AND POWER**

* *This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. I John 4:10*
* *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding,* Prov 3:5
* *You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you.*Isa 26:3

Read the above verses one at a time. Take at least 2 minutes each meditating on their meaning.

1. Choose at least one verse about God’s love and one about God’s power. Write out what they mean to YOU.
   1. God’s Love \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   2. God’s Power \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. List at least two challenging times in your life.
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   2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. How might your perspective have differed if you trusted that God was all-powerful and all-loving?
   1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
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   3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. What more could God do to prove His power, to prove His love? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. Spend at least 3 minutes meditating on your answer. Write down any thoughts.

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1. Think about the above earthly parallel of the elite fighting group. Would you trust them? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

What’s the difference between trusting them and trusting God? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. Imagine yourself surrounded by God, reassuring you that He has everything under control. Describe yourself experiencing the perfect peace mentioned in Isaiah 26:3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. When you trust the truth, the result is perfect peace. Our emotions can serve as indicators of when we are not abiding with Christ. List times of painful emotions (fear, worry, anger, feeling disrespected, unappreciated, etc.) in your life. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. Were you trusting that God was handling those situations?
2. If not, describe how your reaction would have been different if you had fully trusted God.

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1. The next time you face a problem, pause and reflect on whether you believe that God is all-powerful and that He loves you. Ask yourself the previous three questions.

**3 - LOVE GOD AND OTHERS**

**Consider three ways you spend time with God.**

1. Reading, studying, memorizing, and meditating on His Word. How would you describe the amount of time you dedicate to these activities?
   1. Reading \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   2. Studying \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   3. Memorizing\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   4. Meditating \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. If there's room for improvement, what specific changes could you make? (For example: read an extra 10 minutes before getting up) How would you describe the amount of time you spend doing these?
   1. Reading \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   2. Studying \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   3. Memorizing\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   4. Meditating \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Praying at a designated time.
   1. How would you describe the amount of time you spend doing that? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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* 1. If there is room for improvement, what specific changes can you make? (For example, pray an extra 10 minutes before getting up) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. Talking to God and seeking to understand how God communicates with you throughout the day.
   1. How would you describe the amount of time you spend doing this? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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* 1. If there is room for improvement, what specific steps can you take? (Ex: set a timer on your phone to go off every hour to remind you to look vertically and reflect on God’s perspective of what you’re going through)

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**Consider these three aspects of obedience.**

1. Saying no to ungodliness.
   1. What habits or choices do you find yourself giving in to that do not please God?

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* 1. Confess them
  2. What long-term benefits do you get from continuing in sin?

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1. Make the right choices. This is not about how we treat others. Your answers, for example, could include attending church, taking care of your body, or the points mentioned earlier about spending time in the Word and prayer. Read Jam 4:17. What are you not doing that could please God? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. Doing everything for God. *Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.* Col 3:23-24 For more detail on this, check out the Foundation (Motives Matter).
   1. What areas of your life do you leave out God?

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* 1. How can you do what you’re doing now, but do it for God?

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**LOVING OTHERS**

1. Read James 1:27. How do you care for the truly needy, with your time or money? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. What can you do differently or improve?

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1. Reflect on becoming Christ-like and understanding what Christ was like.*“Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."* Matt 20:28 What comes to mind? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. Name at least three family members or friends with whom you spend most of your time. List one or two of these that make them feel most loved. (Quality time, gifts, service, words of affirmation, or touch) If you are unsure, ask them.

Name: List the ways they most often receive love from the list above.

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Name List specific ways you can love them most effectively.

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1. Reflect on your overall attitude when engaging with others. How does it compare to this verse? *Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others*. Phil 2:4 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. As you interact with people throughout the day, what can you do to show love to them? For example, smile, offer a compliment, and extend a helping hand. Name some people or situations where you can improve your loving actions, and identify what specific step you can take.

Name Specific ways you can love them best

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1. List people you could include in your prayers. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**4-EVERYTHING in our lives is a gift**

1. Create a list of personal attributes (e.g., appearance, athletic abilities, intelligence).
2. Create a list of accomplishments (e.g., material possessions, positions).
3. Do you see yourself as superior to people who lack your qualities or accomplishments? Be honest. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. Reflect on the verses below and note any shifts in perspective.

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* *For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?*I Cor 4:7
* *You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.*Deut 8:17-18

1. Create another list of your life expectations. Examples might include, but are not limited to: avoiding physical discomfort, having enough money to do what you want, or being treated in a particular manner by others. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. After meditating on the verse below, write out any changes in your perspective.

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* *"Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."* Matt 8:20

1. Write out at least five benefits you have because of your salvation. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. Spend at least 3-5 minutes thinking about them.
2. Look at something blank, such as a piece of paper or a wall. Read Eph 2:8-9. *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast.*Eph 2:8-9 Spend at least 2-3 minutes thinking about what you did to deserve the gift of your salvation, which is nothing.
3. Spend at least 2-3 minutes thinking about your view of your value in relation to others in light of what you wrote earlier, especially considering that you can not do anything to deserve an eternal relationship with God in Heaven.
4. List the main categories of your physical possessions. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. What did you do to deserve them? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. List significant benefits you have from living now instead of 300 years ago.

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1. On a scale of 1-10, how thankful are you daily for those benefits? \_\_\_\_\_\_
2. What would help you be more thankful? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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* *Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.* I Thes 5:18

**5 - ALL GOOD AND LOVE IS FROM GOD.**

 1. What are some ways others have blessed you?

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2.  Think of each person as a vessel of good and love that you truly received from God. What thoughts come to mind? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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3.  How does that alter your view of a time when one of those people let you down?

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4.  How does it change your view of God loving you through so many people throughout your life?

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5.  How does recognizing all the good coming from God strengthen your trust in Him for the future?

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6.  Write down some sacrificial acts you've done for others.

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7.  Consider that good, love, did not originate from you but from God’s work through you. How does that alter your view of yourself? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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8.  How does this alter your view of yourself compared to others?

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**6- IT IS GOD’S WILL THAT YOU GET TO KNOW HIM**

Although this study might seem simple and repetitive, it will help you learn how to explore God's presence in the Bible and through life events in a way you may never have experienced before. Going through this multiple times with different examples will help train your mind to seek these important answers.

1. Read through 1 John 1. Even if you do not learn anything new, write out what can be learned about
   1. God \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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* 1. your relationship with God \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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* 1. what He expects out of you. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. Choose one of your favorite passages in the Bible. Again, even if you don’t learn anything new, write out what can be learned about
   1. God \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. As you read and study the Bible, continue searching for answers to these three questions.
   1. Think about how many earthly examples, including the parables in the Bible, are used to teach about spiritual matters. God is not limited to instructing us solely through the Bible. His revelation of who He is and what He expects from us is all around us. The following question will explore the method we should use to test our perceptions.
   2. On a scale from 1 to 10, how much do you seek God in your personal experiences? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Think about a time when you experienced pain. Describe what that pain was like.

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1. Describe what Jesus experienced throughout His life and death. Write about what can be learned from it.
   1. God \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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* 1. your relationship with Him God \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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* 1. what He expects out of you. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. Think through at least one other life event. Write out what can be learned about
   1. God \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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* 1. your relationship with Him God \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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* 1. what He expects out of you. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. Thinking about the previous question, what Bible verses confirm that what you believe you learned is true? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. If you cannot think of any, use a search engine and type in “verses” along with the topic you believe you learned. Read the verses around that one or those. What makes you think that the verse you found is in context? If you need help understanding the meaning of the verse, go to the online study guide for this section, and you’ll find links to enter the passage you have questions about and understand the context in which it was written.

**7 - THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE**

*These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.* I Cor 10:11

*What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?*Rom 7:24

*This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.*Psalm 118:24

*Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,*Phil 3:13

*Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.*Rom 4:20-21

*Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."*James 4:14

**Consider the past.** See I Cor 10:11. On a scale from 1-10,

1. Specifically considering your mistakes that are sins, how well have you repented? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Sins for a Christian go well beyond obeying the 10 commandments. Consider James 4:17  *Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.* How well have you followed this command in the past? \_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Confess your sin. I did \_\_\_\_ and it was wrong. Know that you are forgiven.  *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.* I John 1:9
4. Seek God’s help to prevent repeating it or committing similar sins.
5. How good are you at learning from your mistakes? \_\_\_
6. How well do you learn from others’ mistakes?\_\_\_
7. Which ones have you not learned well from? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
8. Why do you think you repeat some mistakes or make the same ones you observe others making? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. If you spend time regretting or reminiscing about might-have-beens, what benefit do you get from doing so?

**Consider the future:**

1. See James 4:14. On a scale from 1-10, how much do you worry about the future? \_\_\_
2. What benefit do you receive from worrying about it? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. Meditate on Isa 26:3 “*You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you.”* How does trusting God for the future help you walk in peace in the present? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. The Bible uses the ant as an example of how we need to prepare for our future by not being lazy in the present. *yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest.* Prov 6:8 Look up and read Prov 6:5-11. On a scale from 1-10, rate how well you do in preparing for the future with your:
   * 1. Health \_\_\_
     2. What steps can you take to improve your performance?

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* + 1. Money \_\_\_
    2. What steps can you take to improve your performance?

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**Consider the present:**

1. See Psalm 118:24 and Phil 3:13. On a scale from 1-10, how much of your time (not when watching TV, reading, etc.) do you spend thinking about the present moment rather than the past or future? \_\_\_\_
2. What could you change to think more about the present moment?

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1. On a scale of 1 to 10, how much of your time do you spend seeking God in the moment? \_\_\_
2. What can you change so you'll think more about God in the moment you're in? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Write out any accomplishments you believe will please God.

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1. Read Isa 64:6 *. All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.* How does that alter your view of your achievements before God? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Now, think of any accomplishments you mentioned as happening in the future. Close your eyes and be present in this moment. Thank God for everything He has done for you. Worship Him for His attributes, including His Love and Power. Tell Him right now that you want His will, not yours. In this moment, you cannot please God more. Write a short note to God about the present. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**8 – IT IS NOT ABOUT US, OUR DESIRED WAY, IT IS ABOUT GOD**

Consider the following and write down anything that conflicts with God's will.

1. The main focus of your life over the past few years. (Example: getting rich). \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. The main focus of your life right now. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. Recent wrong decisions you've made. (For example: lying) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. What do you hope to achieve by fulfilling your own will if it conflicts with God's?

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1. What change can you make in your outlook to maintain a continuous attitude aligned with Luke 22:42? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**LOOKING AT YOUR LIFE**

1. Examine the line representing human history and note the dot.

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1. That dot represents your life in comparison to a line illustrating 5000 years of human history. Seeing that dot as your life can help put into perspective that your life is but a mist. Write a few sentences describing how you perceive your life when you imagine it as brief, especially compared to human history and even less to eternity. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Think about the illustration of the bride and pleasing her. Take a moment to visualize yourself dedicating 20 minutes of completely selfless time to do what pleases God. What does that look like? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. What keeps you from making that an hour, a day, or a full week or longer? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. What are some major differences between living your life for yourself and living it for God? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. List different parts of your life below. They could include work, taking care of possessions, and spending time with others.
4. Rate each of them on a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 indicating how much effort you put into them.
5. What prevents you from working harder at each?
6. Next to each item, place a number that prioritizes the importance you assign to each item.
7. Place a number next to each one, then arrange them in the order of priority you believe God would want you to assign to them, and circle that number.

#7 - #11 (1-10) Why not work (1-10) (1-10)

Aspects of Life Hard Work Harder Importance God’s View

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1. For the tasks where there is a difference, note your reason for having a different priority than God. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. How does your thinking change when you picture doing each task for the Lord? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Read Matt 22:37-39. How often during the day are these two commands at the forefront of your mind? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. On a scale from 1 to 10, how prominent is it **in your mind** to be a witness to unbelievers through your actions? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. On a scale from 1 to 10, how many **of your actions are** a witness of God's love to unbelievers? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. Choose three activities you spend a good amount of time on for leisure or entertainment. If you dedicated your entire life to God, what would you do differently with all or part of that time?

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1. Consider a typical day in your life. Picture dedicating the entire day to God's glory, living each moment for Him. Write down 10 to 15 activities you might do during that day. It could look similar to the list below, which is just meant to serve as some common examples to inspire your thinking.

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* Wake up and thank the Lord for a new day.
* Pray,
* Read and meditate on the Bible
* Eating and practicing self-care
* Reflect on what God might have planned for you and ask Him to give you opportunities to share His love.
* On your way to work, pray and ask the Lord to show you who you might be able to call while driving and encourage them.
* Before you call (using hands-free, of course, Jesus never held a phone while driving), you ask the Lord to give you the words to say.
* As you arrive at work, ask the Lord to help you be a witness and to demonstrate love to your coworkers.
* Your focus should be on serving the Lord, not on your boss or yourself.
* As you're working, you might be tempted to slack off. You might think, Lord, I am doing this for you and will do my best. I remember the Son of Man had no place to lay his head. Working hard for you is the least I can do in this comfortable environment.
* You pray to God to help you appreciate the things you might have otherwise complained about.
* On your way home, consider praying about your interactions with your family. If you're single, ask the Lord to bring to mind someone you could call or visit to encourage or assist.
* If you've memorized some scripture, it's a good time to say a few of them out loud. For example: “When I am weak, then I am strong.”
* If you walk in the door and things aren't how you'd like them, remember again that the Son of Man had nowhere to lay his head.
* You could spend the evening in service and fellowship with those nearby.
* You fall asleep giving thanks to God for another day.

**9 – DIFFICULTY IN OUR LIFE COMES FROM THE FALL**

As you create the lists below, be sure to note any times you've been hurt or gotten angry in response to the events.

**Physical Corruption**

1. Make a list of things in your life that have broken, rotted, or worn out, causing you to work to fix or earn money to replace them. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Make a list of illnesses or injuries you've experienced. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Create a list of illnesses, injuries, or deaths of people close to you that have caused you inconvenience or emotional pain. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Other People’s Sin**

Make a list of others' sins that have negatively impacted your life. It could include anything from their selfishness preventing you from doing what you enjoy to outright meanness directed at you. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**Your sin**

Make a list of how your sins have caused difficulties in your life or the lives of others. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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We are not living in truth when we lack realistic expectations. This opens the door for Satan to sidetrack us and cause reactions that don't align with being children of God. Often, we confuse realistic expectations with reasonable ones. Reasonable expectations reflect how life should be if the world were not corrupt and people treated each other kindly. Realistic expectations are formed by seeing and accepting the world and people as they truly are.

1. Review the lists above and mark an “R” in front of the ones based on everything you've observed in the world and history that people would never expect to happen.
2. Spend at least five minutes reviewing your list and thinking about the challenging aspects of living in a corrupt world. What, if anything, has changed in your perspective? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. Pray and thank God that someday He will take you out of this world to a perfect, corruption-free place. What are your thoughts and feelings? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**10 – GOD TEACHING US THROUGH CONSEQUENCES**

If you haven't finished the study guide for lesson 9, 'Difficulty In Our Life Comes From the Fall,' it's best to do that first.

Review your answers for the following. For each one, try to recall the difficulty and any emotional reactions you experienced. Although this might seem repetitive, it helps you see the challenges of your past more clearly. You can train your mind to view your personal life events with God’s purpose as the bigger picture. Why not use all that pain productively and give it a purpose? For each of the items below, think about an event, your original thoughts and feelings, and your current ones.

**Original:** List the thoughts and feelings you remember having at that moment.

**New:** Look at them perhaps with different eyes, as God’s discipline guiding your focus toward Him, teaching you to trust Him more and understand His heart better. Notice what new thoughts and feelings arise.

You will be copying some of your answers from study 9 to this study.

**Physical Corruption**

1. List two events in your life that have broken, rotted, or worn out, which you had to repair or replace by earning money.
   1. Event\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   2. Original \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   3. New\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   4. Event\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   5. Original \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   6. New\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. List two illnesses or injuries you've experienced.
   1. Event\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   2. Original \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   3. New\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   4. Event\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   5. Original \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   6. New\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. List two illnesses, injuries, or deaths of those close to you that have caused you inconvenience or emotional pain.
   1. Event\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   2. Original \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   3. New\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   4. Event\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   5. Original \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   6. New\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Other People’s Sin**

List three incidents of the sins of others that have negatively affected your life. It could be anything from their selfishness preventing you from doing what you enjoyed to outright meanness directed at you.

1. Event\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Original \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. New\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. Event\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. Original \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. New\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
7. Event\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
8. Original\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
9. New\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Your sin**

List three of your sins that have caused difficulty in your life or the lives of others.

1. Event\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Original \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. New\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. Event\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. Original \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. New\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
7. Event\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
8. Original\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
9. New\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Section 1: **When we are doing our best**

1. What is at least one time when you were treating people properly and doing the right thing, yet you were mistreated? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. How would your attitude and actions have changed if you had accepted that mistreatment was a result of the fall of man?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. What could have been different about your attitude and actions if you had considered that Jesus endured much more throughout His life intentionally because of His love for you than the mistreatment you experienced? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Section 2: **When something happens to us**

1. List two or three difficult things that have happened to you in your life. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Just as above, for each of them, how would your attitude and actions have been different if you had taken those opportunities to better understand how Christ suffered for you? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. For each of them, how would your attitudes and actions have been different if you had accepted what happened as part of God's will and used it to bring you closer to Him?
2. For each of them, how would your attitudes and actions have been different if you had believed that what happened would make you more mature? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Section 3: **When we have done “wrong.”**

1. If you find it difficult to handle being reprimanded, how might your attitude have changed if you had seen the reprimand as a way to guide your life toward a healthier direction?

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**11 – MOTIVES MATTER**

1. Think about what motivates you to finish different tasks in your life. These tasks could include your work, things you do for your family, friends, or others. Ask yourself, "Who are you doing it for?" Most of the time, what would you answer? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Think of times when you worked hard and didn't get recognition. List one \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Who were you doing it for? Be honest. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Sometimes, we may do it for ourselves or to receive praise. Other times, we might do things for others to try to please them, and sometimes, we do things to make our lives easier. If we do things for God out of obedience, we shouldn't even want anyone to notice. We have already gained His pleasure with us.
2. In the section, “It is not about us, and our desired way; it is about God,” in question #7, you listed many aspects of your life. Review that list, reflect on it, and mark each item with one of these letters indicating how often you do those things for God: A-Always, M-Mostly, B-Both, S-Seldom, and N-Never.
3. List the tasks you do the worst job of doing for God. Write next to each what needs to change for you to do them for God. Col 3:23

 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. What benefit do you get from doing things for yourself? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Visualize all of that as building on sand.
2. List some times you've done your "acts of righteousness" to receive personal rewards or thanks. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. Now, imagine doing that act out of obedience to God. What different thoughts or feelings do you experience? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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The next time you seek a thank you or praise, pause, look upward, and at least with your heart say, "I am doing this out of love for you Lord."

1. For the following four questions, rate each on a scale from 1 to 10 and specify what you can do to improve your rating in the future. How would you rate your focus?
   1. at work, doing household tasks, or caring for others, are you not working as if for the Lord and not for men? \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   2. getting to know God better and understanding what He expects from you when you read the Bible. \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   3. when service for others is to be for the Lord, not for men? \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   4. taking care of your physical possessions as if for the Lord, not for men? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**12 – OUR ONLY SOURCE FOR GUARANTEED TRUTH IS THE BIBLE**

1. What adjustments can you make to your schedule to spend more time seeking truth in God's Word?

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1. List some mistakes you've made in your life. After each one, describe how believing in the truth of the Bible could have helped you avoid them.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Make a list of who you have trusted in the past (family, friends, politicians) that you later discovered were flawed, deceptive, or disappointing in some way. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. List some man-made items you believed were trustworthy, like a car or something you bought that ended up disappointing you. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. Think about things you trusted in this world and list some that disappointed or shocked you. If nothing comes to mind, consider everything that happened during COVID-19. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. Looking at questions 2-5, how might believing in the Bible have altered the outcome of those situations? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. What have you believed in the past that was false about anything? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Where did you learn those false beliefs? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. If someone wants to find the truth about God and what He expects from us, where is the most reliable place to look besides the Bible? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. If you find it difficult to answer this question, how does that affect your desire to learn more from the Bible? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. What makes you trust man’s wisdom more than the Bible?

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1. Why hasn't that worked well in your life?

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1. What change in your thinking might lead you to trust the Bible more in the future, and rely less on the intelligence of the world?

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**13 – DECEPTION OFTEN COMES FROM WORLDLY THINKING**

For questions 1-6, initially, only fill in the scale.

1. On a scale from 1 to 20, rate how well you've been responsible in saving enough money for the future. 10 means just the right amount, and 20 means having much more than you'll ever need. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. On a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 meaning always, how focused are you on managing money responsibly so you won't be ineffective in God's service? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. On a scale from 1 to 10, rate how well you care for your body. Drink plenty of water, eat a nutritious diet, and engage in regular exercise when you can. If you think you pay too much attention to your body, put a little “x” next to the 10. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. On a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being all the time, how much do you focus on being responsible with your health to effectively serve God? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. Read Colossians 3:1, then rate on a scale from 1 to 10 to reflect where you think your heart is on any given day, with heavenly things being a 10. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. Read Colossians 3:2 on a scale from 1 to 10 and evaluate where your mind is each day, with 10 meaning you are thinking about heavenly things.\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. Review the six assessments above and list the specific changes you believe God wants you to make.
2. Health and wealth are two earthly things where long-term thinking pays off. What happens when you focus only on short-term earthly gains? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. If you have short-term thinking, why do you believe you haven't considered the future in your past decisions?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. What are some events in your life that caused fairly strong negative emotions?

Event. Emotion/Feeling

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. What deception did you experience during those events because of worldly (horizontal) thinking?
6. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
10. View these events from the perspective of your true treasure, eternal life in heaven. Consider each event and write down what you think and feel if you believed your life to be eternal.

Thinking Emotion/Feeling

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. How would your thoughts and feelings change if you believed that God loves you and has everything under control?

Thinking Emotion/Feeling

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. Health and money are two earthly things where long-term thinking is profitable. What is the result of short-term earthly thinking? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. If you have short-term thinking, why do you believe your past decisions haven't considered the future?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. How can you avoid being deceived into horizontal thinking in the future? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. How can you take time each day, throughout the day, to think about Heaven more? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**14 – WE NATURALLY FORGET OUR IDENTITY,**

**PEOPLE’S UNFAITHFULNESS AND GOD’S FAITHFULNESS**

1. List some actions people have taken that hurt or disappointed you. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Have you ever had people, or even the same person, hurt or disappoint you in the past? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. What made you think they would be different the last time they hurt you? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Based on your life experience, what would be a realistic (not ideal) expectation from others? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. List at least 5 instances when you saw God as being faithful. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. What has prevented you from thinking of these more during difficult times?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. What different actions can you take in the future? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. What is your identity as a Christian? In other words, how does God view you? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. Why is it important to keep that in mind? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. What would help you keep that in mind? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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You answered the following questions in the first study. Review your answers again to see how they might have changed and what new thoughts you have now that you've finished your studies.

1. Review the list of foundations. Pick a few you're already familiar with but haven't effectively applied. Do your best to identify what has prevented you from applying them consistently.
   1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   4. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Review the list of foundations once more. Pick a few you feel you struggle to truly incorporate into your life.
   1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. What specific actions can you take to improve each item on the list from #7? Examples include: spending 5 minutes each day meditating on some truths, placing a reminder note with the truth on your desk at work, or performing an act of kindness for someone.
   1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
   2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**BASIC DOCTRINES**

**GOD**

1. There is only one [God](https://carm.org/dictionary/god/) – Deuteronomy 6:4; [Isaiah 43:10-1](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Isa%2043.10)1
2. God is a [Trinity](https://carm.org/doctrine-and-theology/trinity-chart/) – [2 Cor. 13:14](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/2%20Cor.%2013.14); [1 Pet. 1:2](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/1%20Pet.%201.2)
3. God is all-powerful – [Psalm 115:3](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Ps%20115.3)
4. God is sovereign – [Zech. 9:14](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Zech.%209.14); [1 Tim. 6:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/1%20Tim.%206.15-16)
5. God is spirit – [John 4:24](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/John%204.24)
6. God is eternal – [Psalm 90:2](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Ps%2090.2)

**JESUS**

1. [Jesus](https://carm.org/questions-about-jesus/) is God – [John 1:1](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/John%201.1); 10:30; 14:9
2. Jesus was sinless – [1 Pet. 2:22](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/1%20Pet.%202.22)
3. Jesus is the only way to God the Father – [John 14:6](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/John%2014.6); Acts 4:12

**THE HOLY SPIRIT**

1. The Holy Spirit is God – [Acts 5:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Acts%205.3-4)
2. The Holy Spirit is not a force. He is alive – [Acts 13:2](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Acts%2013.2)

**THE BIBLE**

1. The Bible is the inspired Word of God – [2 Tim. 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/2%20Tim.%203.16)

**MANKIND**

1. All people have [sinned](https://carm.org/questions-about-sin/) – [Rom. 3:23](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rom.%203.23), [5:12](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rom%205.12)
2. Sin separates us from God – [Isaiah 59:2](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Isa%2059.2)

**SALVATION THROUGH JESUS**

1. Jesus’ sacrifice was a substitution for us – [1 Pet. 2:24](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/1%20Pet.%202.24)
2. Jesus rose from the dead in His physical body – [John 2:19-21](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/John%202.19-21)
3. [Salvation](https://carm.org/questions-about-salvation/) is a free gift of God – [Rom. 4:5](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rom.%204.5); [6:23](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rom%206.23); [Eph. 2:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Eph.%202.8-9)

**HELL**

1. Those who reject Jesus will go to Hell – [Rev. 20:11-15](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rev.%2020.11-15)
2. [Hell](https://carm.org/dictionary/false-hell/) is a place of fiery punishment – [Matt. 25:41](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Matt.%2025.41); [Rev. 19:20](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rev.%2019.20)

**END TIMES**

1. Jesus will return visibly to earth – [Acts 1:11](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Acts%201.11)
2. There will be a final judgment – [2 Pet. 3:7](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/2%20Pet.%203.7)

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|  | **GUIDE FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING** |  |

The underlined words link to extra help on the online version at yesgod.info/new

1. **Review**: Watch the videos on the [Steps to Peace with God](https://peacewithgod.net/) website prepared by Billy Graham.
2. **Pray**: God is always listening, always caring, and knows you better than you know yourself. Tell God your wrongdoings (sin). Ask for His help to do better and for anything else on your heart. Tell Him how awesome He is (Praise). Thank Him for anything and everything you are thankful for. [Dig deeper.](https://www.yesgod.info/new.htm#prayer)
3. **Read**: Use the online [Bible reading plan](https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/2838-first-steps-for-new-believers) or start reading at least 10 minutes daily, beginning in the Gospel of John. [Dig deeper](https://www.yesgod.info/new.htm#bible).
4. **Learn**: Work your way through a beginner [Bible study](https://bible.org/seriespage/1-beginning-your-new-life-christ). Or, as you read through the Bible, take notes about what you are learning about God and what you are learning about your relationship with Him.
5. **Ask**: When you have questions, get answers. [GotQuestions.org](https://www.gotquestions.org/) will help you answer your practical questions about God and spiritual issues. Or, ask a Christian friend or pastor. [Dig Deeper](https://www.yesgod.info/new.htm#questions)
6. **Listen**: Until you find a good church, [listen to online messages.](http://yesgod.info/yesgodm.htm#listenandwatch)
7. **Live**: Start living your life for God. it is one of the simplest and at the same time the hardest things to do. It’s hard because inside, we are all selfish. Show your love to God by getting to know Him, and as you learn what is pleasing to your perfect Heavenly Father, do it. Pass His love on to people you have contact with, loving them by doing what is best for them. We  [Dig Deeper](https://www.yesgod.info/new.htm#liveforgod)
8. **Get together**: [Find a good church.](http://yesgod.info/yesgodm.htm#findingachurch) [Why go to church?](https://www.yesgod.info/new.htm#church)
9. **Get help**: Find a Mentor. Ask an older Christian (of the same gender as you) to mentor you. Look for someone who displays the attitudes and actions that were described above. [More on gotquestions.](https://www.gotquestions.org/new-Christian.html)org
10. **Get baptized**: When you find a church, your local pastor will help you with this. [Dig Deeper](https://www.yesgod.info/new.htm#baptism)
11. **Get friends:**Build friendships with other Christians. [Dig Deeper](https://www.yesgod.info/new.htm#talktoothers)
12. **Help others.** The Holy Spirit will lead you in ways to help. You might serve the poor in your community, assist a neighbor with yard work, or visit a sick friend in the hospital. The Spirit will call you to show God’s love [1 John 3:17-18](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+John+3%3A17-18&version=ESV)[)](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+John+3%3A17-18&version=ESV).
13. **Share your good news**: Tell someone about your faith. In some cases, others will believe in Jesus through your example. Christians are still called to share the hope within us with others ([1 Peter 3:15-16](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Peter+3%3A15-16&version=ESV)). [Dig Deeper](https://www.yesgod.info/new.htm#witnessing)
14. **Never forget**how much [God loves you](https://www.yesgod.info/resources/growth/godslove.htm).

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| |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  |  | **EVANGELISM**  howtoevangelize.org |  |   **METHOD 1:** |
| [**CONNECT:**](https://www.howtoevangelize.org/share/presentingchrist.htm#Connect)Meet a need. Do or say something nice. When the person responds, "Thank you," you can say, |
| [**BRIDGE TO THE GOSPEL**](https://www.howtoevangelize.org/bridge/bridge.htm): "**I'm happy to. God has shown me so much love, I'm happy to pass it on to others.**" If you get any positive response, you can say, |
| [**SHARE THE GOSPEL**](https://www.howtoevangelize.org/share/share.htm): "**The best way God showed love to me was to send Jesus to die for all that I've done wrong so I can go to Heaven.**" It is very quick and very effective. Most of the time, you will be able to tell from their response whether it is helpful to continue. Even if that is all you say, you just shared the way to eternal life with them. |
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| **METHOD 2:** |
| [**CONNECT:**](https://www.howtoevangelize.org/share/presentingchrist.htm#Connect) Talk about what you can agree on first. Even if you have not, a great first question to ask is, **"What do you think will happen when you die?"** It fits everyone because everyone dies. *"I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some."* I Corinthians 9:22b |
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| [**BRIDGE TO THE GOSPEL**](https://www.howtoevangelize.org/bridge/bridge.htm): Building a bridge between you and the other person is most effective with questions. A second question to ask for those who respond, "Heaven," is "**Do you think Heaven is a perfect place?**" If they say yes, you can ask, "**As far as doing good things, do you think you are perfect?**" If they say no, the next question switches the conversation from you not being sure what to say to them not knowing the answer. "**So, when you die, how do you change from being imperfect to being perfect so you can enter Heaven?**" You can ask the final question unless they respond as a believer that Jesus provides the way. "**May I share with you how that happens?**" For those who do not answer like most people, you'll find how to respond at howtoevangelize.info to different responses you may hear.  **Another way to bridge.**  If they already have a belief system that differs from Christianity, ask them sincere questions about 1) what makes them sure that what they believe is true, and 2) how they enter into Heaven. (if they believe in Heaven). Once you have spent over half the time you think you'll have with them asking questions and politely listening to what they believe, ask: "**May I share with you what I believe?**" |
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| [**SHARE THE GOSPEL**](https://www.howtoevangelize.org/share/share.htm): There are many ways to share the gospel. One simple way is to share two verses: "***For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.***" Romans 6:23 and "***I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.***" John 14:6 |