



FOUNDATIONS FOR OUR LIVES

INTRODUCTION: As you consider the truths below, they may or may not be new to you. If new, you have the opportunity to have a new perspective of this part of your relationship with God, based on truth rather than the lies of the Devil. Whether each foundation is a new thought or an old one, the real question is how good of a job are you doing at embracing it. In other words, are your actions and reactions consistent with someone who acts as if these are true? In order for this tool to be instrumental in effective and hopefully lasting change in your life, it is crucial you do not just read this, but for anything you do not have complete victory over, that you meditate on the truth, answer the questions, and complete the Study Guides. [Study Guide Overview](#)

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](#)

CORE PRINCIPLES

- 1) Knowledge without application is useless.
- 2) THE foundation for our life is God's love and God's power.
- 3) THE pathways Jesus gave us for our life are to love God and to love others.
- 4) EVERYTHING in our lives is a gift

VIEW OF OURSELVES AND GOD

- 5) ALL good and all love is from God.

LEARNING ABOUT GOD

- 6) It is God's will that you get to know Him.

LIVING IN THE WORLD

- 7) The purpose of the past is for us to learn from it, the present to glorify God, and the future to trust God.
- 8) It is not about us, and our desired way; it is about God.
- 9) Difficulty in our lives comes from the fall.
- 10) God often uses the consequences from the fall, (sin and corruption), which results in our hardship to discipline us, to teach us about Him
- 11) Motives Matter.

OVERCOMING DECEPTION

- 12) Nothing and nobody in the world are fully trustworthy. Our only source for guaranteed truth is the Bible.
- 13) The deception in our lives most often comes from worldly thinking.
- 14) We naturally forget. We forget both people's unfaithfulness and God's faithfulness.

1) **Knowledge without application is useless.** One might even say it is counterproductive. The more we know what is best for us and the less we put it into practice, the more conflicted we become and we can build a habit of ignoring truth. This then leads to hearts becoming hardened. The purpose of the attainment of knowledge is that we learn to love God and others.

- **EARTHLY PARALLEL 1:** Scripture is compelling here. 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 have problems with substance abuse as the general population. Additionally, over 1/2 of them are overweight. They may have significant knowledge about how damaging what they are doing to their body is, but many do not apply that knowledge. Almost everyone knows that drinking plenty of water, not overeating, and getting some exercise makes us healthier. Some people get uncomfortable if someone reminds them of these truths.
- **APPLYING THE PARALLELS:** When truth is revealed to you, do you, on a scale from 1-10, if 1 is shying away from it, 5 is ignoring it and 10 is fully applying it, where would you rate yourself?
- **APPLICATION 1:** Consider I Cor 8:1-3 and 1 Cor 13:2. What change in your thinking do you have if any when you consider that all the knowledge you have and seek to have is absolutely nothing, useless, unless you love, that you love God and love (do what is best for) others.
- **APPLICATION 2:** What areas of your life are you not applying truth? Read and consider the rest of the below passages. What change might there be in your perspective?
- **APPLICATION 3:** When truth is revealed to you, ask yourself what the meaning of the truth is and how it applies 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. (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)*

2) THE foundation for our life is **God's love and God's power.** All of our problems stem from our not trusting in these two attributes. Nothing in this world has both. People can love others, but without power it is useless. For example, love is not enough to cure cancer. Some people have power but do not love others. They are to be feared. God has both. When we stand on God's love and power, we walk in confidence and peace. Events of the world or the sin of others does not shake us. We have confidence that God can work through us beyond what we see as our abilities. Consider that when we feel able to do anything outside of the understanding that our ability is because of God's power, we're being prideful.

- **EARTHLY PARALLEL:** There are areas of many cities that are dangerous to walk when it is dark out. Consider that someone who loves you has four close friends who are part of an elite military fighting team. Visualize yourself walking through an extremely dangerous area with one of them in front, one behind, and one on each side of you. You notice three large suspicious people and react with fear. One of the team observes your distress and while touching the M16 resting on his shoulder smiles and says, "No worries, we have got this." Your confidence in that situation does not depend on your abilities, but on those who have vowed to protect you and their abilities.
- **APPLYING THE PARALLEL:** God has vowed to take care of us, to have it handled. His purpose for us is that we trust in His love and power. People often stumble at this point because they wrongly think that God has promised to protect us from difficulty. On the contrary, Jesus said *"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33) Someday, we will physically die but those who have received the gift of Salvation will live forever. it

is the "forever" that our focus needs to be on. (See the topic "Deception in Our Lives" below.) So, as we walk through life, Jesus, like the "elite force" mentioned before, is there with us, protecting us from harm that keeps us from being more like him. *"The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom."* (II 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 have got this." (Ps 23:4)

- APPLICATION: Think about a difficult time in your life. How would your perspective have been different if you had trusted that God was all powerful and all loving? The next time you have a problem, stop and consider whether you believe that God is all powerful, believing that He loves you. Ask yourself two questions.
- What more could God do to prove His power, to prove His love? When you trust in the truth, the result is perfect peace. Our emotions can be an indicator of when we are not abiding with Christ. List times of painful emotions (fear, worry, anger, feeling disrespected, unappreciated, etc.) in your life.
- Were you trusting that God had that situation handled? If not, write out how your reaction would have been different if you 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. (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)*

3) THE pathways Jesus gave us for our life are to **love God and to love others**. Although difficult, it is simple. This word "love" is Agape love, which is doing what is best for the other person no matter how we feel. There are many ways we show love back to God, including obedience and worship. Our love for others is motivated by God's love for us and expressed by meeting their needs which may be spiritual, emotional, and or physical.

- EARTHLY PARALLEL: A toddler is unable to understand the reasons for most of the commands of their parents. They have no idea of the damage that can be caused by touching something hot or falling from something high. Their success in avoiding serious injury is dependent on listening, trusting, and obeying. They also learn from what they observe their parents doing. If they observe tenderness in words and actions, they view that as normal. When they are told to "be nice" to a sibling, they have an idea of what that looks like.
- APPLYING THE PARALLEL: Like little children, we depend on Jesus not only for our pathway through life but 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 given so our relationship with God could be restored, our love for God grows along with our desire to be like Jesus. As we give thought to the example of Jesus, we learn how to treat others. The way we treat others flows out of how we believe we have been treated. We need to meditate on the truth, which is that a perfect life was given so we may have life eternal. What more could we want? Now share that love with others. Do what is best for them, no matter how you feel.
- APPLICATION: 1) Loving God: Obedience to God's commandments shows love for God. The Ten Commandments give us a guideline. However, the passages below in the book of James gives us a broader and although simpler, a more difficult task of obedience. 2) Loving Others: Some needs are clear. For example, there are people in parts of the world who have to walk long distances for water. We can give financially to meet those needs. Giving some people money might possibly enable them not to work, which is not loving toward them. Most of the time, we have a good idea of what a person's real needs are: a listening ear, sharing a truth about God or this physical life, or helping with a task. Are you sensitive to other's needs? When a clear need is presented to you, and you do not meet it, what is keeping you from passing on God's love? If there is not a 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)*

4) **EVERYTHING in our lives is a gift**, including what we have worked for. Thankfulness, therefore, should be our primary response. 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, where and when we were born, and all of our abilities and opportunities are a gift, where is the boasting? On the contrary, we should be overflowing with thankfulness. Our lack of thankfulness comes from us setting a bar, an expectation for minimums in our lives.

- **EARTHLY PARALLEL:** Consider professional sports stars, genius scientists, or those who win beauty pageants. No matter how hard the average person works, they will NEVER attain worldly status like those gifted individuals. No matter how gifted a person born in a Developing Country is, they most probably will never have those opportunities. It is also a gift when we were born. 200 years ago, even the most elite did not have electricity or be able to fly in an airplane.
- **APPLYING THE PARALLEL:** Consider your physical abilities that some people do not have. (Sight, hearing, arms, legs, and physical strength) Consider when and where you were born. Think about how much you were taught by words and examples growing up. Visualize each of those things as gifts.
- **APPLICATION:** Write out a list of personal attributes and accomplishments. They could be looks, athletic abilities, intellect, or how much money or material things you have or have had in the past. Do you see yourself as better than people who do not have your qualities or accomplishments? Be honest. Consider the following verses and write down any change in perspective. Write another list of your expectations out of life. Examples could possibly include, but not be limited to: not having physical discomfort, having enough money to do as you wish, or for others to treat you in a particular manner. After meditating on the verses below, write out any changes in your perspective. Next, write out at least five benefits you have because of your Salvation. Take at least 3-5 minutes to think about them. Look at something blank like a piece of paper or the wall. Read 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. Remember, there is nothing you can do to "deserve Salvation." Spend at least 2-3 minutes thinking about your view of your value in relation to others in light of what you wrote earlier and considering you cannot do anything to deserve 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? (I Cor 4:7)*

5) **ALL good and all love is from God.** ALL that we receive and all that we give is God's love passed through people. The result of living in these truths is that we are humbled, knowing that all the good we do for others, and all of our good accomplishments are a result of God using us as His vessel. We also realize that everyone who has ever shown love to us has been the same: God's love shown us through others. As we view all that love over our lives coming from God, we learn to lean on God rather than others to continue to love us.

- **EARTHLY PARALLEL:** Our ability to survive on the earth is dependent on the sun. Even parts of our world that do not get much sun are so cold, that one couldn't survive without substantial clothing or shelter. In some climates, food does not grow during the winter. Some religions worship the sun making an effort to remember its importance. We can take credit for success in growing plants, and surely following proper procedures results in better success. But the power for growth comes from the sun. Even for the expert, insufficient sunlight will result in failure
- **APPLYING THE PARALLEL:** In the same way, all our success, what we receive, and what we can give others comes from the Son. He created all things, holds them all together, and is THE source of love. Our success depends, not on our hard work but on the love given us. Our work is to pass the Son's (Jesus) love onto others.
- **APPLICATION:** Write out some of the ways you have been blessed by others. Consider each one as that person is a vessel of the good, the love you received, and that love coming from God. How does that change your view of a time when one of those people let you down? How does it change your view of God loving you through so many people throughout your life? How does seeing all the good as coming from God help you trust Him for the future? Write out some of the sacrificial things you have done for others. Consider that the good, the love, did not come from

you, but came from God through you. How does that change your view of yourself? How does it change 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 that you 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." You learn about God and what He expects of you by reading and meditating on the Bible. It is important to know that God is not limited to teaching you 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 you read here are examples. Jesus many times talked in parables using earthly truths to help people understand heavenly ones. It is important to test what you believe you are learning against the Bible, which is the foundation for truth. As you read God's Word and experience life, your primary focus should be to seek what you are learning about God and your relationship with Him, and what He expects out of you. Think in terms of getting to know God, not just learning what attributes He has. Consider that you would not describe a good friend or family member by only their attributes but more importantly who they are as a person.

- **EARTHLY PARALLEL:** A friend of yours introduces you to their friend. It is someone that you seem to connect with. In order to have a relationship, you would need to get to know that person. That requires spending time with them. You could find out many things about them. (Birth city, age, favorite color, where they went to High School, favorite food, vacation spot, etc.) You would learn a lot about them, but you would not know them. Knowing someone requires time with them. You would know them better when you observe how they respond to different situations. Similarly, you would not approach someone saying you would like to be friends and ask them to give you a list of what you need to do so you can be their friend. Rather spending time together, mutually meeting each other's needs, this shows trustworthiness and your relationship will naturally develop.
- **APPLYING THE PARALLEL:** Learning about God is very important. But it is not enough. One can know an abundance of information about God and have no relationship with Him. God reconciled man to God so we can have relationship with Him. In all aspects of your life, seek to know God in a way that improves your relationship with Him. An example is that many times when we sin, we do not experience consequences. (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 just one of many ways we can learn more about God's heart.
- **APPLICATION:** Read through I John 1. Even if you do not learn anything new, write down 1) what can be learned about God, 2) What can be learned about your relationship with Him, and 3) what He expects out of you. As you read and study the Bible, keep looking for the answers to these three questions.
- Think through some recent events. Write down the same as above. What Bible verses confirm that what you believe you 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)*

7) **The purpose of the past is for us to learn from it, the present, to glorify God, and the future to trust God.** God is pleased with our direction in this moment rather than after we've accomplished a goal or completed a future task. We will never be perfected on this earth. (Rom 7:24) However, if in this moment, we are seeking God, the good news is that we are pressing forward in a Godly direction. As we live in this truth, we won't be thinking 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. Over and over there is failure. However, through this process, he learns what does not work. All he has in the PAST are failed experiments and notes to not repeat those. In the PRESENT, he works hard in the hope that there will be success. The FUTURE is unknown but exciting. What might the invention turn into? Should he

spend energy worrying about the future, he's wasted that time and energy that could have been used to learn from past mistakes. And learning from them is exactly what will result in a desired future.

- **APPLYING THE PARALLEL:** Like the inventor, we make mistakes and we **MUST** learn from them. We need to repent of sins which are mistakes. Like the inventor, we'd do our best to learn from other's mistakes so that we would not have to waste our one life needlessly experimenting. Spending energy being concerned about the future keeps us from giving proper attention to what is right in front of us. We learn from the past, take charge of life in the present, and hope for the future.
- **APPLICATION:** Consider the past. Have you repented of your sins? Do you learn from your mistakes, or from what you view as others' mistakes? Which ones haven't you learned from? If you spend time in regret or reminiscing on might have been, what benefit do you receive? Consider the future: What benefit do you receive worrying about it? How does trusting God for the future help you walk in peace in the present? Consider the present: How much of your time do you spend living in the moment, seeking God in the moment? Write out any personal accomplishments that you believe will make you more pleasing to God. Consider that what you just wrote is the future. Close your eyes, and be in this moment. Thank God for what He's done for you. Worship Him for his attributes including His Love and His Power. Tell Him right now you want 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. It is about God getting the glory through our lives. 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:** Consider that someone close to you is getting married and you have offered to help with the wedding. The bride chooses what flowers, food, colors, entertainment, and decorations she wants. You would not consider showing up substituting her choice of food or flowers with your favorites. It is her day. She should have it her way. Sadly, many at a place of employment rather than following the wishes of their boss or customers, do what they want either because they think it is better or out of laziness.
- **APPLYING THE PARALLEL:** Considering the two examples above, the issue is accepting whose way it is supposed to be. Who is the boss? We would typically be more obedient to the bride than the boss. With the bride, it is just one day and we desire to see her happy so we do it all her way. Although it can be difficult at work it is simple, "Do what the boss says!" It is that simple with God. "Do what God says!" When working for a boss, it is not just about following specific orders. It is about helping the company be successful. Learn God's heart and his desire, the bigger picture and let that picture be your picture. *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 out what has conflicted with God's will. 1) The overall focus of your life in 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 is in conflict with God's? What change can you make in your perspective to have an ongoing attitude consistent with Luke 22:42 below?
- *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 have an expectation of an easy life. Our desire for things to be right in a broken world comes from God putting eternity in our hearts. As we have more realistic expectations for how the world really is, we won't be caught off guard by the evil of others, our own sin, and the pain we suffer because the physical world is failing. We're to accept the hardship caused by other's sins, repent of our own, and long for heaven.

- **EARTHLY PARALLEL:** As we get older, our physical condition deteriorates. Some people say that health is wasted on the youth. Most young people do not appreciate all the things their bodies can do. Conversely, many elderly people are happy to be able to just get around without significant pain. Although the youth witness this in the elderly, very few appreciate and take advantage of their "working" bodies. Some complain about minor physical inconveniences while an elderly person would jump at the chance to switch conditions with them.
- **APPLYING THE PARALLEL:** The difference between the youth and the elderly is perspective. The wiser of the elderly are well aware of how their physical life, which is subject to corruption, is obviously going downhill. This principle of sin's corrupting power carries over into the evil in other people's hearts and relationships. When one is aware that evil is all around, they can more fully enjoy the times when they receive good. Rather than being caught off guard by difficulties in the world and the evil of others, acknowledge it as part of the fall and use it as an opportunity to long for heaven. Look for and take full advantage of the times when God's intervention shines through some circumstance or the life of someone who touches yours with God's love.
- **APPLICATION:** You have seen how the physical corruption of the world (including your body), people's sin, and your own sin cause pain in your life. Write out how these three things have caused you difficulty and pain. Since all of your experience and the Bible teach you to expect this corruption and sin, how can you change your future expectations to be 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 from the fall, (sin and corruption), which results in our hardship to discipline us, to teach us about Him.** We must at that point 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 difficult training because they know it is what prepares them to have a possible victory. If we look at hardship similarly, knowing we have a perfect coach (God) who allows everything for our good, we walk in peace, we have hope, and we quit viewing the pain as taking away from the value of our lives. Many people (not only athletes), work out, and "inflict difficulty" on themselves to get physically stronger. They look past the pain knowing the benefit it brings. However, when other's actions cause us to have physical or emotional discomfort, we tend to fight against it. Whereas there are times when we should defend ourselves physically or remove ourselves from emotionally abusive situations, much of the time the discomfort is the result of normal suffering from the result of another's sin. IF we keep in mind that our Father is all-powerful and loves us, that he has allowed this difficulty, then we have the opportunity to view difficulty brought on us by others the way an athlete trusts a coach. Even though we may not understand, 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 for what to do with our pain. An earthly view (horizontal thinking) results in us believing that pain reduces the quality of our lives. This is Satan's lie. If we meditate on the truth (vertical thinking) that not only is God using the difficulty to mature us but also that just to have a relationship with us, Christ purposely went through what we would not choose to go through, we will feel so loved and God is glorified! Some of our pain is from our own sin. Just like the physical pain from touching something hot, God allows consequences to redirect, to discipline us toward godliness.

- **EARTHLY PARALLEL:** Consider a toddler just learning to walk. They fall a lot, either because of a lack of balance or perhaps weak muscles. If the parent always holds the toddler's hands taking weight off their legs, it will take much longer for either balance or muscles to improve. Each time the toddler falls, they learn what does not work. Stumbling step, one after another, makes them stronger. And at last, they can walk! There's excitement for all. 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, either self-applied or applied by the world around us. We tend to fight against the difficulties inflicted on us because we do not understand that it is exactly what's necessary for us to grow. As much as we might experience pain watching our children fall, we know that it is a necessary part of them going to the next level, which is walking. God wants to take us to higher levels in our relationship with Him, in our trust in Him. The cry to God of one who is abiding with Christ and 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 difficulty brought on you by other's sin? If you had viewed it as a workout allowed by God for your good, how would it have changed your reaction? Whether you receive God's discipline or kindness, are you accepting or fighting against God's move to redirect your life? When you fight against God, and you 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) The houses built on rock and sand look the same. **When we do what we do for God, living our lives for Him, we have built our lives on rock. When we live for ourselves or to please others, we have built on sand.** The house built on sand WILL ultimately fail. All that we do in our lives, all the work of our hands, work at church, work with our families, friends, and others is either done 1) for God or 2) to bring attention to ourselves, making us feel better about who we are, or what we believe will advance our lives. Our attainments, the attention we receive, and our feelings are fleeting, sand under our feet, and are ultimately empty. When we do it for God, and things seemingly do not work out the way WE think they should, we can have peace in knowing God is pleased. After all, God is responsible for the results.

- **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 period of time are equally functional. But when trouble comes, the rain and wind, the house on an unstable foundation, and the sand fails.
- **APPLYING THE PARALLEL:** What foundation are you building your life on? Is it solid and lasting? Or is it on worldly things that are sure to fail someday? "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matt 6:21) For example in the case of wealth being a focus, it can be lost, one can die without enjoying it, or one can look at what they prized and realize too late that it brought very little fulfillment. What are a couple of things you give the most value to? Are they material things, your abilities, your position, or something else? If you lost that but still had all you needed to live, would your life feel fulfilled? If not, you may need to move toward a better foundation. Are you doing things ultimately for God's purpose or your own? The answer will indicate how stable the soil is that you are building on.
- **APPLICATION:** Consider the motivation for different tasks in your life. It could be your work, how you treat your family, friends, or others. Ask yourself, "Who are you doing it for?" Make a list of what you spend your time doing. Mark each one as follows. Always for God, mostly, both, seldom, and never. Write out what benefit you get from doing it for yourself. Visualize all of that as building on sand. Think of times when you worked hard and weren't appreciated for it. Who were you doing it for? Be honest. At times, we do it for ourselves, to receive praise, at times for others to try to please them, and even at times just to make our lives easier. If we are doing things for God, out of obedience, we should not even want anyone to even notice. We've already received His pleasure with us. Write out any of the times you have done your "acts of righteousness" to have some personal reward or thanks. Visualize doing that act out of obedience to God. The next time you find yourself looking for a thank you or praise, stop, look upward, and at least with your heart 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 are fully trustworthy. **Our only source for guaranteed truth is the Bible.** As we learn to integrate this truth into our lives, we learn to exercise discretion in all we read and hear from others. When we know what is truth, God's word, we can stand strong on His foundation which allows us to effectively operate in this world, and thus avoid standing too firmly on what we are not sure of. Satan's primary work is to deceive us in order to get us to believe lies. Satan has no power that God does not allow.

- **EARTHLY PARALLEL:** If you had to climb up a tall old wooden ladder, you would want to know that every rung was strong. Before trusting your life to the ladder, you would inspect and perhaps test each rung with your hands before stepping on them with your weight. No matter how strong, with each step, you would know that solid ground was much stronger. The risk comes from an ongoing trust in that ladder as it gets older. The wood can become brittle or rotted and one day the rung could break.
- **APPLYING THE PARALLEL:** The only sure truth we have is the Bible. Whereas we need to put some faith in individuals, if we do not test, retest, and always be aware that every person will fail us at some time, we'll step on a rung that's become rotted and may have a horrible failure.
- **APPLICATION:** Make a list of who you have trusted in the past that you have found out later were flawed or deceptive. What changes in your schedule can you make to take more time to seek truth in God's Word? How would have 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 this earth. This takes continual energy as virtually all of our experiences are related to this life. God provides us with many earthly parallels to teach us that long-term thinking is profitable. We need to make necessary changes to create habits of long-term heavenly thinking. A pastor, Tom Horton, shared in a sermon decades ago to ask two questions 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 spend so much money they do not have savings, the result is stress and difficulty. When people eat too much and do not exercise over an extended period of time, they become unhealthy and it can be physically taxing just performing everyday functions. Eating in an unhealthy manner or spending money on non-essentials is enjoyable. However if one lives only for today's pleasures, they pay for it in the future. There's no way out of the pain. Either the pain is self-inflicted through discipline or becomes the consequence of an earlier lack of discipline. There's no reason for disciplining oneself if there is no future benefit. So, when one exercises or says no to that extra helping, it is because they are looking to the future and are doing what's best for that future self.
- **APPLYING THE PARALLEL:** Long-term thinking or lack thereof is what separates those who take care of their body and are responsible with money from those who aren't. That same thinking process when applied to spiritual things puts us in line with God's desire for us. We follow God's will for our lives today because we do not just live for this life. We live for eternity.
- **APPLICATION:** Health and money are two earthly things where long-term thinking is profitable. What is the result of short-term earthly thinking? If you have short-term thinking, why do you think you haven't made past decisions giving thought to the future? What changes can you make to think longer term? Other than asking yourself the questions above, how can you take time each day, throughout the day to be thinking about Heaven more?
- *"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 put ongoing effort into remembering both God's attributes** (like His love and power), **and God's faithfulness in our lives.** When we are deceived, we trust people too much. We lean on them and when they let us down, we stumble. Remembering the unfaithfulness of mankind keeps us from leaning on people too much. 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 love to us, and cared for us in many ways. However, when they do something hurtful, it is not natural for us to look at that event in light of all the good they have done. Their current action and our pain tend to be all we are thinking about at the moment. It is best to look at the painful moment through the eyes of the entire relationship of someone who cares for us.
- APPLYING THE PARALLEL-1: Even more so, when we experience pain, God wants us to have an overriding perspective of His love and faithfulness. This is why we are told to "remember" God's faithfulness and meditate on the attributes of God.
- EARTHLY PARALLEL-2: Forgetting people's unfaithfulness: Since our earliest memory, people have let us down in many ways. Yet when someone hurts us in some manner, we tend to respond as if it should not have happened again. Our thoughts may be, "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 would not, we need to know that people will let us down. We must therefore lean carefully on people so we do not falter when they sin. We must stand strong on God who fails no one. A big part of standing strong on God is remembering his faithfulness.
- APPLICATION: Make a list of the attributes of God. (Love, power, etc.) How do these attributes compare to the limitations you face? Make a list of God's faithfulness in your life. Include answers to prayer. Write out how considering God's attributes would have changed your response and your feelings about some of your past difficulties.
- *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 1984 NIV This document may be copied and sold for up to printing and mailing costs.