

FOUNDATIONS

with

STUDY GUIDE and DIGGING DEEPER

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

This belongs to

The study is in the back section.

This can be found online at yesgod.info/foundations



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. (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)*

- 1) Consider 1 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 God and love (do what is best for) others. _____

- 2) What areas of your life are you not applying truth (be honest)? _____

- 3) Read and consider the rest of the above passages. What changes might there be in your perspective? _____

- 4) When truth is revealed to you, ask yourself what the meaning of the truth is and how it applies to your life. If possible, note a time someone shared a new truth with you. _____

- 5) List a few beneficial facts about overall health that you're aware of but don't often put into practice. _____

- 6) List a few things about money management, spending less or working extra for example, that you know but don't often put into practice. _____

- 7) Go through the list of foundations. Choose a few that you already were aware of but haven't done a good job applying in your life. Do your best to come up with what has kept you from applying these consistently. _____

- 8) Go through the list of foundations again. Choose a few that you think you do the poorest job of integrating into your life. _____

- 9) What are specific things you can do to improve each of them (the list from #7). Examples: Take 5 minutes each day to meditate on some truths. Put a truth reminder note on your desk at work. Do an act of kindness for someone. _____

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. 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*

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.
 - a. God's Love _____
 - b. God's Power _____
- 2) List at least 2 difficult times in your life.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
- 3) How would your perspective be different if you had trusted that God was all-powerful and all-loving?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
- 4) What more could God do to prove His power, to prove His love? _____
- 5) Spend at least 3 minutes meditating on your answer. Note any thoughts. _____
- 6) 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? _____
- 7) Visualize yourself with God surrounding you and telling you He's got things under control. Describe yourself being in the perfect peace described in Isa 26:3. _____
- 8) When you trust in the truth, the result is perfect peace. Our emotions can be an indicator of when we're not abiding with Christ. List times of painful emotions (fear, worry, anger, feeling disrespected, unappreciated, etc.) in your life. _____
- 9) Were you trusting that God had those situations handled? _____
- 10) If not, write out how your reaction would have been different if you fully trusted God. _____
- 11) 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 the prior 3 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 spend doing these?
 - a) Reading _____
 - b) Studying _____
 - c) Memorizing _____
 - d) Meditating _____
- 2) If there's room for improvement, what specifically can you do differently? (Ex: read an extra 10 minutes before getting up) How would you describe the amount of time you spend doing these?
 - a) Reading _____
 - b) Studying _____
 - c) Memorizing _____
 - d) Meditating _____
- 3) Praying at a set-aside time.
 - a) How would you describe the amount of time you spend doing so? _____
 - b) If there's room for improvement, what specifically can you do differently? (Ex: Pray an extra 10 minutes before getting up) _____
- 4) Talking to God and seeking how God is communicating with you throughout the day.
 - a) How would you describe the amount of time you spend doing so? _____
 - b) If there's room for improvement, what specifically can you do differently? (Ex: set a timer on your phone to go off each hour to remind you to look vertically and reflect on God's perspective of what you're going through) _____

Consider these three aspects of obedience.

- 1) Saying no to ungodliness.
 - a) What things do you find yourself giving into either out of choice or habit that doesn't please God? _____
 - b) Confess them _____
 - c) What do you gain long-term by continuing in sin? _____
- 2) Make choices to do what is right. This aspect isn't about how we treat others. Your answers for example could be going to church, taking care of your body, or the parts above about time in the Word and prayer. Read Jam 4:17. What aren't you doing that could please God? _____
- 3) 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 depth on this, look at the Foundation (Motives Matter).
 - a) What parts of your life don't you include God in? _____
 - b) How can you do what you're doing now but do it for God? _____

LOVING OTHERS

1) Read James 1:27 What do you do to take care of the truly needy either with time or money?

2) What can you do or do better?

3) Meditate that we are to become Christ-like and 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 thoughts come to mind?

4) Name at least three family members or friends whom you spend most of your time with. List one or two of these that make them feel most loved. (Quality time, gifts, service, words of affirmation or touch) If you don't know, ask them.

Name

List the ways they receive love most from the above list

Name

List specific ways you can love them best

5) Consider your overall attitude as you engage others. In what ways is it not consistent with this verse? *Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.* Phil 2:4

6) As you interact with people throughout the day, what can you do to show love to them? For example, smile, compliment, offer to help. Name some people or situations where you can do a better job of loving and what specific action you can take.

Name

Specific ways you can love them best

7) Make a list of people you could add to those you pray for.

4-EVERYTHING in our lives is a gift

- *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.* 1 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

1) Write out a list of personal attributes. (Ex. looks, athletic abilities, intellect)

2) _____
Write out a list of accomplishments. (Ex. Material things, position)

3) Do you see yourself as better than people who don't have your qualities or accomplishments? Be honest.

4) _____
Consider the above verses and write down any change in perspective.

5) _____
Write another list of your expectations out of life. Examples could 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. _____

6) _____
After meditating on the verses below, write out any changes in your perspective.

7) _____
Write out at least five benefits you have because of your salvation.

8) _____
Spend at least 3-5 minutes thinking about them.

9) _____
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.

10) _____
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 can't do anything to deserve an eternal relationship with God in Heaven.

11) _____
Make a list of the main categories of any physical possessions you own. _____

12) _____
What did you do to deserve them? _____

13) _____
Make a list of significant benefits you have due to living now instead of 300 years ago.

14) _____
On a scale from 1-10, how thankful are you each day for those benefits? _____

15) _____
What would help you be more thankful? _____

5 - ALL GOOD AND LOVE IS FROM GOD.

1. What are some of the ways you've been blessed by others?

2. Consider each one as that person is a vessel of the good, the love you received, and that love coming from God. What thoughts come to mind?

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

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

5. How does seeing all the good coming from God help you trust Him for the future?

6. Write out some of the sacrificial things you've done for others.

7. Consider that the good, the love, didn't come from you, but came from God and through you. How does that change your view of yourself?

8. How does it change your view of who you are compared to others?

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

Although this study may seem simple and redundant, it will help you learn how to learn about God from the Bible and life events in a manner you may never have experienced. Going through this several times using different examples will help train your mind to seek these important answers.

- 1) Read through I John 1. Even if you don't learn anything new, write out what can be learned about
 - a) God _____
 - b) your relationship with Him God _____
 - c) what He expects out of you. _____
- 2) 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
 - a) God _____
 - b) your relationship with Him God _____
 - c) what He expects out of you. _____
- 3) As you read and study the Bible, keep looking for the answers to these three questions.
 - a) Consider how many earthly examples including the parables are used in the Bible to teach about Spiritual things. God is not limited to teaching us from the Bible. His revelation of who He is and what He expects out of us is all around us. In a following question, the method we should use in testing our perceptions will be dealt with.
 - b) On a scale from 1-10, how would you rate how much you seek God in your personal experiences? _____
- 4) Think about a time when you were hurting. Describe your pain at that time.

- 5) Describe what Jesus went through in His life and death. write out what can be learned about
 - a) God _____
 - b) your relationship with Him God _____
 - c) what He expects out of you. _____
- 6) Think through at least one other life event. write out what can be learned about
 - a) God _____
 - b) your relationship with Him God _____
 - c) what He expects out of you. _____
- 7) Thinking about the prior question, what Bible verses confirm that what you believe you learned is true? _____
- 8) If you can't think of any, use a search engine and put in "verses" along with the topic you believe you learned. Read the verses around that verse or verses. What makes you think that the verse you found is in context? If you need help knowing 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 as well as understanding the context it was written in.

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 far 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 done in the past obeying this command? _____
- 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) Ask for God's help to not repeat it or similar sins.
- 5) How good are you at learning from your mistakes? _____
- 6) How good are you at learning from what you view as others' mistakes? _____
- 7) Which ones haven't you done a good job learning from? _____

Why do you think you repeat some mistakes or make the same ones you see others making?

- 8) If you spend time in regret or reminiscing on might-have-beens, what benefit do you receive from doing so? _____

Consider the future:

- 1) See James 4:14. On a scale from 1-10, how much would you say you worry about the future? _____
- 2) What benefit do you receive from worrying about it? _____
- 3) 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?

- 4) 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 good of a job you do preparing for the future with your
 - i) Health _____
 - ii) What can you do to do a better job? _____
 - iii) Money _____
 - iv) What can you do to do a better job? _____

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 moment you're living in rather than the past or future? _____
- 2) What could you change so you would think more about the moment you are in?

- 3) On a scale from 1-10, how much of your time do you spend seeking God in the moment? _____
- 4) What could you change so you would think more about God in the moment you are in?

- 5) On a scale from 1-10, how much of your time do you spend seeking God in the moment? _____
- 6) What could you change so you would think more about God in the moment you are in?

- 7) Write out any accomplishments that you believe will make you better please God.

- 8) 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 change your view of your accomplishments before God?

- 9) Now, consider that any accomplishments you wrote about are in 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 can't 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 out those things that have 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 right now. _____

- 3) Recent decisions you have made. (Example: lying)

- 4) What do you hope to gain by fulfilling your own will if it is in conflict with God's? _____
- 5) What change can you make in your perspective, to have an ongoing attitude consistent with Luke 22:42?

LOOKING AT YOUR LIFE

- 1) Look at this line representing human history and note the dot.

- 2) That dot compared to a line showing 5000 years of human history is your life. Seeing that dot as your life may help give perspective to understanding that your life is a mist. Write down a couple of sentences that describe how you see your life when you picture it is so short compared to human history, much less eternity. _____

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

- 3) Write out what keeps you from making that an hour, a day, or a full week or longer.

- 4) What are some significant differences between living your life for yourself and living it for God?

- 5) List different aspects of your life below. They could include work, taking care of possessions, and spending time with others.
- 6) Rate each of them on a scale from 1 to 10 for 10 for how hard you work at them.
- 7) Write out what keeps you from working harder at each of them.
- 8) Next to each item put a number that prioritizes the importance you place on each item.
- 9) Place a number next to each of them, and put them in order of the priority you believe God would have you placed on 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
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

- 10) For the tasks, where there is a difference, note what reason you have for having a different priority than God has. _____
- 11) What is going on differently in your head if you are picturing doing each of those tasks for the Lord? _____
- 12) Read Matt 22:37-39 How often during the day are these two commands foremost in your mind? _____
- 13) On a scale from 1 to 10 how much is it **in your mind** to be a witness to unbelievers by your actions? _____
- 14) On a scale from 1 to 10 how much **are your actions** a witness of God's love to unbelievers? _____

9 – DIFFICULTY IN OUR LIFE COMES FROM THE FALL

As you make the below lists, make sure to note times you've been hurt or angry in response to the events happening.

Physical Corruption

- 1) Make a list of things in your life that have broken, rotten, or worn out causing you to have to work either to fix them or to earn money to replace them. _____

- 2) Make a list of illnesses or injuries you have had. _____

- 3) Make a list of sicknesses injuries, or deaths of those close to you that have caused you inconvenience or emotional pain. _____

Other People's Sin

Make a list of the sins of others that have negatively impacted your life. It could be anything from their selfishness keeping you from doing what you would have enjoyed to outright meanness directed toward you. _____

Your sin

Make a list of how your sins have caused difficulty in your life or the lives of others. _____

When we don't have realistic expectations, we aren't living in truth. That gives Satan an opportunity to sidetrack us and to get us to react in ways that aren't fitting with children of God. Many times, we confuse realistic expectations with reasonable expectations. Reasonable expectations are the way life should happen if the world wasn't corrupt and people treated each other with kindness. Realistic expectations are achieved by seeing the world and people the way they really are and remembering it.

- 1) Go through the above lists and put an "R" in front of which ones based on everything that you've observed in the world and history that people would never expect to happen.
- 2) Spend at least five minutes looking over your list and thinking about these difficult things being part of living in a corrupt world. What if anything changed in your view?

- 3) Pray and thank God that someday He is taking you out of this world into a perfect place where there is no corruption. What are your thoughts and feelings? _____

10 – GOD TEACHING US THROUGH CONSEQUENCES

(If you haven't completed the study guide for lesson 9, Difficulty In Our Life Comes From the Fall, it would be best to do so first.)

Go through your answers for the following. For each one as you can, remember the difficulty and perhaps the emotional reaction you went through. Whereas this may seem redundant, it allows you to see difficulties in your past with more clarity. You can retrain your mind to see your personal life events with God's purpose being the bigger picture. Why wouldn't you want to not only put all that pain to good use but to give purpose to it? For each of the below consider an event, your original and new thoughts and feelings.

Original: List thoughts and feelings you remember having at the time.

New: Look at them perhaps through different eyes, as God's discipline in directing your focus toward Him, to learn to trust Him more, to understand His heart more. Note what different thoughts and feelings do you have.

Physical Corruption

1) Make a list of things in your life that have broken, rotten, or worn out causing you to have to work either to fix them or to earn money to replace them.

- a. Event _____
- b. Original _____
- c. New _____

- d. Event _____
- e. Original _____
- f. New _____

2) Make a list of illnesses or injuries you have had.

- a. Event _____
- b. Original _____
- c. New _____

- d. Event _____
- e. Original _____
- f. New _____

3) Make a list of illnesses injuries, or deaths of those close to you that have caused you inconvenience or emotional pain.

- a. Event _____
- b. Original _____
- c. New _____

- d. Event _____
- e. Original _____
- f. New _____

Other People's Sin

Make a list of the sins of others that have negatively impacted your life. It could be anything from their selfishness keeping you from doing what you would have enjoyed to outright meanness directed toward you.

- a. Event _____
- b. Original _____
- c. New _____

- d. Event _____
- e. Original _____
- f. New _____

- g. Event _____
- h. Original _____
- i. New _____

Your sin

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

- a. Event _____
- b. Original _____
- c. New _____

- d. Event _____
- e. Original _____
- f. New _____

- g. Event _____
- h. Original _____
- i. New _____

Section 1 When we are doing our best

- 1) Write out at least one time when you were treating people properly, doing the right thing, and you were mistreated. _____
- 2) What would have been different about your attitude and your actions if you had accepted that mistreatment came as a result of the fall of man? _____

- 3) What would have been different about your attitude and your actions, had you given thought that Jesus went through on purpose, far more throughout his life because of His love for you, than the mistreatment you suffered? _____

Section 2 When something happens to us

- 1) Write out two or three difficult things that have happened to you in your life. _____

- 2) Just like above, for each of them write out what would have been different in your attitude and your actions if you took those opportunities to better understand how Christ suffered for you. _____

- 3) For each of them, write out what would have been different with your attitudes and your actions if you accepted what happened as within God's will and used it to draw you closer to him. _____
- 4) For each of them, write out what would have been different with your attitudes and your actions had you believed that what happened would make you a more mature person. _____

Section 3 When we've done "wrong."

- 1) If you struggle with being reprimanded, write out ways in which your attitude would have been different if you had accepted the reprimand as a redirection of your life to a healthier place.

11 – MOTIVES MATTER

1) Consider what motivates you to complete different tasks in your life. Those tasks could be 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 the answer be? _____

2) Think of times when you worked hard and weren't appreciated for it. List one _____

3) Who were you doing it for? Be honest. _____ At times, we may do it for ourselves, or to receive praise. At times we may do it for others, to try to please them and there are other times we do things just to make our lives easier. If we are doing things for God, out of obedience, we should not even want anyone to notice. We've already received His pleasure with us

4) In the section, "It is not about us, and our desired way; it is about God," in question #7, you wrote a list of many aspects of your life. Go to that list, reflect on it, and mark each of them with one of the following letters describing how much you do those things for God: A-Always for God, M-mostly, B-both, S-seldom, and N-never.

5) List tasks here that you do the poorest job of doing for God. Write next to them what needs to change for you to be doing them for God. Col 3:23

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

6) What benefit do you get from doing things for yourself? _____
_____ Visualize all of that as building on sand.

7) Write out some of the times you have done your "acts of righteousness" to have some personal reward or thanks. _____

8) Now, visualize doing that act out of obedience to God. What different thoughts or feelings do you have?

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."

9) For the following four questions, rate each on a scale from 1-10 and write what specifically you can do to improve your rating in the future. How would you rate your focus

a. at work, doing household tasks, or caring for others if you don't work as working for the Lord and not for men? _____

b. getting to better know God and what He expects from you when you read the Bible? _____

c. when service for others to be for the Lord, not for men? _____

d. taking care of your physical possessions as being for the Lord, not for men? _____

12 – OUR ONLY SOURCE FOR GUARANTEED TRUTH IS THE BIBLE

1) What changes in your schedule can you make to take more time to seek truth in God's Word?

2) List some mistakes you've made during your life. After each one, write how believing in the truth of the Bible would have helped you avoid them.

3) Make a list of who you have trusted in the past (family, friends, politicians) that you have found out later were flawed or deceptive or that disappointed you in some way. _____

4) Make a list of some man-made things that you thought were trustworthy like a car or something you purchased that ended up disappointing you. _____

5) Consider things you trusted in this world and make a list of some things that disappointed or shocked you. If nothing comes to mind, think of all the things that happened during COVID. _____

6) Looking over questions 2-5, how might having believed in the Bible changed the outcome of those situations? _____

7) What have you believed in the past that was false about anything? _____

8) Where did you learn those false beliefs? _____

9) If a person is looking for truth about God and what He wants from us, what is the most accurate place to find it outside of the Bible? _____

10) If you, understandably so, have a hard time answering this question, how does that change your desire to learn more from the Bible? _____

11) What do you think gets you to trust in man's wisdom rather than the Bible?

12) How has that not worked well in your life?

13) What change in your thinking process might change how you can in the future put more trust in the Bible, in the truth presented to you by God rather than the intelligence of the world?

13 – DECEPTION OFTEN COMES FROM WORLDLY THINKING

- 1) On a scale from 1 to 20, rate yourself on how good of a job you've done being as responsible as you can be to have a sufficient amount of money for later years. 10 would be just the right amount. 20 would be having much more than you could ever need. _____

- 2) On a scale from 1 to 10 with 10 being all the time, how much is your focus on being responsible with money for the purpose of you being effective in God's service? _____

- 3) On a scale from 1 to 10 rate how good a job you do taking care of your body. Drinking plenty of water, eating healthy, and getting regular exercise as you are able. If you believe you give too much attention to your body, put a little "x" next to the 10. _____

- 4) On a scale from 1 to 10 with 10 being all the time, how much is your focus on being responsible with health for the purpose of being effective in God's service? _____

- 5) Read Colossians 3:1 on a scale from 1 to 10 assess where you think your heart is on any given day, what is important to you with heavenly things being a 10? _____

- 6) Read Colossians 3:2 on a scale from 1 to 10 and assess where you think your mind is at any given day with how much you think about heavenly things being at 10. _____

- 7) Go through each of the 6 assessments above and write out specific changes you believe God wants you to make.
- 8) Health and money are two earthly things where long-term thinking is profitable. What is the result of short-term earthly thinking? _____

- 9) If you have short-term thinking, why do you think you haven't made past decisions giving thought to the future? _____
- 10) _____ What
are some events in your life that brought about some fairly strong negative emotions?
Event. Emotion/Feeling
- | | | |
|----|-------|-------|
| 1. | _____ | _____ |
| 2. | _____ | _____ |
| 3. | _____ | _____ |
| 4. | _____ | _____ |
- 11) What deception did you experience during those events because of worldly (horizontal) thinking?
1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
 4. _____

12) Look at those events with the lens of your real treasure, your eternal life, being in heaven. Take each event and write out what you are thinking and feeling would be if you were thinking of your life as eternal.

Thinking

Emotion/Feeling

- | | | |
|----|-------|-------|
| 1. | _____ | _____ |
| 2. | _____ | _____ |
| 3. | _____ | _____ |
| 4. | _____ | _____ |

13) How would your thinking and feeling be different if you believed that God loves you and has everything in control?

Thinking

Emotion/Feeling

- | | | |
|----|-------|-------|
| 1. | _____ | _____ |
| 2. | _____ | _____ |
| 3. | _____ | _____ |
| 4. | _____ | _____ |

14) Health and money are two earthly things where long-term thinking is profitable. What is the result of short-term earthly thinking? _____

15) If you have short-term thinking, why do you think you haven't made past decisions giving thought to the future? _____

16) How do you think you could avoid being deceived into horizontal thinking in the future? _____

17) How can you take time each day, throughout the day to be thinking about Heaven more? _____

14 – WE NATURALLY FORGET OUR IDENTITY, PEOPLE’S UNFAITHFULNESS AND GOD’S FAITHFULNESS

- 1) List some things people have done that have hurt or disappointed you. _____

- 2) Have you had people or even the same person hurt or disappoint you in the past? _____
- 3) What made you think they would be different the most recent time they hurt you? _____

- 4) Based on your life experience, what would be a realistic (not preferred) expectation from others?

- 5) List at least 5 times you viewed God as being faithful.

- 6) What has kept you from thinking of these more when you go through difficult times?

- 7) What can you do differently in the future? _____

- 8) What is your identity as a Christian? In other words, how does God see you?

- 9) Why is it important to keep that in mind? _____

- 10) What would help you keep that in mind? _____

You answered the below questions in the first study. Go through them again and see how your answers might be different and what additional thoughts you have now that you’ve completed all the studies.

- 1) Go through the list of foundations. Choose a few that you already were aware of but haven’t done a good job applying in your life. Do your best to come up with what has kept you from applying these consistently.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
- 2) Go through the list of foundations again. Choose a few that you think you do the poorest job of integrating into your life.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
- 3) What are specific things you can do to improve each of them (the list from #7). Examples: Take 5 minutes each day to meditate on some truths. Put a truth reminder note on your desk at work. Do an act of kindness for someone.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____



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 of 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 of 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 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 think 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)*

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2-GOD'S LOVE AND POWER!

1. ACCEPTING THAT GOD'S LOVE AND POWER IS 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

6. DO WE REALLY "BELIEVE?"

7. GOD HAS EVERYTHING UNDER CONTROL

ACCEPTING THAT GOD'S LOVE AND POWER IS SUPERIOR TO OURS

The subject of resting on God's love and power may be the simplest and the most rewarding Foundation to put into practice. It is a simple concept. We are flawed. We are limited in every way imaginable, our bodies and our minds are flawed. We are lulled and deceived into thinking we are near invincible, particularly in our early years. Giving up on our view of our bodies and particularly our minds is frightening to most of us. We depend on both to get us through life or we are forced to depend on others. Depending on others results in us giving up our sense of independence.

• GOD'S POWER

God's power is far beyond our comprehension. He is outside of time, outside of 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 get a glimpse of the physical creation of the universe and the earth. In Genesis, nine times we read, "God said," and all that we know was brought 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 wonder whether God's power is both beyond our imagination and more than sufficient to be capable of "solving" whatever problems we face?

• OUR WEAKNESS

This is why when we struggle, when we feel weak or better yet realize our own weakness, and feel frightened, God has already answered. Paul with all his strengths was given a weakness to remind him of his frailty. God's answer to Paul in the following passage applies to us as well.

*"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 really are, that God's power is made evident. When we think and live like we have got everything handled, that lie and our pride resist God's power working in our lives. It is not that He can not do the work. (Job 42:2) It is that God will not get the Glory so He does not do the work. When it appears that we are responsible for a positive outcome either in our own eyes or those observing, we get the glory. It is not God's purpose in the world for us to be glorified and it is not the purpose He created us for either. An example in the Bible that explains 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 wants glory and we are here to glorify Him.

We simply are weak. The issue of our weakness becomes a stumbling block in two different ways.

- First, we think we are not weak, and that we can handle life just fine on our own, with a little help from God from time to time when we think we need Him.
- Second, we think that we are so weak, that things are so bad, that the God of the universe is not 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. Now, 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 think we are capable, we are being prideful. When we think we are too weak, we are being prideful. How can this be? The capable are not considering that their next breath is being held together by Jesus.

"He is before all things, and in him all things hold together." Col 1:17

Give at least a moment to think about the meaning of the word "all." What does it not include? Nothing. Without Christ's active power, the universe vaporizes into nothing! How can we possibly take credit for our minuscule accomplishments?

When we think we are too weak, we may be comparing ourselves to a time when we did not think we were weak. We may have thought at one time we were capable based on some physical or mental attribute or some material things we possessed. The pride is evident in that case because we falsely believe that if we had those things back, we would no longer be weak. Pride also comes in the midst of our perceived weakness being too much for God because we think somehow, that we are a strong enough being in this universe that the one who created it and the one who sustains it, Jesus, does not have enough goodness, love and power to be bigger than our huge, in our own eyes, weakness.

• 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 be in control of the situation we face.

We do not have perfect peace because we do not trust in a perfect God. Our peace increases as our view of God's love and God's power increases.

TRUSTING: GOD OR OURSELVES?

Let us simplify it with the big picture. We have shown ourselves to be untrustworthy, incapable, and unloving at times. Clearly, based on our history, we are not dependable. God has always shown Himself to be trustworthy, capable, and loving. Even though *"we see but a poor reflection"* now, (1 Cor 13:12) and our flawed view of God may be very small when we are struggling, when we are sinking, He in our flawed minds is similar to a small life raft in the middle of the ocean. Two false views keep us from getting in the raft.

- We think we are capable. To get in requires humility, admitting we can not make it on our own. Our view of our abilities is flawed.
- We do not see the raft as capable of saving us. Our views of God's love and ability are flawed.

When we get in and hold on, our eyes will be opened to find that the raft we are on will soon be picked up by a Coast Guard vessel that has been looking for us.

God does not present Himself to us in all His majesty, revealing all of His love and power. If He did, in our human form, we would die. But even if there was a way, all that God is so outshines the majesty of the world that people would choose God out of self-preservation and selfishness. That is not God's desire for mankind.

POINTING US TO JESUS

He had a plan put into place before the beginning of time. That plan was 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 is purposefully to point humanity to Jesus. Jesus showed us what love is.

"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

DO NOT EXPECT TO SEE CLEARLY

It is important to stop and consider as much as we can, the depth of the love of God. In our seeking to understand God, it is important to start with the fact that *"we see but a poor reflection."* Otherwise, we can come to the false conclusion that if we can not understand something about God, it must not be true. Few, if any, readers understand all the complexities of a jet airplane but that does not stop them from flying. What has God done to show His immense love?

Paul's prayer for us is that we would see God more clearly, by faith, not because His majesty is shown to us in a way that takes away 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

Even if the raft may look small in our eyes, it is our only hope. But God does not want us to see Him as our only hope just because we at last see how flawed we are. He wants us to see Him as a God who loves us beyond our imagination, and that we would grasp how high and deep His love is.

DIGGING DEEPER YET INTO God's Love

1. Before time began, God, knowing we would sin, planned for our creation and redemption. Who makes something they know will not do what it was made for? God. Consider that God knew ahead of time every sin you have ever committed and those you will commit and He made you anyway! That is love! Before God made man, He knew that the result would be immense suffering on His part. He "looked ahead" and chose to do so anyway. We can not conceive of being all-powerful and having such love to be willing to go through such suffering for such flawed creatures. It is important to spend some time here to reflect on, as much as we are able, 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.** *"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 We do not like humbling ourselves before others, much less thinking of becoming, for example, a bug.
- **Jesus gave up being all-knowing, all-powerful, and present everywhere both in space and in 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 in this moment is beyond human comprehension. We can only get a glimpse perhaps, by visualizing several people who are 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. But, in this moment of created time, both experienced a splitting, a chasm, a separation that if could have been felt by the universe, 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 can not imagine the agony Jesus went through when He took ALL the sins of the world on 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."* (1 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)

3. He calls us sons. Jesus, so to speak, took our place in prison. We were not left out on the street to start over, fend for ourselves, or find meaning. We were adopted into the family of God. Most of us, never having been an orphan, can feel the excitement of a family not only taking us into their home but adopting us, giving us their name, caring for us as one of their own, and including us in their will. We do not feel loved being part of God's family at times because Satan blinds us to the truth, the immensity of 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."* (1 John 3:1-2)

4. God glorifies Himself in us. Every one of us is a unique creation of God. When we do the will of God, loving others, we have a unique light that shines. When it does, God is glorified. (Matt 5:16) Consider that God's glory is shining through broken you! He has chosen you to be the vessel of His love. Wow! What love it takes to use broken

vessels to show glory through, 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)

5. He's 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 have wished you could have, but it would be 100 times better, you would be so excited and feel so cared for. Not a house, but a huge mansion with servants. Not a vacation but months in the best resorts in the world. 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 do not have even more excitement about a gift that never ends? We are not doing what it says to do in Col 3:1-3. What more can God do to show how much He loves you? *"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)

"What more do I expect God to do so I feel loved?"

Can you think of what earthly thing you would trade for any one of the five ways God shows love to us?

DO WE REALLY "BELIEVE?"

Because this is so important, so foundational, it is best that we look at peace and trust again in a practical way.

"You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you." Isa 26:3

We do not have perfect peace because we are not trusting in a perfect God. Our peace increases as our view of God's love and God's power increases. When we do not have perfect peace, it is important to identify the problem.

We can compare our inner peace to a thermometer telling us whether we have a fever or not. Peace is much more than a gauge, but it can be used as one. The problem is simple. We either do not believe that God is powerful enough to take care of us or we do not believe that He loves us enough to do so. It could even be both. The word "believe" in the Bible has an additional meaning we do not usually think of when we use the word in English. Trust. If a friend just finished aeronautical school and asked if we believed they could fly, our response would quickly be, "Yes." If they asked if we would go with them on their first flight without an instructor and we hesitated, we did not believe they could fly using the Greek definition of "believe."

To help see how this idea of trust is part of "believe," read through these verses three times replacing the word "believe" with "trust," then "have confidence in" and finally, "place your trust in." This helps us see how these definitions fit much of the intended meaning, not just as we would mean many times 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 believe."* John 6:36
- *Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me!"* John 8:45

We need to get this settled in our minds regarding whether or not we trust God's power and love. Trusting God's power is not a hard thing to do. We need to spend a short period of time thinking about His power. He made the entire universe, including time itself, by His word. What more evidence could anyone ask for? When it comes to His love, many have a problem trusting for several reasons.

- They do not know the meaning of Agape love. It is doing what is best for the other no matter how one feels.
- They know their own love is flawed.
- They know others who have let them down because they have flawed love.
- They have not spent time meditating on how much God loves them in so many ways.
- They minimize the most important way, the death of Jesus on the cross.

We can solve these roadblocks by understanding that God's love is perfect and our love is flawed so we will do our best never to compare the two in order to understand His love. When we, like Peter, take our eyes off of Jesus and falter, we need to come back to the five ways God shows His love to us and ask the question. "What more do I expect God to do in order for me to trust that He loves me enough to take care of me?"

We so much of the time in spite of all the evidence we have against ourselves, trust ourselves.

*"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

Breaking down this popular verse is simple. Focus on the bolded words and it is clear to see that it is all of our hearts, that leaning on something not solid results in failure, and again that it is in all of our ways that we need to acknowledge God.

GOD HAS EVERYTHING UNDER CONTROL

He wants us to know that He not only loves us beyond our imaginations He 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 see our limits, but much more importantly His limitless love and power.

Perhaps, if God were to sum up in three words His response to even the most difficult situation we can ever face, He would say to us.

"I'VE GOT THIS!"

5 - ALL GOOD AND LOVE IS FROM GOD!

Introduction: The purpose of this section is to discuss the source of love and good. It's best to read over the section about [God's Love and Power](#) first.

The passage below needs no introduction or explanation, only 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, spend at least 2-3 minutes reading and thinking about the above passage. It couldn't be more clear 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."* 1 John 4: 16

All good comes from God. Again, the Bible couldn't be more clear about the source of good, as this passage begins with a warning against being deceived to believe 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 may protest that in these verses Jesus is insinuating he isn't good. That's not what this passage says. Jesus asked why the man called him good. The man did not know that Jesus was God. If you look at this passage from the man's perspective, there's no confusion.

The important takeaway is the statement by Jesus that there is no one good except God alone. While we may accept this statement as truth, it is important to make sure it is our view of ourselves. Many people, including many Christians, see themselves as "good." Nobody is good. Period. Let's look at what integrating this truth into our lives looks like. We will be humble, not seeing ourselves as better than we are. Another passage 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 before or since we've been saved is God's good in us and through us. This may be hard to take, to believe. Thankfully, God is so good to be so clear about everything that is 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 was 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 don't get the praise. God does. God does because it is His good showing through broken, sinful people!

Our attitude then is one of humility, of not being the source in any manner of good or of love. While we feel like nothing, or useless without God, that's not the whole picture. The rest of the picture is that the God of the universe uses our broken sinful vessels to show 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 showing love for someone else by doing what's best for them and serving them, we can be excited that the God of the universe chose to use lowly us 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 view based on truth saves us much heartache from people letting us down. The reality is that for a season, God showed His goodness and love through a person to touch our lives. When a particular person lets us down, for at least that moment they are no longer being vessels of God in our lives. God has promised neither to leave nor forsake us. He is still here. He doesn't want us leaning on anyone so hard that when they no longer become vessels, we fall. We need to first look up and know how much we're loved by God ([FIVE WAYS GOD LOVES US](#)) and look around wondering who He will use as a vessel next in our lives or when that 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.](#)

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

These are a few more quotes from *Knowing God* by J.I Packer. Packer's book may be the best read for those who wish to get to know God better. The quotes below are not only a taste of the book but a challenge and pathway to getting to know God better. It will be profitable for you to meditate on one or a few sentences or phrases at a time.

"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."

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
 - a. MAN'S WEAKNESS
 - b. GOD'S POWER
7. PLEASING OURSELVES AND PRESERVATION
8. OUR SIGNIFICANT INSIGNIFICANCE
9. THE INTENTIONAL ASPECT
 - a. TWO COMMANDS
 - i. LOVING EVERYONE
 - ii. LOVING THE UNBELIEVER
10. THE REACTIONARY ASPECT
11. SUMMARY IN WORSHIP

INTRODUCTION

The idea of living life like it is "all about God" instead of "it is all about us" needs to be our underlying attitude. You are a man or a woman. It is something you just know. You never have to remind yourself. Even though as a man may have some feminine mannerisms or as 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. In the same way, the experiences we have in the world do not identify us either. The identity 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." 1 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 along with 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 significant truth for one to embrace.

How can we come to the point where we 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 most important life issues, we simply do not have enough life to learn from our own experiences. Thankfully, when it comes to spiritual matters, we have the Bible. If we only trusted the Bible completely... Consider the experience of Solomon. It is important that we see that our lives are futile without God.

Solomon was much wiser than most and has shared wisdom with us. He spends much of Ecclesiastes describes life on earth without a focus 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 to seek truth. If trusting in Solomon's conclusions is not convincing enough to you, think through what it is that gives meaning to life. We can observe others who have more than what we have to discern if the attainment of what we desire has brought fulfillment in their lives. Celebrities, for example, have significantly more popularity, talent, influence, and material things than most people in even the richest countries in the world. Along with all their "successes" they have a significantly higher than average divorce rate. ([sourced online](#)) They also have significant problems with drug and alcohol abuse. ([sourced online](#)) How does one who is rich, good-looking, or famous know who their real friends are? It is much more difficult than it is for the average person. Their earthly accomplishments that much of the world strives after clearly are not the 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 reason about what brings fulfillment. Most people do not and can not have Solomon's perspective. Most need to be rich to see the futility of riches. Those without the pleasures of the world falsely think, "If only I had this or that, my life would be good." It is when one either attains all they desire or one is able to visualize having attained it, that they really realize those things do not fulfill. 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 either reduce suffering or to 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 one do with more pleasure? What do celebrities do with it? They fight with each other (divorce) and medicate themselves more than those who are without those commonly desired luxuries of life. Perhaps life would be fulfilling if we would teach everyone to show kindness and love to one another. Would not 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? Think about the chances of that happening. Mankind has proven that even with the presence of God and God's people in the world that the world tends 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, both elected and dictators alike, to know that man just can not figure out how 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 can not even approach the life of the Garden of Eden. Mankind without God is ultimately doomed to 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 have a part in our lives for us to have a purpose and to be able to love others. If only part of us is striving for that which is eternal while a good part of our being is living for that which has no purpose, we are divided within. It is either about us or it is about God. We need to give thought to both the focus of our lives and the things that we do that are not "all about God." What is the outcome of the parts of our lives that are about us? When our identity is clear to us that we are one whose life belongs to God, our decisions and reactions are based on us living for God. When we choose to do something, we choose it as one carrying out the desires of one's leader or boss. When we experience difficulty, we view it as not only being under God's control, but being for 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 serious fallacy that many Christians fall into is having a belief system described like this.

1. God is powerful.
2. He died for me so I can go to Heaven.
3. He wants me to give Him my time on Sundays, Bible studies when I can, when I am reading the Bible, and when I am praying.
4. The rest of the time I should try not to sin.
5. If I trust Him, most of my problems will be resolved.
6. As long as I am not doing anything wrong the rest of the time, I am living the way God wants me to.

What is the problem with this list? It is the fifth and particularly the final item. It shows that this believer sees their Christian life as a life of doing, rather than being. A rewrite of the final item is better stated like this.

- The rest of the time, every moment I can, I think of how I can please God. I ask God to guide me in my decisions and my reactions. I ask God to show me how to love others the way they need love. When I encounter an unbeliever, I ask God to show me what to say. When things are pleasant, I thank God. When they are not, I think of how much God loves me and His past faithfulness and I trust God to turn things I see as bad for good. I belong to God. My life belongs to God so I try to live each moment as His servant.

The biggest difference between these two points of view is that one sees a "God time" and a "me time." The other sees all one's time as belonging to God. The fact that we are here for His Glory and His purpose, should be as real to us as whether we are a man or a woman.

THE WEDDING DAY ILLUSTRATION

The illustration of the bride's wedding day is helpful in us seeing how our lives should be all about God. For those few hours, it would be considered unconscionable for someone to do something to upset the bride or even not to give in to any reasonable wish that she had. Most friends and family would not only jump to the occasion of helping, but they would be pleased to do so and feel honored to have been of help. In fact, some would have boasted later how the bride asked them for help. When asked to do an important task, one who loves the bride does not think of what they are missing out on while serving, but only how to please the bride. This is the attitude that God wants us to have as his children; to live in a particular way that demonstrates that everything in our life is all about Him, not about us. We live in a particular way when "it is all about God" versus when "it is all about us". Our attitudes and ultimately our actions show who we are living for. Many people never grasp the concept of it being "all about God," not "about them." Many of those that do, forget it over time as the things of the world draw them back into thinking that living in this world is all or at least mostly about them. Everything in the world, in the horizontal plane, is drawing our attention to ourselves. It takes continuous discipline, looking vertically often to remind us of who we are. This concept is discussed in more detail in [remembering and forgetting](#)

APPLICATION

Consider the two extremes and what living in between looks like. The first extreme is that our entire lives are lived for God. The other extreme is that we live our lives for our own pleasure to the detriment of everyone around us. It does not matter how much suffering those around us go through as long as our life is pleasurable. That may sound harsh, but in reality, for some unbelievers who believe that man is only an advanced animal, that is consistent. The in-between part is that each of us is that person to some degree. Each time we sin in a way that hurts others, which most sins do, we are to some degree just focused on ourselves, ignoring or perhaps purposefully not caring that we may be hurting others. Jesus spoke about how "little" things are big in God's view. *"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 Rather than judge those who seem to live only for themselves, we need to look at our lives to see how in some manner we are doing the same thing. Each time we choose to live for our pleasure at the expense of others, we need to confess the selfish act and view it as living inconsistently with our identity, as belonging to God. Instead of focusing on ourselves, we can live our entire lives to please God, and in relation to 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 get the attitude implanted, the seed of truth planted so we can get 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 similar to these that describe God unimaginably far above us. As we see more clearly the vast difference between God's power and ours, it becomes naturally clear that the only purpose that can matter in our lives is His purpose.

• 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 should result in an attitude of awe, of a deep realization that God is so far superior to anything we can even imagine. Close your eyes and do your best to grasp a glimpse of His glory, His power, His everlasting nature. It is mind-boggling, beyond comprehension. We need to set this memory the best we can. Come back to it often, particularly when you note either the pleasures or pain of this world. We will find ourselves in a spirit of thankfulness and or peace. Come back to it daily and test the things you do each day, including the thinking throughout your day, and test whether or not you are living as one who serves an unimaginable God. Think about the ultimate futility of serving yourself.

PLEASEING 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. Consider that the smartest and particularly the most loving people in the world just a hundred years ago are for the most part forgotten. What is your life? For a person without a relationship with God, life consists of self-preservation and self-pleasure. It is senseless with their worldview to show love (doing what is best for the other person) to others unless they are getting something equal or greater in return. So, they are left with the purpose of maximizing self-pleasure, which Solomon calls meaningless. It is God who gives purpose, and that purpose is to give Him Glory by the way we live our lives. We still need times of self-preservation, and God blesses us with times of pleasure. In those times particularly we must have a spirit of thankfulness to God. The underlying focus of our life is to please Him by getting to know Him better and by loving others.

OUR SIGNIFICANT INSIGNIFICANCE

Look at this line representing human history and note the dot.

Consider that dot compared to a line showing 5000 years of human history is your life. Seeing that dot as your life may help give a perspective of your life as a mist.

God has given you that dot, a certain amount of time that He has ordained. Even though in one sense, you are insignificant, Christ died for you, adopted you, and desires a relationship with you. There is no other dot like you. Consider 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 so it is all about 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 the focus of our lives and our reactions to events.

THE INTENTIONAL ASPECT

The intentional part of our life, holding onto truth and acting on it is crucial in living for God instead of for ourselves. It is the purposeful part of our lives, our choices when we are not experiencing any significant outside pressure.

When we are looking horizontally at the world, there is darkness even though the devil, who disguises himself as the "angel of light" makes it look pretty. When we look up to God as the giver and sustainer and the one who gives purpose to our life, we will naturally live like the child of God that we are, His light shines out of us, and people glorify God. That is our purpose.

In addition to Col 3:17 above, the Bible clearly lays out how both 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 something that many Christians miss. It is all summed up in the word, "whatever." That includes everything.

God wants all of our time, our hearts, and our minds. He wants to be at the center of all of our activities and thoughts. Our Sunday mornings, Bible study times, and prayer times are important. Just like we do not only have certain times each day when we know we are either a man or a woman, God wants us to always know 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, at taking care of your possessions, at being the best spouse, the best child, the best parent, the best employee you can be. Work hard at being responsible with your money, health, possessions, and time that 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 can not 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 the work toward each as you believe they are important to GOD, not to your earthly desires. And do all of these FOR God.

Again, prioritize the work toward each as you believe they are important to GOD, not to your earthly desires. And do all of these FOR God.

And finally, prioritize the work toward each as you believe they are important to GOD, not to your earthly desires. And do all of these FOR God.

Repeating this was on purpose because it is so important.

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 have at all times is how we can please God. Part of the way we please God is to love (do what is best for others no matter how we feel) others.

- **LOVING EVERYONE**

Consider each person you encounter, particularly those whom you spend significant time with. Seek to find out what their real needs are and love them with God's love by meeting those needs. At times, the needs others have are clear. We can love people by helping carry something or helping around the house. Many times it is not clear at all. Many husbands have a hard time knowing how to love their wives at any given moment. Giving people money when in a bind may be exactly the opposite of loving them. They may need to experience consequences to motivate them to make positive changes. They may need time teaching them and encouraging them not to be wasteful or to work harder. Many things that people call love are enabling people to remain in unhealthy situations. Our ongoing prayer should be, "Show me how I can love others with your love today." This ongoing prayer is an example of how this commonly not understood verse is practiced. "*Pray continually*" I Thes 5:17

Another passage that can guide us when we want to know 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 directives in these passages trains us to look to God, to see that it is ALL about Him. Many husbands have been brought to their emotional knees by not looking vertically for the answer about how to love their wives. Applying the truth, that it is all about God, not about us is actually very freeing. A husband's job is not to fix his wife, or the relationship, but to be the best husband he can be, not for his wife, but for the Lord. When we live the best we can 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 amazingly freeing part is that we KNOW that God is pleased and rewards us for our obedience. So, when we perform any act of service, of love for another, whether we get a thank you or not does not matter. At a job, if we help out another employee, who would choose a thank you from that employee over a good job pat on the back from the boss and a paycheck? We work for the paycheck, not the thank you from fellow employees. In the same way, our work on earth is for God, not others. We have received the most important affirmation because our Heavenly Father is pleased. So, there is no disappointment when whatever we do, we do for the Lord.

• LOVING THE UNBELIEVER

The greatest need of an unbeliever is salvation. There are countless ways to show love to others. Showing love to them has a wide range of actions. If it is someone you will only have five minutes with, it may be sharing the Gospel or if you have done something to help them, to in some way let them know you are a Christian. If it is a close friend or family member who has heard the gospel message, it may be day in and day out, living like Christ in their presence, showing them love even though you may never initiate conversation about spiritual things. That said, the gospel can ONLY be shared with words.

THE REACTIONARY ASPECT

The reactionary aspect falls into three categories.

1. When we are doing our best, doing right, and we are attacked in some manner.
2. When something happens to us.
3. When we have done "wrong" and we receive a reprimand.

The manner in which we react to what happens to us will be looked at in detail in the topic: [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.](#)

Everything that happens to us is ordained by God.

God is using everything that happens to us, 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 manner in which God is pleased.

SUMMARY IN WORSHIP

A worship song that you may wish 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 us pack it up in just a few words. 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, be vessels of God's love. When we stop pursuing that which will not last and focus on living each moment for God, we become as close as we can to being who we were created to be.

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.

- 1. Trials are to be expected.**
- 2. God limits our trials for His purposes.**
- 3. Eternal View**
 - a. Suffering through trials creates a groaning to be with Christ.**
 - b. An eternal view of trials results in peace.**
 - c. Peace in trials comes from trusting in the power of Jesus.**
- 4. Trials reveal a false foundation in self-confidence.**
 - a. Trials remind us that we are not in control of life.**
 - b. Trials take away our self-confidence.**
- 5. Trials are for our good.**
 - a. God is involved in disciplining us.**
- b. Trials are meant to get us to a better place.**
 - c. God uses our suffering for our good.**
- 6. No Trial separates us from the love of Christ.**
- 7. Results of suffering when right**
 - a. Suffering when we are right helps us know God.**
 - b. Suffering when we are doing right results in rewards.**
 - c. 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 below have no narrative to go along with the quoted scripture. Those scriptures explain the topic best on their own.

1. Trials are to be expected.

Many people enjoy stages in their lives where trials are minor and almost unnoticed. For example, young people seldom have physical pain. Most of the time those who give effort into taking care of their bodies, finances, and relationships have fewer trials than others. It is easy for the lack of significant trials to lull people into a false sense of security. They can believe that the reason for their lack of trials is because of the way they live their lives. There is some truth in that. On average, people who take care of their bodies live healthier and longer lives. The key words here are, "on the average." If we were able to affect our outcome by our actions all the time, we, in that manner, would be like God. If we believe we can affect our outcomes, we are really believing that we have the power of God and that a particular part of our world is in our control. But that is not how the corrupted world works and it is not the view God wants us to have. It is a lie. Consider that avoiding trials is similar to achieving success when you read 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 that we can avoid trials by living wisely. We are in a corrupt world. God wants us to know that He, not us, is in charge. When life seems without trials, use this time to discipline yourself. Take the energy that you would have used to work through trials to dig deeper into scripture, to serve others, to deny yourself as you save money and take care of your health. Choose to do that which is difficult in this world because that pleases God. you will always be aware that life can be hard because you are making it hard on yourself by being unselfish to serve others, and by giving up pleasure now to hopefully reap a future benefit. When difficulty comes, you will be trained in it and not see the difficulty as out of the ordinary,

"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

2. God limits our trials for His purposes.

It is clear 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 reign. Jesus while in the garden of Gethsemane said angels could protect him (Matt 26:53), and before Pilate, Jesus made clear that Pilate's power to do evil was given from above. (John 18:10-11) We cannot imagine the extent of evil that would be in the world if it were not for God holding Satan back. So when we face evil of any sort, we can have full confidence that it is what is allowed by God for our ultimate good, and not something that is out of control. We also need to understand that our "ultimate good" as God plans it, may be in stark contrast to what is 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

3. Eternal View

- **Suffering through trials is really a groaning 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 falsely counted on our bodies, our savings, our government, or even friends and family members not to have let us down. When they do, we realize that the foundation we thought was firm, was not firm at all. Many people view events, personal encounters, or world events and proclaim something like, "That is just not right." God has put eternity in the hearts of men (Eccl 3:11). He has given believers a partial view 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 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, to feel a bit of what it will be like to be with Jesus in Heaven, consider how much of your day you are putting the following passage into practice. If a person spends most of their day thinking about earthly things, it is difficult when a trial comes about to quickly have a Heavenly perspective.

"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

- **An eternal view of trials results in peace.**

Paul discusses the temporal and the eternal. It is one thing to read the bible and get a glimpse into Paul's perspective and life. It is entirely another thing to grasp what it means for our daily lives. It is so easy to get caught up with what is right in front of us. On this earth, we are schooling, working, and playing most of the time. At the moment, it seems to be all that life is about. When any of those goes "wrong" in our eyes, we can easily lose heart. We lose sight of the fact that we were made so that our temporary mortal lives will

be swallowed up by life; that life is Jesus. (John 14:6). Read through the following passages slowly visualizing these words describing what your view of life should be.

“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

- **Peace in trials comes from trusting in the power of Jesus.**

As the world gives us difficulties, Jesus is trying to get us to understand that the only peace in the midst of the difficulty is found in Him. We are in this world that has been made subject 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!” 1 Cor 10:12. Many times we need to experience that corruption when our expectation of how life is supposed to be is unmet. That wakes us up from trusting in our misplaced faith and redirects us back to the only solid foundation which is 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.

- **Trials remind us that we are not in control of life.**

A purpose of trials is to let us see that we are beyond our own ability. After the fall, even though mankind may think they have control or victory over aspects of life, that control is an illusion created by a lie of Satan. The intent of the lie is to get us to build confidence in ourselves, others, and the earth, rather than confidence in God. At the fall, death entered into mankind. It does not matter how much care we take to protect ourselves and to take care of our bodies, there is not only no guarantee of success, but there are guarantees that we will fail, that we will die and we cannot control when. For example, even though up to $\frac{2}{3}$ of cancer deaths can be prevented by a healthy lifestyle, the rest succumb to it in spite of the most valiant efforts to stay healthy throughout their lives. Some viruses kill the healthy at the same rate as the unhealthy. When we consider the corruption of the physical earth, there are hurricanes, fires, and earthquakes as well as other natural disasters that can take our lives or the quality of our lives away in an instant. A sinful man can take out someone's life by drunk driving, murder, or war. So, again, it is an illusion that we are ever in control. That said, our bodies and our finances are a gift from God. They are not our own (1 Cor 6:15), and on average, we bring additional trials on ourselves when we do not take care of them.

Paul went through many levels of suffering and gives 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*

- **Trials take away our self-confidence.**

The other roadblock to living as if it is all about Jesus is that we, our flesh, and our earthly desires must diminish. We naturally fight against anything that means less of us. John the Baptist saw this truth. (John 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*

5. Trials are for our good.

Many times, God's discipline, the redirecting our lives to be Christlike, is done by allowing the consequences of sin in the world to touch our lives. This discipline is meant for our good, resulting in growth and maturity.

People struggle to varying degrees with not letting their habits rule 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 means saying no to more food than is needed for our health and saying no to food that is unhealthy. Discipline is eating healthy, for instance, eating plenty of vegetables and drinking enough water. Exercise requires discipline. Good money management requires both self-control and discipline. Too many of us fail at doing a good job at one or both of these.

Spiritual self-control and discipline are not unlike the parallels of earthly ones. Say no to sin and yes to righteousness. Whereas most people do not struggle with understanding what is sin and what it looks like to say no to it, many do not see what self-discipline in a righteous life looks like. We are told to set our hearts and minds on things above, not on earthly things. (Col 3:1-2) This, like exercising or drinking enough water, takes purposeful thinking and actions. It takes discipline. What do most Christians do more of when they see things going wrong in their lives? They pray! They read their Bibles! Their focus becomes less earthly and more eternal. God's purpose for discipline in our lives goes far beyond getting us to read our Bibles and pray more. God wants our hearts and minds to be on Him; on who He is. He wants to get us to know Him better and to keep knowing Him better 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 mature to grow in Him. Even when we do not want the best for ourselves, He wants the best for us. Even when we are unwilling to go through what it takes for us to become what is best for us, He allows things to happen in our lives in order to redirect us. At times it requires significant hardship for us to become refocused.

Think of it this way: People involved in sports do not hesitate to complete very hard workouts because they are focused on what they gain. We must both understand and keep that parallel in mind when we face 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 that we suffer. Just as Jesus focused on the joy beyond the cross while He endured its pain, while 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, able to train us in the manner in which we need training. We need to be focused on the goal, not the pain it takes to reach the goal.

- **God is involved in disciplining us.**

"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

- **Trials are meant to get 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

- **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 separates 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

- **Suffering when we are right helps us know God.**

When we suffer for what is right, we are suffering in the same manner as 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 that we get to know Him. When we suffer for what is right, we can more deeply understand the ever-loving heart of God.

“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

- **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 suffer, we understand His suffering more and we get to know Him better.

“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

- **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

8. Trials prove our faith is genuine.

We do not know how strong anything is until it has been tested. In the physical realm, if we did not recognize them, we would not know the difference between a football or basketball star and a person of similar size who had never played the game. It would take a test to know the quality of their talent. The same holds true in relationships. If you have a relationship with someone and you do not know them to have gone through difficulties with others and they have not had difficulty with you, then you do not know if your relationship will last if difficulty happens. It is not only others that we are unsure about, but ourselves. And it really is not about how strong we are, rather it is about who we are putting our faith in. When we are trusting in God, in His power, and in His love, we have peace during trials.

“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 position we have given God is proven genuine when we endure trials while resting in God’s peace. Jesus is proven genuine in and through us.

“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

9. The way we handle trials is a witness of God’s work.

God’s work in our lives through trials reveals Jesus in us. The attitude of a Christian compared to an unbeliever, when there are earthly losses, bears witness that we see a greater purpose than what this earth offers. The power of Jesus is manifested in our lives. Many people have never heard of, or given sufficient thought to the Foundation Principle, “It’s not about you. It is about God.” It is about Jesus! Living and thinking often about this truth results in so much falling into place rather than seemingly falling apart. When we see that the ultimate goal God has for us is for the life of Jesus to be revealed in us, then what we used to see as senseless, 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*

10. We must keep the purpose of trials foremost in our minds.

It takes focus to remember the purpose of trials. The tempter, Satan, will do everything in his power to make you lose sight of the reality that trials will take place.

“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.” 1 Thes 3:2-5

11-MOTIVES MATTER

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 on rock. When we live for ourselves or to please others, we have built on sand.

1. **ROCK OR SAND**
 1. **READING THE BIBLE**
 2. **PRAYER AND ACTS OF SERVICE**
 3. **PERFORMING THOSE DISCIPLINES FOR THE LORD**
2. **THE SIN THAT MANY DO NOT KNOW ABOUT**
 1. **Withholding Love**
 2. **Not Serving**
 3. **Poor use of time**
3. **SUMMARY**

ROCK OR SAND

If we are putting into practice that it's all about God, not about us, we'll naturally be building on the rock. Jesus' illustration about building on the rock of sand teaches us the importance of putting God's word into practice. Jesus challenged the religious leaders of the time for their hypocrisy and attempts at following the letter of the law while ignoring the spirit of the law. There is no indication in this parable that the houses had differences in quality of construction. This section helps us to look at areas of our lives that can look the same from the outside but have different motivations, and different 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 the rock or sand falls into two main categories.

1. Tasks that we chose to do unto the Lord
2. Tasks that we do not choose to do unto the Lord

The only subcategory that only fits one of these is sin. It always falls into #2. There are a lot of things we do that can fall into either category and our purpose, makes all the difference.

READING THE BIBLE

One would think that reading or even memorizing the Bible would always be done as to the Lord. However, Jesus made this clear in His reply to the Sadducees who studied God's word at length.

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 out of a desire to please God or get to know Him better, you are doing right. If it is to for example boast to others about how many chapters you read, or even to feel good about yourself how much you read, it's building on sand.

We should read God's Word with the purpose of getting to know Him better. We could read only one verse in a day, meditate on it, and let it become real to us and it is worth more than reading two or three books daily without understanding. We understand the Word of God by the power of the Holy Spirit. To build on the rock when it comes to reading our Bibles is to read purposefully to seek to better know God and what He expects from us.

PRAYER AND ACTS OF SERVICE

Matthew 6 expresses how even what may be considered godly activities aren't 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

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 so many. In our minds, we need to think, "The service I'm 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." 1 Cor 3:11-15

Two people can be doing the exact same thing and one is building on sand and one on rock. One can be serving to feel better about themselves, to please someone else, in hopes of getting recognized, or in hopes of getting rewarded by someone. The other serves to please God and none of what the prior person hopes for matters.

There are certain activities that most people wouldn't see as sin. Stop reading here if you don't wish to be convicted.

THE SIN THAT MANY DO NOT KNOW ABOUT

Withholding Love

Scripture says *"Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins"*. James 4:17 Wow, that includes a lot. For example, it includes withholding love, Agape love which can be defined as choosing to do what's best for others no matter the cost. Jesus summed up the law commanding us to love God and love others. We might be upset with someone and justify not being vengeful if we're not doing anything to hurt them. But, if we withhold the love that we normally would be showing, we are withholding the good we know we ought to do and that is revenge which belongs to the Lord. Now, this is hard stuff, to keep giving when we are treated poorly. However, if that service is what is best for the other person at that time, and we wish to be obedient to James 4:17, we need to continue to serve in spite of the other person's behavior.

Not Serving

If we live with others, we typically have ample opportunity to serve. For those who live alone and are able, there are plenty of people who would benefit from a phone call of encouragement, a visit, or some help. If anyone is at a loss for what good they could do, a call to the church secretary may quickly fill in the blanks. If you are physically unable to help and do not see yourself as one who could encourage others, you can do what may be the most important. You can spend significant time praying for others. All this that we do, we do for the Lord.

Poor use of time

There are countless activities we engage in. In themselves, many aren't sin. But when out of balance, or when there is a good that we are ignoring so we can watch TV or surf the internet, it becomes sin. Using our time for God is covered in detail in the section, It's not about us, it's 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

SUMMARY

There are many "good" things that we may do during the day. Examples are reading the Bible, praying, taking care of our bodies and finances, housework, yard work, and our jobs. By having an attitude that we are doing it for God and God only, we build on the rock.

BASIC DOCTRINES

GOD

1. There is only one God – Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 43:10-11
2. God is a Trinity – 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Pet. 1:2
3. God is all-powerful – Psalm 115:3
4. God is sovereign – Zech. 9:14; 1 Tim. 6:15-16
5. God is spirit – John 4:24
6. God is eternal – Psalm 90:2

JESUS

1. Jesus is God – John 1:1; 10:30; 14:9
2. Jesus was sinless – 1 Pet. 2:22
3. Jesus is the only way to God the Father – John 14:6; Acts 4:12

THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. The Holy Spirit is God – Acts 5:3-4
2. The Holy Spirit is not a force. He is alive – Acts 13:2

THE BIBLE

1. The Bible is the inspired Word of God – 2 Tim. 3:16

MANKIND

1. All people have sinned – Rom. 3:23, 5:12
2. Sin separates us from God – Isaiah 59:2

SALVATION THROUGH JESUS

1. Jesus' sacrifice was a substitution for us – 1 Pet. 2:24
2. Jesus rose from the dead in His physical body – John 2:19-21
3. Salvation is a free gift of God – Rom. 4:5; 6:23; Eph. 2:8-9

HELL

1. Those who reject Jesus will go to Hell – Rev. 20:11-15
2. Hell is a place of fiery punishment – Matt. 25:41; Rev. 19:20

END TIMES

1. Jesus will return visibly to earth – Acts 1:11
2. There will be a final judgment – 2 Pet. 3:7

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 website prepared by Billy Graham.
2. **Pray:** God is always listening, always caring, and already 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.
3. **Read:** Use the online Bible reading plan or start by reading at least 10 minutes each day starting in the Gospel of John. Dig deeper.
4. **Learn:** Work your way through a beginner Bible study. 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 will help you answer the practical questions you have about God and spiritual issues. Or, ask a Christian friend or pastor. Dig Deeper
6. **Listen:** Until you find a good church, listen to online messages.
7. **Live:** Start living your life for God. It's one of the simplest and at the same time the hardest thing to do. It's hard because inside, we're 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
8. **Get together:** Find a good church. Why go to 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.org
10. **Get baptized:** When you find a church, your local pastor will help you with this. Dig Deeper
11. **Get friends:** Build friendships with other Christians. Dig Deeper

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 clearly call you to show God's love (1 John 3:17-18).
13. **Share your good news:** Tell someone about your faith. In some cases, other people will come to faith in Jesus through the example you share. Christians are still called to share the hope within us with others (1 Peter 3:15-16). Dig Deeper
14. **Never forget** how much God loves you.

EVANGELISM

howtoevangelize.org



METHOD 1:

CONNECT: Meet a need. Do or say something nice. When the person responds, "Thank you," you can say,

BRIDGE TO THE GOSPEL: "I'm happy to. God has shown me so much love I'm happy to pass it on to others." If you get any sort of positive response, you can say,

SHARE THE GOSPEL: "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.

METHOD 2:

CONNECT: Talk about what you can agree on first. Even if you haven't, 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

BRIDGE TO THE GOSPEL: 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?" The final question is one you can ask unless they respond as a believer that Jesus provides the way. "May I share with you how that happens?" For those who don't answer like the majority of people, you'll find how to respond at howtoevangelize.info to different responses you may hear.

Another way to bridge.

If they have a belief system already 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've spent over half of 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?"

SHARE THE GOSPEL: 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