

DEVOS

2017

The image shows an open Bible with handwritten notes in blue and black ink. The pages are from the Book of Hebrews. The top right corner has a large blue header that reads "DEVOS" and "2017". At the bottom of the image, there is a blue box with white text that says "NCBC Youth Group DEVOS—Hearing from God For Yourself". The Bible pages are filled with various annotations, including underlines, circles, and marginal notes. The left page is Hebrews 2:10-18, and the right page is Hebrews 3:1-6. The notes are written in a cursive, handwritten style. The blue ink is used for headings and some key phrases, while black ink is used for the main body of the notes. The overall appearance is that of a personal study or devotion journal.

NCBC Youth Group DEVOS— Hearing from God For Yourself



New Covenant

B I B L E C H U R C H

NCBC Youth Group DEVOS—
Hearing from God
For Yourself

This devotional booklet is written by the people who know you and love you dearly. Life is shared not just in words, but in real-world interactions. This is what Paul said that he did in Thessalonica: “We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us” (1 Thess. 2:8). All of us at New Covenant Bible Church love you dearly and the words written here are living proof of this.

If you already have a habit of spending time with the Lord ALONE, you will enjoy this booklet. If you do not, may this book help you to establish a faithful time of prayer, Bible reading and personal worship. The first part of this booklet is written by the Elders, Deacons, and some of their wives; the second part has some extra material to further you on the path of establishing routines in *seeking the Lord first, with all your mind, body, and soul*. Remember, we seek the Lord together; He is found by those who seek Him (Jer. 29); He satisfies the longings of those who hunger and thirst for His righteousness.

OPENING UP THE PSALMS¹

A Series on the Psalms by Rob Murphey

I. Introduction to the Psalms

Take a moment and pick any Psalm to read right now.

Which one did you read?

What did you learn?

How did you experience God as you read it?

How are the Psalms different from the rest of the Bible?

II. Wisdom Psalms

Today we will focus on one type of Psalm: Wisdom Psalms.

- a. Wisdom Psalms provide instruction for right living.
- b. They often take their themes from the wisdom books of the Old Testament: Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes
- c. Frequent themes in the wisdom Psalms are:
 - The fear of the Lord.
 - An emphasis on the Word.
 - The righteous vs. the wicked.
 - The reality and certainty of God's justice.
 - Miscellaneous counsel about everyday life.
- d. Wisdom Psalms frequently contain one or more of the following:
 - "Better" sayings (37:16; 119:72).
 - Numerical sayings (62:11-12a)
 - Warnings to sons (34:11).
 - Blessing formulas (1:1; 112:1, 127:5)
 - Rhetorical questions (34:12; 49:5-6).
- e. These Psalms are often categorized as wisdom Psalms: 1; 32; 34; 37; 49; 73; 91; 112; 119; 127, 128, 133, 139.

¹ This study is guided by the book *Opening up Psalms* by Roger Ellsworth.

Work Sheet

Read through Psalm 1.

1. Glancing back through the Psalm, which themes do you observe from Ilc. above?
2. Which elements do you see in this Psalm from Ild. above?
3. What does the word "but" indicate in vs. 2?
 - a. What does the word "meditate" mean?
 - b. What kind of parallelism does David use here?
 - c. Does observing the parallelism help you define what David means by "delight"?
How would you describe delighting in the Law of the Lord?
4. How does vs. 3 relate to vs. 2? What's the logical connection?
 - a. What figure of speech does "like a tree" introduce?
 - b. What does this figure of speech tell us about the man who delights in God's law?
In what ways is he like a tree?
5. What figure of speech does David use in vs. 4?
 - a. What is chaff?
 - b. How are the wicked like chaff (Matt. 3:12)?
6. What does the word "therefore" indicate in vs. 5?
7. What's the logical connection between verse 5 and 6? What does the word "for" indicate?

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Confidence Psalms

1. Using your worksheet from last time, describe one characteristic of a wisdom Psalm.
2. Our focus today is Psalms of confidence. These Psalms are often very personal and describe—in general terms—why God is worthy of our trust and confidence. Confidence Psalms are part of a larger group of Psalms called Psalms of Thanksgiving. These Psalms often contain the following elements (but not necessarily all as we'll see in Psalm 23):
 - a. A proclamation of praise to God. These Psalms often begin with an introductory statement of why God can be trusted or why He should be praised. Sometimes this part begins with the words "I will praise..." or similar words.
 - b. A report of deliverance. In this part the psalmist looks back and explains his need and how the Lord delivered him. This part lists the reasons for confidence in God. This report sometimes begins with a general statement that is expanded in the verses that follow.
 - c. A renewed vow of praise. Having described the way that God delivered him, the Psalm writer offers his praise to the Lord.
 - d. Praise or instruction. Sometimes the Psalm includes direct praise to God or instruction to others.
 - e. These Psalms are often categorized as confidence Psalms: 3, 4, 11, 16, 23, 27, 62, 91, 121, and 131.
3. Notice the superscription or heading of Psalm 23. Does it provide any helpful background information? What are some possible settings that led David to write this Psalm?
 - a. "A Psalm"—*mizmor*- music accompanied by stringed instruments.
 - b. Setting: 2 Samuel 17:27ff.
4. David begins this Psalm with a report of deliverance in vs. 1. What is the report or the reason for his confidence in the Lord?

5. Verse one introduces a figure of speech called a metaphor. Like a simile (from last time), this figure of speech is used to describe the way that two different things are similar. Unlike a simile, a metaphor doesn't use the words "like" or "as" in the comparison. What two things is David comparing with his figure of speech used in vs. 1?
6. List some of the specific things that David mentions in his report of deliverance.
7. David introduces a different metaphor in vs. 8. What two things is David comparing in this figure of speech? What specific things does David mention in his comparison?
8. Verse 6 could function as a renewed vow of praise. What does David praise the Lord for in this verse?
9. If you're using an ESV, notice the footnote by the word "mercy" in vs. 6. What important term is translated by the word "mercy"?
10. Write down some of the expressions of God's goodness and mercy that you have experienced and share these with the group.

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Pilgrimage Psalms

1. Pilgrim Songs. These songs were sung by Jewish pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem and include Psalms 120-134. This kind is sometimes referred to as Songs of Ascent because the pilgrims would travel up to Jerusalem which was about 2700 feet higher in elevation.
2. How many times a year were Jewish males required to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem (see Exodus 23:14-17)? What occasions did they celebrate in Jerusalem?
 - a. Unleavened Bread in the spring (see Deuteronomy 16:1-8).
 - b. Weeks / Pentecost / Harvest in early summer (see Deuteronomy 16:9-12).
 - c. Ingathering / Tabernacles / Booths in the fall (see Deuteronomy 16:13-15).
3. Using your Bible or a study Bible, what can you discover about the Sons of Korah who authored this Psalm (see 1 Chronicles 9:17-24; 2 Chronicles 20:19)?
4. Read through Psalm 84. List the various ways that the author refers to the Lord. If possible, give a brief description of what these titles reveal about God.
5. From these names and titles, how would you describe the author's view of God? Does God require us to hold a similar view (see Heb. 12:28-29)?
6. List the different ways that the author describes the temple in these verses.

7. Describe the author's attitude toward worshipping God in verses 1-4. What words or phrases stand out to you?

Could you describe your attitude toward worship using any of these terms? How does your attitude compare to the author's? Can you think of a reason that might cause your attitude to differ from his?

8. What benefit comes to those who worship the Lord in verses 5-7? [Note: The Valley of Baca was a hard part of the journey to Jerusalem.]

9. What benefit comes to those who worship the Lord in verses 8-12?

10. List some of the blessings that you receive in public worship. How do these strengthen and satisfy you?

OPENING UP THE PSALMS

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Individual Laments

1. We've looked at three types of Psalms so far in our study.
 - a. Psalm 1 was a wisdom Psalm. Give a brief description of this type.
 - b. Psalm 23 was a confidence Psalm. What does this type of Psalm do?
 - c. Psalm 84 was a pilgrimage Psalm. What were these Psalms used for?
2. Today we turn to look at Lament Psalms, and specifically individual laments. Laments...are individual believers' cries to God in times of need, whether sickness, affliction, slander, war, etc. In ancient Israel, the worshipper would normally go to the temple to offer his petition, and in many cases the officiating priests might offer the prayer on his behalf. From a study of other lament Psalms, the following parts can be clearly identified:¹
 - a. The Address and Introductory Cry. Individual laments can be easily identified by their first words which are the believers' cry to God for help. Sometimes this section of the Psalm contains an introductory petition as well.
 - b. The Lament Proper. This is where the Psalm writer will describe his distress or trouble. This part can be very brief or extended and often falls into three sections: "You, O God," "I," and "my enemies."
 - c. The Confession of Trust. The Psalm writer will often contrast his trouble with a statement of his confidence in the Lord. Sometimes this section takes up most of the lament. Some of these sections begin with "but as for me..." Sometimes this section is completely absent.
 - d. The Petition proper. This is the actual prayer request—the prayer for help and deliverance. This section often includes two separate requests: 1) the request for God to be favorable ("look" or "pay attention"), and 2) the request for God to intervene ("save" or "deliver").
 - e. The Vow of Praise. Lament Psalms always turn to praise at the end (with the possible exception of Psalm 42). There is often an abrupt change in the mood of the Psalm at this

¹ Adapted from *Principles of Hebrew Exegesis in the Psalms*, Allen P. Ross, pp. 98-9. "The order of the elements may vary considerably from psalm to psalm, and some of them may even be absent."

point. While his prayer has yet to be answered, the Psalm writer promises to praise the Lord in the sanctuary when he receives the answer to his prayer. One possible reason for the abrupt shift in the mood at this point is that the Psalm writer has received assurance from the priest that the Lord will deliver him.

3. According to the superscription, what important event formed the background to this Psalm?
(2 Samuel 11-12)

4. Using the parts described in #2, identify the different stanzas of Psalm 51 and list any important features that you observe. Remember: "The order of the elements may vary considerably from psalm to psalm, and some of them may even be absent."

a. 1-2:

b. 3-6:

c. 7-12:

d. 13-17:

e. 18-21:

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Communal Laments

1. We've covered four types of Psalms so far in our study
 - a. Wisdom Psalms (Psalm 1).
 - b. Confidence Psalms (Psalm 23).
 - c. Pilgrimage Psalms (Psalm 84).
 - d. Lament Psalms (Psalm 51).
2. Today we turn to a different kind of Lament Psalm: national or communal laments. While individual laments represent the lament of a single person, communal laments represent the lament of the entire nation of Israel. "National laments are less numerous than individual laments. The reason for them will be catastrophes that involve the nation—war, drought, plagues, etc. One can imagine the nation in such crises holding a national day of fasting and prayer."¹ The typical elements in a communal lament are:
 - a. The address and introductory petition to God
 - b. The lament proper (often including the foes, the nation ["we"], and God).
 - c. National confession of trust.
 - d. The petition proper and motivation (May God do this to our enemies, may God do this to us).
 - e. The vow of praise.²

Opening up Psalms puts Psalm 126 in the category of a communal lament. Others describe Psalm 126 as a Psalm of Zion or a Pilgrimage Song (based largely on the superscription: "A Song of Ascents"). This reflects that the categories described in *Opening up Psalms* are guidelines for study and not hard and fast rules. Several Psalms can fit in more than one category depending on the person studying it. Psalm 126 certainly is a Song of Ascents, but as we'll see it also also elements of a national lament.

¹ From *Principles of Hebrew Exegesis in the Psalms*, Allen P. Ross, p. 100.

² Ibid. "The order of the elements may vary considerably from psalm to psalm, and some of them may even be absent."

3. Read through Psalm 126. Who is the speaking in the various parts, and who is the speaker addressing?
 - a. Verses 1-3:
 - b. Verse 4:
 - c. Verses 5-6:
4. Using either your knowledge of Israel's history or the notes in your study Bible, when did the events in vv. 1-3 take place? See Isaiah 52:7-12. Are there similarities between this passage and Psalm 126?
5. In v. 4 we see that Israel was in a time of spiritual dryness, much like the southern parts of Israel. The psalmist is asking God to do in the spiritual real what he did in the natural realm, that is pour our copious grace and love that would take away their dryness and cause them to rejoice again. (*Opening Up Psalms*, 88).
6. Using either your memory or your study Bible, what period of Israel's history might Psalm 126:4 be referring to? See also Malachi 1:6-14 and Haggai 1:1-11 and describe what's happening in Israel in these books.
7. What solution does the speaker in vv. 5-6 prescribe for Israel's spiritual condition? Is there a principle here for us when we find ourselves in the same predicament? See James 4:8-11 and Matthew 5:3-4.

Save Me, O My God

By Christie Murphey

It was one of those days, you know the one. We have all had them, the day when it seems like nothing is going your way. It starts with the power going out in the night, so the alarm did not go off and you got up late. That meant that you had to get ready so fast you picked your least favorite pair of jeans. You know, the ones with the weird zipper that does not stay zipped. Your hair is not right and you have to eat a dry pop tart on the way to school. Once you get to school it is okay but you have this “mood” and everyone knows it. You end up eating lunch alone because no one wants to be around while you eat your...you guessed it...dry pop tart because you did not have time to make your lunch. Finally, school is done and you can head home. All you can think of is getting home and crashing in your bed to just get away from it all. But no, your mom has to stop and run in for just one thing...one hour and many things later, you get home. You walk in the door and your dog is hiding. Never a good sign, so you tread carefully and sure enough, there in the middle of the floor is a smelly surprise. Of course, you are the one who gets to clean it up. As you do you think, why did we have to get a big dog... big dog=big....yuck! What did this dog eat? What a smell! You finally get to your room. Your day is done, tomorrow has got to be better, right?

We have all been there. Even the writer of the Psalm we are going to read today. King David wrote Psalm 3 when he was running away from his son Absalom who was going to kill him and take over the kingdom. Talk about a bad day! Take a moment and read Psalm 3.

Psalm 3 English Standard Version (ESV)

Save Me, O My God A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.

3 O LORD, how many are my foes!

Many are rising against me;

² many are saying of my soul,

“There is no salvation for him in God.” *Selah*

³ But you, O LORD, are a shield about me,
my glory, and the lifter of my head.

⁴ I cried aloud to the LORD,
and he answered me from his holy
hill. *Selah*

⁵ I lay down and slept;

I woke again, for the LORD sustained me.

⁶ I will not be afraid of many thousands of
people

who have set themselves against me all
around.

⁷ Arise, O LORD!

Save me, O my God!

For you strike all my enemies on the cheek;
you break the teeth of the wicked.

⁸ Salvation belongs to the LORD;
your blessing be on your people! *Selah*

King David was having a bad day. Running for your life is generally not a sign that all is well. If anyone had a reason to be upset, afraid and just wanting to give up, it was King David. Verse one spells it out pretty clearly.

“O LORD, how **many** are my foes!
Many are rising **against** me;”

He is overwhelmed and has every reason to lose it. So many people are against him! He is not a young man anymore like when he hid in the wilderness from King Saul. However, one thing is there. One thing that he began to learn as a young man tending sheep and protecting them from predators (check out 1 Samuel 17:34-36) was that the Lord was with him. He depended on the Lord when he faced Goliath. In 1 Samuel 17:45-47 it was his war cry! In fact, all through his life he leaned upon the promise that he states in this Psalm.

³But you, O LORD, are a shield about me,
my glory, and the lifter of my head.
⁴I cried aloud to the LORD,
and he answered me from his holy hill. *Selah*
⁵I lay down and slept;
I woke again, for the LORD sustained me.
⁶I will not be afraid of many thousands of people
who have set themselves against me all around.”

David depended on it and had seen it his own life. So you may be thinking, yeah, that’s cool. The next time I am running for my life I will remember this. The next time something really big comes my way I will ask the Lord to help me. But here is the thing. He is always your shield. Even in the little things, like a day that starts wrong. Faith in God is something that we build in our character. It is something that starts small, like believing God is there to help you in the little things. Just like a toddler builds their muscles and coordination when they learn to walk, so you build your faith muscle as you go through the little irritations of the day and take them to God for help. You make running to Him, your shield, the lifter of your head, a habit. You do that enough times and it becomes ingrained in your brain. It becomes an automatic response in hard or difficult times. You can say with King David,

“⁸Salvation belongs to the LORD;
your blessing be on your people!”

So, the next time you have something go not quite the way you planned, take a moment and invite the Lord to be your shield. Tell Him how you are feeling and what is going on that is bothering you. He won’t always take it away. In fact, He probably won’t. But He will be there with you, walking it out beside you, around you, as your shield. Sustaining you as you walk the path that He has laid out for you for His purpose and your good.

Take some time to talk to Him now about what is going on in your life right now. Don’t wait for a bad day. Get in the habit of talking to Him daily and the times you do have a bad day it will be easier to run to him, your Shield.

Comfort for my Soul

Psalm 16

By Bryan Gilde

How often do you take a break and just reflect on your day or week?

Take some time now to thank God for things that have happened in the past week.

What are the top three concerns on your heart right now?

The Palms are a great place to regularly go to, as you reflect on your life. They bring great comfort to our soul as we talk to God about our lives.

Read Psalm 16

I need to be reminded all the time of God's truths. I need to know that the world tells me lies every day. I *have been* told they are lies, but I need to be told again and again by God. Verse 2 reminds me that the only truly good thing I have is God. In fact, He is the only guarantee I have in life. That according to verse 3, He takes pleasure in me and especially takes pleasure in my obedience.

The lies of the world will hurt you. Verse 4 says those who run after those lies will increase in sorrow. I will not participate in the world's lifestyle. I will be associated with godliness! This is my prayer and desire as I seek after God.

Verses 5-6 are a sure reminder that God is in charge of His universe and He is actively working in my personal life *for my joy and His glory*.

Verses 7-10 say that as a result of His faithful love for me, I long to be with Him and please Him every day. Therefore, even at night when I am dreaming, my prayer is that I would glorify Him in my mind.

I bank my whole life on verse 11! God has shown me the path of life for eternity and also while I live on this earth. Whether I am on earth or in Heaven, He fills me with Joy and Pleasure. I know that the my joy in Heaven will be much greater than my joy here on earth and so I long to be fully in His presence.

Action Point:

Write out a prayer that expresses your longing to glorify God in all you do, all the time:

Humility

By Sandra Gilde

Philippians 2:3-8

Humility. What is humility? It is an overwhelming response to God because of His sacrifice He made for us. It is confessing our sins and wanting to live a life of purity in light of the mercy He has given us. Humility is submitting to God. Webster defines humility as "The quality or state of not thinking you are better than other people." Jesus in all humility did not consider equality something to be grasped but instead made Himself nothing..... and became obedient to death (Phil. 2:6-8).

Why are we as Christians supposed to be humble?

#1 - We are commanded. Philippians 2:3 "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit but in humility consider others better than yourselves."

#2 - To imitate Christ. v. 5 "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus".

#3 - Because we are compelled by his love. Romans 12:1-2 says "In view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God."

What would my life be like if I considered others better than myself? I would value others' opinions, respect others' authority, submit to others' leadership. I would not ignore other people so I could get ahead and be known. I would not look inward and compare my skills and accomplishments to someone else's thinking more highly of myself. Or, if I lacked something that someone else had I would not be jealous of them in their accomplishments and feel sorry for myself. I would be confident in who God made me. Ultimately, I would long for others to know Christ and be compelled to show them God's love.

Jesus knew who he was. He was confident in his status as God's Son and therefore able to be humble and sacrifice all.

In what area of my life do I need to choose to be humble today?

Other than Jesus, who in the Bible displayed humility in their life?

Prayer: Thank you Lord for humbling yourself to die for my sins, so I can have a relationship with you. Thank you for showing me what true humility is. Lord, help me to be humble before you and others today.

More than Just a Story

By Matt Rees

How many Bibles do you think there are in your house? Ten? Twenty? How many of them never get opened? The book of Jude was written by the brother of Jesus. He wrote it in the first century when there were not Scriptures shut up in every nightstand or sitting on every coffee table. For the common person, the only way to learn the scriptures was from oral instruction.

Do you ever wonder why the Bible seems to have so many strange or obscure little stories? Many times we can quickly get the point, or see the obvious application but many times we just zip thru a text without thinking it has any implications or applications.

¹⁰ But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively. ¹¹ Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion.

Jude 1:10-11

Jude assumed that those people who read or heard this letter would know what he was talking about when he mentioned "*the way of Cain*" and "*the error of Balaam*" and "*the rebellion of Korah*"? Do you know what those are? Jude expects you to know.

The genealogy of Jesus Christ in Matthew 1 contains some amazing things for just seeming to be a list of names. Typically, women were not mentioned in genealogies. There are multiple women mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus.

² Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,³ and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, ⁴ and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, ⁵ and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, ⁶ and Jesse the father of David the king.

Matthew 1:2-6

The three I underlined above have some amazing stories behind them. It's pretty shocking that they are the ancestors of our Savior. Do you know who they are and what makes them shocking?

Knowledge of biblical history will give you wisdom in the present. There is a lot of truth in the saying "Those who do not learn history are doomed to repeat it." Biblical history is valuable for Christian living. Knowing that Cain was jealous and hated his brother and resented Abel's true spiritual communion with God will help

you to recognize and watch out for such things. If you know that Balaam finally caved in and made the Word of God a means of worldly gain, it will help you to recognize when that is going on around you or in yourself. By knowing that Korah despised legitimate authority and resented Moses' leadership, you can recognize when that is happening and protect yourself from people who dislike anyone being seen as their leader or, see this happening in yourself.

Knowing the history attached to Jesus' genealogy will help you know the heart of God better. Tamar was the daughter-in-law of Judah. She had Perez by her father-in-law after Judah deceived her. From Perez comes the Davidic dynasty. Rahab was a prostitute in the city of Jericho before it was destroyed by God. Rahab showed faith in God and was spared from destruction. She became the great, great grandmother of King David. Ruth was a Moabite woman who married an Israelite. When he died, she had faith in God and returned to the land of Israel with her Mother-in-law Ruth. She became the great grandmother of King David. As far as the world was concerned these three women were nobodies. God showed that his ways are not our ways and shows lovingkindness to the broken and desperate.

We are part of this grand story and these are our ancestors too. In the same way, as believers we are adopted into God's family and Jesus is our older brother.

Action Points

Read the entire book of Jude in the New Testament.

What is your current commitment to reading God's Word?

How are you doing in keeping this commitment this week?

What are the top two things you need to do this next week in order to keep your commitment to reading God's Word?

For further study:

Read Genesis 3. "*way of Cain*"

Read Numbers 22-24. "*the error of Balaam*"

Read Numbers 16. "*the rebellion of Korah*"

Read Genesis 38:6-30. **Tamar**

Read Joshua 2 & 6:17, 23-25 & Hebrews 11:31 & James 2:25. **Rahab**

Read Ruth. **Ruth**

Too Much Stuff!

By Vicki Rees

Growing up in the United States, it's easy to believe the idea that the more things you buy, the happier you will be. On average we see 5,000 advertisements every week and they tell us that we will be happier if we buy whatever it is that they are selling. "Buy this brand of clothing if you want to be cool." "Drink this soda and you'll have lots of friends and fun." "Drive this certain car if you really want to be a success." And we hear these messages so many times from so many places that we begin to believe them without realizing that we do. As a result we want more money so we can buy more clothes, a nicer car, better toys, etc.

In America, we consume twice as many material goods as we did fifty years ago. From that time the size of the average American home has nearly tripled. And do you know how many items the typical American home has in it? About 300,000 items! On average our homes contain more televisions than people. Because we have too much stuff, most people don't have room to park their cars in their two car garages. Many people don't have room for all the things they buy so they rent an off-site storage unit – just to store their stuff! And yet, would you describe Americans as wildly, happy people? If stuff made us happy, wouldn't you think we 'd be there by now?

According to 1 Kings 10, King Solomon amassed a fortune dwarfing that of any other ruler of his time. Through tribute money from dependent kingdoms, Solomon collected 666 talents (about twenty-five tons) of gold each year. If gold is \$1,000 per ounce, that's \$800 million every year! He made tons of money (literally), and he spent it too. He said to himself as recorded in Ecclesiastes 2,

"Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good. 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. I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees. I bought male and female slaves and had other slaves who were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me. I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired male and female singers, and a harem as well – the delights of a man's heart. I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. I denied myself nothing my eyes desired. When I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind."

Matthew 19 tells of a man who approached Jesus and asked,

"Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" Jesus answered, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come follow me." "When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions."

Stop and think about that for a second, the young man missed out on an opportunity to fellowship with God in flesh because he loved his stuff more. His material possessions had become an idol; his idol got in the way and clouded his perspective. God's plans for us are so much bigger than just seeing how much we can accumulate while we are on earth. Jesus knows that our lives are too valuable to waste chasing possessions. *"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."* John 10:10. Jesus has more in mind for us than acquiring material wealth. In that verse he's talking about abundant spiritual blessing. If we want our lives to be all that God has for us, we need to make sure we're not carrying all this extra weight around. If we're spending most of our time and money caring for the things that we own or planning the things we're going to buy – that's a load we don't need to bear.

I've got great news for you! You don't have to be caught up in consumerism! You are not valuable because of the stuff that you own. You don't have to buy stuff just because it's on sale and you might get a good deal. I love the quote from Augustine, "Find out what God has given you and take from it what you need, the remainder is needed by others. Or this one from Mother Theresa, "Live simply, so that others may simply live."

Matthew 6:19 *"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*

There's more joy in owning less than we can ever find in owning more,
if we instead find our joy in God.

Some questions to ask yourself:

Am I trying to find happiness in the things that I buy?

What are some lies that I might be believing about possessions and money?

Read Luke 3:10-14. What did John the Baptist tell the people to do to get ready for the Messiah? Why do you think he told them those specific things?

Wait On The Lord

How to Spend an Extended and Planned Time with God Free from Distraction

By Nick Richardson

Guidelines

Don't hurry -- just seek the Lord, waiting on Him. Don't look for some mystical or ecstatic experience outside of His Spirit guiding you in the Word. Isaiah 40:31 promises that those who wait upon the Lord will renew their strength. Psalm 62:5 says, "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him."

Realize His presence -- Read through a passage like Psalm 139, grasping the truth of His presence with you as you read each verse. Ponder the impossibility of being anywhere in the universe where He is not. Often we are like Jacob when he said, "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not" (Genesis 28:16, KJV)

Wait on Him for cleansing -- The last two verses of Psalm 139 lead you into this. Ask God to search your heart as these verses suggest. When we search our own hearts it can lead to imaginations, morbid introspection, or anything the enemy may want to throw before us. But when the Holy Spirit searches He will bring to your attention that which should be confessed and cleansed. Psalms 51 and 32, David's songs of confession, will help you. Stand upon the firm ground of 1 John 1:9 and claim God's faithfulness to forgive whatever specific thing you confess.

Wait on God to worship Him -- Psalms 103, 111, and 145 are wonderful portions to follow as you praise the Lord for the greatness of His power. Most of the psalms are prayers. Or turn to Revelation, chapters 4 and 5, and use them in your praise to Him. There is no better way to pray scripturally than to pray Scripture.

Preparation

If God has given us plans and purposes in our times with Him alone, we will be ready when opportunity comes to move right into it. We won't have to say, "I'm not prepared." The reason many Christians are dead to opportunities is not because they are not mentally alert, but they are simply unprepared in heart. Preparation is made when we get alone with God.

A boy asked a pilot if it didn't take quick thinking to land his plane when something went wrong. The pilot answered that no, he knew at all times where he would put down if something went wrong. He had that thought out ahead of time.

- 1) Find a place where you can be alone, away from distractions.
- 2) Review the guidelines listed above.
- 3) Make a plan and come prepared with worship songs, a journal, your Bible, perhaps a devotional book or use a software tool like eSword (free Bible Software you can download, www.e-sword.net).
- 4) Remember as the Pilot example tell us, this time of getting away for an extended time, expecting to hear from God as you are guided by His Spirit in His Word, is your preparation for the trials and temptations you will go through, or are currently going through.

Worksheet

Example: What scripture helps me to focus on:

His presence – Like (Exo 33:14) And he said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

Do a word search on the word 'presence' in the OT:

1Sa 2:21 Indeed the LORD visited Hannah, and she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. And the boy Samuel grew in the presence of the LORD.

Act 3:20 that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus,

Application

Use topics above to ask yourself how God is directing you today and ask questions of what God is showing you.

What does it mean to **experience His presence**? _____

- 1) His presence is consuming, indicates His holiness, reminds of God's glory and our sinfulness.
- 2) Leads us to fall on our knees to worship Him, but also as Acts 3:20 says, times of refreshing come from the presence of the Lord.

Then ask the Lord to guide your prayers for **cleansing** as you look at scriptures like:

Psa 139:23 Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!

Example: If you realize you've sinned against a brother, make a note of it so you won't forget to set it right. Otherwise, the rest of the day will be hindered. Your fellowship with God will be hindered if there is something between you and someone else that you haven't planned to take care of at the earliest possible moment.

Worship Him by praying through the Psalms (helps to search with eSword for key words like **exalt**).

Psa 99:5 Exalt the LORD our God; worship at his footstool! Holy is he!

Psa 99:9 Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy mountain; for the LORD our God is holy!

Ask yourself what it means to worship in Spirit and truth. Sing your favorite song(s) of praise.

(Source: Thoughts from "How To Spend A Day in Prayer" by Lorne C. Sanny, with the Navigators.)

"My God Would Never..."

By Keith Nelson

You will find as you grow in your own walk with the Lord, you will grow in your understanding of who He is. As you walk out your walk and talk to various people along the way, you will find that many people have created their own "god". These people will often be more than happy to share with you what their "god" will or will not do. As events occur in the world, their life, or your life, they will try to interpret whether God had anything to do with the circumstance. Occasionally, you may hear the words uttered, "My God would never..." and then fill in the blank. This is when knowing what the Lord says about himself is so important.

The book of Habakkuk is a book that you may find unfamiliar. It's a short book, only 3 chapters. It is not one that we tend to go to for regular spiritual refreshment. There is a danger when we only linger over books that we find comfortable. God reveals who He is and how He operates in scripture...all of scripture. I am challenging you to read through Habakkuk and see what the Lord says about himself. The prophet starts off by registering his complaint to the Lord. It seems fair enough, and we would all tend to say along with him, "Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong?" The Lord himself answers the complaint and declares, "For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told." You may be asking yourself, "What is this work?" and rightly so. Read and see for yourself what the Lord was doing. It may surprise you, and it would most certainly surprise someone who says, "My god would never..."! If you find yourself wondering about what you are reading, check the study notes in your Bible to help you make sense of it.

Habakkuk listened to the Lord and had to conclude that God doesn't always do what we want or think He should do. There are lots of examples of this in the Old Testament when we take the time to read. But, as you read always be on the lookout for the Lord's heart and what He desires. He wants His children to trust Him, so that we will say along with Habakkuk, "Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation."

Has there been a time in your life when you felt like the Lord was getting it all wrong? Have you ever just questioned what the Lord was allowing to happen to you, a dear friend, or a family member? I know I have, but I also know God is GOOD! Throughout your life, you will have ups and downs. You will see good times and bad. This is nothing new, and a thorough reading of the Word shows us that clearly. It also shows us that the Lord is faithful and will do what He says He will do. Letting us proclaim, "My God would never break His promises!"

Do you see something going on in the world today that makes you question why the Lord would allow it? Talk to the Lord about it in prayer. Ask Him for increased faith to trust Him and His plan. Pray for those being affected that God would "comfort them in their affliction" (2 Cor. 1:4).

Who do You Aim to Please?

Colossians 3:22-25

By Kristy Nelson

I admit, I'm a pleaser. I want others to "like me". I want to be accepted. I want approval from others and honestly, quite often it doesn't come. Whether it's in what I'm doing, saying, or just being me... I want others to approve of me. I think we could *all* say we might feel this way at times. Especially in the day of social media, we might find ourselves looking at the number of likes we get or comparing ourselves to others that have more likes/followers, etc.

Ask yourself, "*Why* do I post in the social media circles and outlets in which I am a part of this week?" (This is different than *what* you post.)

Ask yourself, "Why do I say what I say in the circle of friends I hang out with each week?"

We should not rely on approval from others or even look for others' approval. **Read Colossians 3:22-25.** In the end, it is God who we will stand before (**Read Romans 14**) and He will be our judge. We should look for and want His approval and Lord willing, we will get it when we hear His sweet words, "Well done, my good and faithful servant" (see **Matthew 25**).

Let's keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. Whatever we do, let us do it as if we are doing it for Jesus. May we not try to please men, performing well when they are looking at us. Our reward does not come from men, but from the Lord...verse 24 says, "knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ".

Who do you aim to please? Does not being accepted or "liked" steal your joy? I want to encourage you to meditate on these verses, hide them in your heart, and serve and live for your Savior, the only one whose approval matters.

For His Glory

Doing all things as unto the Lord

By Shannon McGowan

Years ago, when our kids were little, Steve's Mom unexpectedly became a widow. Andy McGowan, otherwise lovingly known as Grandpa, had a failing heart condition that went untreated and it led to his early death. Now, hang in there... I'm going somewhere with this.

Steve is also an only child, so out of love and honor for his parents he stepped in to the primary role of caring for his Mom and her home. And "yes," there have been plenty of times through the years that Steve and I "felt" obligated to help his Mom instead of serving with the warm fuzzy feels ... you know, sometimes it just ain't convenient. Besides, Steve already has a house to maintain, three kids to raise, a full time job, and a wife to keep happy :)

Colossians 3:23-24

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

Who said this? Paul, while in a Rome prison

Who was he addressing? The Church in Colossae

Why? Epaphras, the founder of the church, came to visit Paul in prison out of concern for heresy spreading within the church. So, Paul addresses several key teachings to correct the church. In Chapter 3, Paul is addressing the behaviors of a Christ follower, and admonishing them to "*put on the new self*."

Why am I sharing the story of Steve and his new-found responsibilities and feels with his Mom now a widow? And why would I insert the verse about doing stuff as for the Lord and not for men?

First, it is only possible to serve the Lord if you are His, a Christ follower, a believer, redeemed by His blood and set apart for His glory.

So, I share this with you, brother and sister in Christ, so that you too can put away the "old" thoughts and behaviors. Specifically, so that you know that in whatever you do, do it heartily as for the Lord. You are serving the Lord not man.

Applying this to my everyday life...

Steve's Mom, Granny, has had a bad back for years. She has had two major surgeries and is limited physically from doing most manual labor. After Andy died, I took over mopping her kitchen floor. Now, in all seriousness, I actually enjoy "cleaning." It is weird, I know. Anyway, one day while mopping her kitchen I was considering "cutting corners," maybe leaving a spot or two... you know, it's not my floor, who would know, right? Those were my thoughts... and then a gentle thought (the Holy Spirit) within me spoke directly to my selfishness... "work as unto the Lord, unto Me." So, my dear friend, as you go about your day consider working as unto the Lord, out of love for Him. He asks this of us and is pleased by our willful obedience! May He bless you and keep you and continue to grow you in the Truth. I love you dearly.

HOLINESS

By Shawn Cavanaugh

Do you ever think of yourself as Holy?

What does Holiness mean to you?

What is Holiness?

Holiness is simply separation. Not separation from the world, but separation from the way the world acts. In an effort to live a holy life, it means that we should be deliberate in being distinct from those who do not know Christ. Our God is different from all so-called other Gods, therefore we must live according to His will and give Him glory.

When Tracy and I went to Maui several years ago, we went to the top of Haleakala (pronounced Hall- A- ah- ka-la) National Park which is known for the Haleakala Crater. Haleakala's volcano form makes up 75% of Maui and its' tallest peak is just over 10,000 feet. This volcano is one of the most popular attractions in Maui and has spectacular views from the top. There are many tourists that visit the volcano as well as hikers. Fortunately, for many hikers there is also a restroom at the top. When I went in the restroom I noticed a very peculiar sign above the toilet. It read "Reclaimed Water In Toilet Do Not Drink". I thought it was a joke at first, however, it was a formal sign created in the same colors and font type as other park signs and I realized it was an official sign. Who in their right mind would drink out of a toilet? Apparently, there is the possibility of hikers who may get confused by the attitude or overly thirsty by hiking, I presume. Most people do not need a sign to tell them not to drink toilet water.



(Actual photo of the sign- nice image as well in case someone doesn't read English☺)

The Scriptures indicate, even as God is holy, we should be holy in all manner of lifestyle. Now, on this planet, we certainly will never attain complete holiness, for we are always at war with our flesh and sinful nature as Paul noted in Romans 7:15. But holiness is the goal for which we should be directing our actions. As we know, sin puts a barrier between us and God. However, Holiness brings fellowship with Him—holiness is also what allows us to have eternal life with God in heaven (*Romans 8:11-14; Hebrews*

12:14). This was accomplished through Jesus Christ as He took on all of our sins on the cross so that God **may see us as holy** (*Colossians 1:19-22*).

Although, toilet water may appear to be clean you would never be so foolish as to take a drink of it! That's because no matter how pure it may look, you still know that it is contaminated (at least most of us know ☺). And it does not take much impurity to make that water unclean! In a similar way, we must understand sin to be a filthy contaminant to our spirit, and we must avoid those sinful things through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Every day we are faced with decisions that involve our pursuit of Holiness. God allows us the free-will to make our own choices. These choices typically come down to:

- Do that which pleases God and avoid sin
- Or do that which pleases the flesh which typically leads to sin

Most of us know not to drink toilet water and most of us know we should avoid sin. Like the sign above the toilet in Maui, God has provided us with reminders and warnings in His Word to keep us from trouble. As we fellowship with the Lord through reading his Word, gathering with other believers, praying, worshipping, etc., we pursue Holiness. This pursuit requires preparation. Each day we need to seek the Holy Spirit's strength and ask for wisdom to avoid sin (drinking the toilet water). We need to put on the armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18).

1. Are we called to be Holy? (Leviticus 11:44, 1 Peter 1:15-16)
2. How are we Holy? (Romans 5:19, Hebrews 10:10)
3. If we are Holy, what is the purpose of pursuing Holiness?
 - a. God's sees us as Holy (if we are Believers)
 - b. As Believers we are now to live a life that is Holy
4. Are there things in your life or areas where you are drinking toilet water (allowing sin to go unchecked)? Are there things preventing you from living out a more Holy life?
5. Have you prayed for strength and wisdom to live a more Holy life?

An analogy: If we are on a football team and put on the team's jersey, we are seen as being a part of the team- one of the team's players (similar to being seen as Holy). However, we are also expected to act accordingly, to act according to team guidelines to represent the team. We are expected to behave as part of the team as well (similar to living out Holiness). If you're wearing the jersey, you have committed to live a lifestyle that aligns with what that represents and behave in a way that demonstrates your commitment.

The One Exam You Can't Fail

By Dean Billings

As we get older our temptations change, but we are always tempted, for even Jesus was tempted (yet was without sin, Heb. 4:15). As a younger child, we may struggle with lying or disobeying our parents. We may be pressed for the desire to take small things. As we approach adulthood, our sins become larger with greater implications. As our attraction grows for the opposite sex and as we take on responsibilities at our first jobs our temptations seem to intensify beyond control. Then we have a desire to justify these sins: it is only a small item to take home from work; we plan to get married so we can go ahead; etc.

Read Hebrews 12, 2 Corinthians 13:5

As we transition to being responsible for ourselves and can no longer rely on our parent's rules to guard against temptation, we have to understand two things. First, temptation is everywhere; and secondly, continually giving into sin can tell us the true nature of our hearts.

The passage in Hebrews contains in verse 12, a reiteration of one of Jesus' quotes, which itself is taken from the Old Testament, where God says "You are to be holy to me because I, the LORD, am holy (Lev. 20:26)." So we are called to be holy, which means to be set apart as pure and righteous, other worldly, different (because we *are* righteous *and walk* in righteousness) from the surrounding culture completely. This includes the movies we watch, the way we live out our relationships with significant others, how we consume alcohol, etc. We are to be so different the world considers us weird and asks us why we are this way (I Cor. 4:10 says we are to be fools for Christ). This means to not give into temptation and avoid situations where we are tempted. To paraphrase an old saying: if we find ourselves continually falling into the same sin, you are not falling you are jumping.

It often is not popular to hear what old dead guys have to say, but old dead guys often have wisdom from years of experience. The Puritan John Owen said, "be killing sin or it will be killing you." So our life should be marked by killing sin. As we experience new circles of people outside of our church family and the friends of our parents, we must be on guard against wanting to be accepted by the world or "going along to get along". I will let you in on a secret. It is hard, very hard. The world in which I work is not a world filled with people seeking after righteousness. In reality those who hold close to the faith are seen as weak in my world because they do not partake of the pleasures of the flesh. It can be lonely to walk the narrow way. I will not sugar coat this. I can say it gets easier with age as we grow to understand what really matters. I also

can say you don't have to go it alone. The Holy Spirit, your helper and counselor will be with you. But you must do your part to fight against these temptations.

The second point comes from the above passage from 2 Corinthians. If you find yourself constantly falling into sin, you need to examine yourself in the light of the scriptures to see if you are in the faith. The Bible tells us to work out our faith in constant fear and trembling, which doesn't mean we work our way to heaven but that we should consistently examine our hearts out of fear of the final judgement. This requires, drum roll, reading the scriptures and asking: "If I do this thing, does it align with the precepts and ideas of scripture?" We are accustomed to thinking that there is a season of the faith where we can sow our wild oats and still be in Christ. This is not found in scripture. So, if we are not holy as has been previously stated, we are not separate from the world, we look just like the world in our thoughts, actions, and deeds, then the question must be asked: Are we a child of God? The answer to this question has eternal significance. Answering this question is the *sole* purpose of this life.

Action points:

Like any army going into battle or any football team taking the field, you need a plan. There is a tendency for the world to make fun of people who plan their lives, but you need a plan for what to do to avoid being tempted. So, when dating put into place stops that you will not pass to not fall into sin. Plan to stay in the word with a dedicated time to read the scripture, and forgive yourself when you fail at this, then start again. Pray, pray, pray to receive help from the Holy Spirit to understand where your temptations lay in wait for you.

Write down some questions you have about dealing with ongoing temptations:

Who can you talk to, to get the answers to your questions, so that you can honor God with your life by living worthy of the calling in which you received?

TAKE FROM "FIFTY REASONS WHY JESUS CAME TO DIE" BY JOHN PIPER

Why Jesus Came to Die:

2

TO PLEASE HIS HEAVENLY FATHER



Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him;
he has put him to grief.

ISAIAH 53:10

Christ loved us and gave himself up for us,
a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

EPHESIANS 5:2

Jesus did not wrestle his angry Father to the floor of heaven and take the whip out of his hand. He did not force him to be merciful to humanity. His death was not the begrudging consent of God to be lenient to sinners. No, what Jesus did when he suffered and died was the Father's idea. It was a breathtaking strategy, conceived even before creation, as God saw and planned the history of the world. That is why the Bible speaks of God's "purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began" (2 Timothy 1:9).

Already in the Jewish Scriptures the plan was unfolding. The prophet Isaiah foretold the sufferings of the Messiah, who was to take the place of sinners. He said that the Christ would be "smitten by God" in our place.

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for

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our iniquities. . . . All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:4-6)

But what is most astonishing about this substitution of Christ for sinners is that it was God's idea. Christ did not intrude on God's plan to punish sinners. God planned for him to be there. One Old Testament prophet says, "It was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief" (Isaiah 53:10).

This explains the paradox of the New Testament. On the one hand, the suffering of Christ is an outpouring of God's wrath because of sin. But on the other hand, Christ's suffering is a beautiful act of submission and obedience to the will of the Father. So Christ cried from the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46). And yet the Bible says that the suffering of Christ was a fragrance to God. "Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Ephesians 5:2).

Oh, that we might worship the terrible wonder of the love of God! It is not sentimental. It is not simple. For our sake God did the impossible: He poured out his wrath on his own Son—the one whose submission made him infinitely unworthy to receive it. Yet the Son's very willingness to receive it was precious in God's sight. The wrath-bearer was infinitely loved.

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Why Jesus Came to Die:

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FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF OUR SINS



*In him we have redemption through his blood,
the forgiveness of our trespasses.*

EPHESIANS 1:7

*This is my blood of the covenant,
which is poured out for many
for the forgiveness of sins.*

MATTHEW 26:28

When we forgive a debt or an injury, we don't require a payment for settlement. That would be the opposite of forgiveness. If repayment is made to us for what we lost, there is no need for forgiveness. We have our due.

Forgiveness assumes grace. If I am injured by you, grace lets it go. I don't sue you. I forgive you. Grace gives what someone doesn't deserve. That's why *forgiveness* has the word *give* in it. Forgiveness is not "getting" even. It is giving away the right to get even.

That is what God does to us when we trust Christ: "Everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name" (Acts 10:43). If we believe in Christ, God no longer holds our sins against us. This is God's own testimony in the Bible: "I, I am he who wipes out your transgressions for my own sake" (Isaiah 43:25). "As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12).

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But this raises a problem. We all know that forgiveness is not enough. We may only see it clearly when the injury is great—like murder or rape. Neither society nor the universe can hold together if judges (or God) simply say to every murderer and rapist, "Are you sorry? Okay. The state forgives you. You may go." In cases like these we see that while a victim may have a forgiving spirit, the state cannot forsake justice.

So it is with God's justice. All sin is serious, because it is against God (see chapter 1). He is the one whose glory is injured when we ignore or disobey or blaspheme him. His justice will no more allow him simply to set us free than a human judge can cancel all the debts that criminals owe to society. The injury done to God's glory by our sin must be repaired so that in justice his glory shines more brightly. And if we criminals are to go free and be forgiven, there must be some dramatic demonstration that the honor of God is upheld even though former blasphemers are being set free.

That is why Christ suffered and died. "In him we have redemption *through his blood*, the forgiveness of our trespasses" (Ephesians 1:7). Forgiveness costs us nothing. All our costly obedience is the fruit, not the root, of being forgiven. That's why we call it grace. But it cost Jesus his life. That is why we call it just. Oh, how precious is the news that God does not hold our sins against us! And how beautiful is Christ, whose blood made it right for God to do this.

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Why Jesus Came to Die:

TO DELIVER US FROM THE PRESENT EVIL AGE



[He] gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.
Galatians 1:4

Until we die, or until Christ returns to establish his kingdom, we live in "the present evil age." Therefore, when the Bible says that Christ gave himself "to deliver us from the present evil age," it does not mean that he will take us out of the world, but that he will deliver us from the power of the evil in it. Jesus prayed for us like this: "I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one" (John 17:15).

The reason Jesus prays for deliverance from "the evil one" is that "this present evil age" is the age when Satan is given freedom to deceive and destroy. The Bible says, "The whole world lies in the power of the evil one" (1 John 5:19). This "evil one" is called "the god of this world," and his main aim is to blind people to truth. "The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Until we waken to our darkened spiritual condition, we live in sync with "the present evil age" and the ruler of it. "You once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons

of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2). Without knowing it, we were lackeys of the devil. What felt like freedom was bondage. The Bible speaks straight to twenty-first-century fads, fun, and additions when it says, "They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved" (2 Peter 2:19).

The resounding cry of freedom in the Bible is, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind" (Romans 12:2). In other words, be free! Don't be duped by the gurus of the age. They are here today and gone tomorrow. One enslaving fad follows another. Thirty years from now today's tattoos will not be marks of freedom, but indelible reminders of conformity.

The wisdom of this age is folly in view of eternity. "Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is folly with God" (1 Corinthians 3:18-19). "The word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing" (1 Corinthians 1:18). What then is the wisdom of God in this age? It is the great liberating death of Jesus Christ. The early followers of Jesus said, "We preach Christ crucified . . . the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:23-24).

When Christ went to the cross, he set millions of captives free. He unmasked the devil's fraud and broke his power. That's what he meant on the eve of his crucifixion when he said, "Now will the ruler of this world be cast out" (John 12:31). Don't follow a defeated foe. Follow Christ. It is costly. You will be an exile in this age. But you will be free.

TO MAKE HIS CROSS THE GROUND OF ALL OUR BOASTING



*Far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our
Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified
to me, and I to the world.*

Galatians 6:14

This seems over the top. Boast only in the cross! Really? Literally *only* in the cross? Even the Bible talks about other things to boast in. Boast in the glory of God (Romans 5:2). Boast in our tribulations (Romans 5:3). Boast in our weaknesses (2 Corinthians 12:9). Boast in the people of Christ (1 Thessalonians 2:19). What does “only” mean here?

It means that all other boasting should still be a boasting in the cross. If we boast in the hope of glory, that very boast should be a boast in the cross of Christ. If we boast in the people of Christ, that very boasting should be a boasting in the cross. Boasting only in the cross means only the cross enables every other legitimate boast, and every legitimate boast should therefore honor the cross.

Why? Because every good thing—indeed, even every bad thing that God turns for good—was obtained for us by the cross of Christ. Apart from faith in Christ, sinners get only judgment. Yes, there are many pleasant things that come to unbelievers.

But the Bible teaches that even these natural blessings of life will only increase the severity of God’s judgment in the end, if they are not received with thanks on the basis of Christ’s sufferings (Romans 2:4–5).

Therefore, everything that we enjoy, as people who trust Christ, is owing to his death. His suffering absorbed all the judgment that guilty sinners deserved and purchased all the good that forgiven sinners enjoy. Therefore all our boasting in these things should be a boasting in the cross of Christ. We are not as Christ-centered and cross-cherishing as we should be, because we do not ponder the truth that everything good, and everything bad that God turns for the good, was purchased by the sufferings of Christ.

And how do we become that radically cross-focused? We must awaken to the truth that when Christ died on the cross, we died (see chapter 31). When this happened to the apostle Paul, he said, “The world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Galatians 6:14). This is the key to Christ-centered boasting in the cross.

When you put your trust in Christ, the overpowering attraction of the world is broken. You are a corpse to the world, and the world is a corpse to you. Or to put it positively, you are a “new creation” (Galatians 6:15). The old you is dead. A new you is alive—the you of faith in Christ. And what marks this faith is that it treasures Christ above everything in the world. The power of the world to woo your love away has died.

Being dead to the world means that every legitimate pleasure in the world becomes a blood-bought evidence of Christ’s love and an occasion of boasting in the cross. When our hearts run back along the beam of blessing to the source in the cross, then the worldliness of the blessing is dead, and Christ crucified is everything.

TO RANSOM PEOPLE FROM EVERY TRIBE AND LANGUAGE AND PEOPLE AND NATION



*Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals,
for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for
God from every tribe and language and people and nation.*

Revelation 5:9

The scene is heaven. The apostle John has been given a glimpse of the future in the hand of God. "I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll . . . sealed with seven seals" (Revelation 5:1). Opening the scroll signifies the unfolding of world history in the future. John weeps that there seems to be no one to open the scroll. Then one of the heavenly beings says, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll" (5:5). This is a reference to Jesus Christ, the Messiah. He had conquered by his death and resurrection. Then John sees him: "I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain" (5:6).

Then the heavenly beings around the throne fall down and worship Christ. They sing a new song. Amazingly, the song announces that it is the death of Christ that makes him worthy to open the scroll of history. The implication is that Christ's death was necessary to accomplish God's global purposes in history. "They sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy are you to

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take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation" (5:9).

Christ died to save a great diversity of peoples. Sin is no respecter of cultures. All peoples have sinned. Every race and culture needs to be reconciled to God. As the disease of sin is global, so the remedy is global. Jesus saw the agony of the cross coming and spoke boldly about the scope of his purpose: "I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself" (John 12:32). As he planned his death, he embraced the world.

Christianity began in the East. Over the centuries there was a major shift to the West. But increasingly now, Christianity is not a Western religion. This is no surprise to Christ. Already in the Old Testament his global impact was foretold: "All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you" (Psalm 22:27). "Let the nations be glad and sing for joy" (Psalm 67:4). So when Jesus came to the end of his ministry on earth, he made his mission clear: "that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations" (Luke 24:46-47). The command to his disciples was unmistakable: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19).

Jesus Christ is not a tribal deity. He does not belong to one culture or one ethnic group. He is "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). "There is no distinction between Jew and Greek [or any other group]; the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:12-13). Call on him now, and join the great global band of the redeemed.

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TO GAIN HIS JOY AND OURS



*For the joy that was set before him,
[he] endured the cross, despising the shame,
and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Hebrews 12:2

The path that leads to joy is a hard road. It's hard for us, and it was hard for Jesus. It cost him his life. It may cost us ours. "For the joy that was set before him [he] endured the cross." First the agony of the cross, then the ecstasy of heaven. There was no other way.

The joy set before him had many levels. It was the joy of reunion with his Father: "In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Psalm 16:11). It was the joy of triumph over sin: "After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3). It was the joy of divine rights restored: "[He] is seated at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2). It was the joy of being surrounded with praise by all the people for whom he died: "There will be . . . joy in heaven over one sinner who repents"—not to mention millions (Luke 15:7).

Now what about us? Has he entered into joy and left us for misery? No. Before he died, he made the connection between his joy and ours. He said, "These things I have spoken to you,

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that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full" (John 15:11). He knew what his joy would be, and he said, "My joy will be in you." We who have trusted in him will rejoice with as much of the joy of Jesus as finite creatures can experience.

But the road will be hard. Jesus warned us, "In the world you will have tribulation" (John 16:33). "A disciple is not above his teacher. . . . If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household" (Matthew 10:24-25). "Some of you they will put to death. You will be hated by all for my name's sake" (Luke 21:16-17). That's the path Jesus walked, and that's the road to joy—his joy triumphant in us, and our joy full.

In the same way that the hope of joy enabled Christ to endure the cross, our hope of joy empowers us to suffer with him. Jesus prepared us for this very thing when he said, "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven" (Matthew 5:11-12). Our reward will be to enjoy God with the very joy that the Son of God has in his Father.

If Jesus had not willingly died, neither he nor we could be forever glad. He would have been disobedient. We would have perished in our sins. His joy and ours were acquired at the cross. Now we follow him in the path of love. We reckon "that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Romans 8:18). Now we bear reproach with him. But then there will be undiminished joy. Any risk required by love we will endure. Not with heroic might, but in the strength of hope that "Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning" (Psalm 30:5).

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Aleph

Oneness - All - Ox or Bull -Greatness/mastery

The best athletes compete with noble purpose, they are in it for pure love of the game.
 They play by the rules, eager to practice, giving 100%, their effort's always rewarded.
 They keep their hearts right with God, so everything they do is right.
 Fundamentals, fundamentals! It's your foundation and you can't win without them.
 The sooner you get them down, the sooner you follow through consistently.
 Not embarrassed by turnovers, ready to meet any challenge.
 Out of a heart filled with praise, I thank you for teaching me to judge rightly for my life choices.
 I'm making the most of every opportunity, and following your direction. I don't want to ever be passed up for another.

9 - 16

Bet

Distinction - House - Break Open

How do you keep from messing up when you're young? By following your instructions.
 If you want to be the best you've got to give it your all, don't let up on practicing the fundamentals everyday.
 The game is like life, we can keep a pure lifestyle by going over the fundamentals again and again until they are part of our being
 I bless you every chance I get for you teach me the principles of success.
 I can say from memory everything you've taught me, just like a song on the radio.
 Getting one of your plays down is as exciting as winning the lottery.
 I rehearse them over and over, improving my skill.
 I have such passion for your ways, hardly an hour goes by that I don't think about your instruction.

17 - 24

Gimel

Action - Camel (going from oasis to oasis in the desert)

You are leading me to become mature. And following you is an adventure that makes me feel so alive.
 Each day is an opportunity to learn something new, you encourage me to persist to learn every aspect of your instructions.
 I've never been here before, You patiently lead me the right way.
 I'm always eager to know how you think I am doing, you always seem to have something good to say.
 You don't have much patience for show arrogance, they are only looking out for themselves, believing the rest of the team is only there to make them look good.
 Only if that arrogance is driven out of them will we come together as a team.
 Coaches my discuss my weaknesses. But my mind is on your advise, your prescription for excellence.
 My greatest delight is to follow your daily word to me, They are my coaches.

Dalet (Delta)
Division -Open door to enter

My soul is naturally drawn to what is low and dirty, your advice to live free and pure keeps me focused and in order.
 I keep close touch with you on my training, you help me accomplish my goals.
 Your ways of doing things is so above my skill level, the only way I can incorporate them into my life is if you teach me one step at a time.
 Sometimes I get overwhelmed form all the pressure, you lift me up Lord with your words of encouragement.
 I don't need to live any kind of pretense when you offer me your favor so graciously.
 I know you judge all things fair and square, so that if I choose truth to light my way, I will have a clear path and conscience.
 And if I stick to it as a way of life, I know you will keep me from being embarrassed and shamed.
 I will be quick taking your advice, I know it allows you to enlarge my capacity to receive, even more than I deserve.

Heh
Connection - Window - Mental to spiritual

You daily lead me in the right direction and it develops into good habits to live by.
 I keep making the same request, let me understand the way your commands work, once I see their benefit it makes me eager to do it.
 Set me up for action Lord, I'm right at home making a good plan come together.
 You wet my appetite for your ways, and draw me off this bench of self interest.
 And keep me from being distracted, my life's at it's best when I'm focused on doing what you say.
 When what you promised happens, how respect for you grows.
 I don't need to fear your judgment calls, cause when the dust clears, I'll be the one on the way to the free throw line.
 Living life your way always keeps me coming back for more, especially when we make a fast break and you're right there beside me.

Vav
Multiplication - Spine/Unfoldment

You took a tremendous risk to allow me to be on your team, even made a promise to pour all your time and talent into me.
 You've set me up so I can answer their trash talk, I've been taught by the best.
 You won't leave me standing here like a dummy without a word to say, I've put all my confidence in your advice.
 You don't have to worry about me, I've made up my mind to play by the rules.
 I move down the floor without even thinking about it, we've gone over each drill so many times I could do it in my sleep.
 I can talk the game with the best and always have a great conversation.
 It's a joy to follow you, because I love you.
 You've imparted your understanding to me, making me love you even more. What you've said is always on my mind.

Zayin

Projection - Spear, Weapon - Action/To cut off

Remember your promise to put me in the game, I'm already on the edge of the bench.
 The only thing that makes sitting here bearable is your assurance that my time is coming.
 It doesn't help when they make fun of me, but it does make me try that much harder.
 I think back on how things turned out for guys like Pistol Pete, and I have hope again.
 Those loud mouths couldn't make the team themselves, so they try to be cool as party animals; Just makes me mad that they break all the rules.
 Your advice is the heart of my life's song, I sing it everywhere I go.
 Even when I'm out with my friends for a movie or a game of pool, I find myself Imitating you, keeping on the straight and narrow.
 I've gotten in the habit of looking for the right thing to do.

57- 64

Chet

Encompassment - Fence/Skin - Perimeter/Surface

Everything I am I owe to you Lord, I've promised to follow you faithfully.
 There's no limit to how I want to please you, hoping you will be patient with me.
 When I think about the course my life is taking. Step by step I want to keep pace with you.
 I do what you tell me right away, I don't ever want to get behind.
 The party crowd thinks I'm missing out on a good time, always pestering me to join them at their parties, this pressures momentary compared to my desire to please you.
 While they're out getting drunk, I'm in bed with a smile on my face thanking God for the way he's put my life together.
 My friends as those who have their lives headed in the right direction, whenever we come together a synergy takes place.
 We are a community with God's love at the center, and he imparts his wisdom among us.

65 -72

Tet

Completion - Wholeness/Bonding - To twist together

The excellent things we receive are a result of our trusting in God's word.
 If you want to have the edge in your performance, then put full confidence in your training.
 I didn't realize what a fool I looked like trying to be a show off, Now that I'm benched I've learned to pay more attention to what you say.
 You're not just a good trainer, your a good in every aspect of your being. I don't just want you to teach me the game, but I hope your character rubs off on me as well.
 The party crowd starts rumors about me trying to bring me down, but I'm focused on doing what's right with all my heart.
 They don't care who they hurt, arrogance has clogged their arteries like cholesterol, but your advice is like a reassuring arm around my shoulder.
 I'm glad I didn't get away with sin, I'm much better off learning to excel in life.
 Having you teach me one on one means more to me than even winning the lottery.

Yod

Personal Consciousness - Conscious Hand - To make, deed, work

You fashioned my inner being, and so you know how I work best. Give me eyes to see what you are doing so I'm at the right place at the right time.
 Kindred spirits cheer when I go out on the floor, they know I'm going all out for the team.
 Your timing couldn't be better, even bench time is choreographed into the game plan to get me stoked.
 When your hand is on my shoulder as you cue me up for the play, I feel your confidence in me pull me up.
 You're patient with me, even when I blow it, gives me confidence to try again; You know that I really want to get it right.
 Those arrogant loudmouths who said I wouldn't make the cut are eating their words, So glad I didn't lose focus.
 Those who heard them now have come to respect me, they understand that
 God rewards those who seek him and do what he says.
 May I always keep in mind that I'm nothing without you, staying humble, not embarrassing myself by biting off more than I can chew.

Kaf

Hold in, likeness - cupped hand - To cover

My minds exhausted thinking of ways you could possibly make something of me, but you reassure me my time is coming.
 I really can see it happen a thousand times in my mind, when will you have mercy and let it happen.
 Instead I'm like a side of beef hanging in the smokehouse; Your every instruction's like smoke permeating my being.
 It isn't fair that I have to hang here while you let the party crowd make fun of me with no consequences to pay.
 They're always trying to make me slip up, never playing by the rules.
 Your advice has really helped me to see through the lies they bring to get me in trouble.
 They almost had me there for a while, but I remembered what you said and gained the upper hand.
 So glad you kept me on the team, and covered me when I was in a slump; I'm careful to do exactly as you tell me.

Lamed

Learning - Abstraction - Cattle goad, staff - Prod

Your advice is the standard, it's your book everyone looks in to get it right.
 Consistency, you are it's definition; like the earth whose laws never change.
 Each word you say is like a worker ant, busy all day storing up provisions for whomever takes your advice.
 If I hadn't been focused on your instructions I'd be off the team, not even useful to warm the bench.
 I will remember your teachings forever, They are the entrances to success and prosperity.
 Help me! Aren't I totally loyal? My daily prayer is to know your will.
 Those who play dirty do they're best to take me out, but I'm safe as long as I focus on what you say.
 Perfectionists seldom reach their goals; They're focus is laser beamed on themselves. But focusing on excellence for love of the game takes off all the limits.

Mem

Womb - Water - Source from within - Massive/Over-power

How affectionately I embrace your law, it's what I marinate in all day long.
 It's no wonder I can outmaneuver my opponent, your game plan rocks, I live by it.
 I've expanded my training beyond what my coach has taught by getting understanding from you through prayer.
 This leads to innovation that takes me beyond my predecessors; each game is a new opportunity to go beyond what's been before.
 I've disciplined myself to avoid succumbing to my weaknesses; so I can follow through on my promise to obey your word.
 I'm staying on the path for you personally are leading me.
 Your training is to my commitment as honey on toast is to my mouth.
 I am able to perceive more of what you teach me in direct proportion to my avoiding every pathway that takes my focus off you.

105-112

Nun

Neck/Nexus - Prince -Fish(middle or connection)

Your instructions set the pace for my progress, and enlighten the pathways of prosperity.
 I have sworn with absolute resolve to follow your instructions as I see the vision unfold.
 No matter what it costs, how much pain I have to endure, I'm staying with it until I'm flowing in blessing you promised.
 Be pleased Lord with the praise I give from a heart free of arrogance, teach me to judge as you do.
 I so often get wrapped up in my own emotional perspective of things, I'm glad your word's an anchor to hold me steady.
 I'm easily ensnared if I'm unfocused but I'm staying true to my commitment to your instructions.
 They give me good understanding for every situation life brings, they are my inheritance for life. That's why there's always a smile on my face.
 My heart is always at peace knowing you have a lifetime of new opportunities for me.

113-120

Semek

Prop - Sustain - Continuous creation - Sustenance, to hold up

I hate half -heartiness, but I love your ways.
 The secret to success is patiently waiting in hope as you develop your character in me.
 Out of my way you lazy sinners, I'm on a mission is to follow God's plan for my life.
 Your promise lifts me up, I'm so proud to be on your team.
 You give me confidence to face every challenge, every day I have a reason to respect you more, you keep my life in a wonderful balance.
 Those who stray away from your path get left behind, their self deception has gotten them absolutely nothing.
 They become like rats in the alley, who can't wait to feed on garbage. Makes me appreciate your ways all the more.
 It shakes me up, that except for your grace, I realize that could have been me; I stand in awe of you for it.

121 - 128

Ayin

Eye/Well - (like an onion - layered to and from the deep)

We've just played a great game, won fair and square; So now they want to take us on in the parking lot.
You assure us that champions are secure, on or off the court; Makes their arrogant taunts sound so foolish, not worth loosing our heads over.
I'm searching but I have-not yet grasped the ways of your salvation; the key to your most precious promise.
I may cry for mercy but don't stop working on me until your satisfied I'm ready.
I so desire to train rising to the next level.
It's definitely time for you to get to work on us, we are so undisciplined
I love your instructions, your the best there is, beyond gold metals. For you to train me is better than winning gold myself.
I so admire your ways, I avoid every meaningless distraction.

129 - 136

Peh

Engulf - Swallow - Mouth - Eat to become full

Your training is so marvelous, I watch with an eagle eye not to miss a thing.
As you develop your strategy, your plan becomes more and more clear. Even simpletons like us can get it.
We're like hounds who've sensed the hunt is about to begin, panting for the next word out of your mouth.
You give me special attention and favor in return for my sincere devotion to you.
We're being trained for excellence, so that no other plan will be able to penetrate our defense.
You keep us from being distracted by our opponent's plan to get us off our game; we focus on your strategy.
You look at me with confidence as I run down the court, when I hear "man on", I know exactly what to do.
It just kills me when someone tries to be a hot shot and we turnover the ball.

137 - 144

Tsdhe

Righteousness - Highest - Rule over the Zodiac

God is right as are his laws.
His testimonies are guiding lights into the truth, if you trust in them they will always prove worthy.
My natural enemies are hearts that ignore you when you speak, I'm worn out trying to get them to listen.
Your advise has been through flood and fire and brought thousands out in glory, every testimony makes me love them more.
I may be just a water boy, benched indefinitely, but I still pay close attention to every move you make.
What you say is right from the dawn of history to it's close, always true and reliable.
When problems bring trouble into my life, I'm glad I have your promises to see me through
Your laws are right and always have been, give me an understanding of them so I can have a well ordered life.

145 - 152

Qaf

Copy - Mechanical - Monkey/Ape - Physical copy of inner truth

I'm calling with all my heart and I expect an answer. Whatever you prescribe I'm ready to take it.
I'm not letting up, I want out of this situation and I'm willing to do whatever it takes.
I'm up for early morning prayer, crying out for answers, I'm hoping for a word from you before dawn.
I was up all night, not sleeping, just thinking about your promise to me.
Listen please, if you really care about me, shelter me under your wings, Show me your justice.
Those who want to hurt God lovers are right next door, but they are miles away from living a good life.
But you are near Lord and faithful to the word you spoke over us.
I learned a long time ago by studying your word, that you prepared it to last for eternity.

153 - 160

Resh
Radiance -Head

Pay attention to my miserable troubles, steady me for a response, I'm not ignoring your directions.
Plead my cause and your attorneys fees are covered, my case is secure as your promise to defend it.
The wicked have no concept of how you work salvation, they look for answers in all the wrong places.
Your mercy sweeps me up in a flood of love, I'm riding it like a wave far above the turmoil below.
Many are those who harass me for my convictions, but I'm not turning aside your advice.
I grieve over their detestable conduct, They completely ignore everything you say.
I'm hanging on every word you say for I love how it keeps my life in good order, kept safe in your grace.
The glory of your leadership radiates faithfulness, all your judgments are right and last forever.

161 - 168

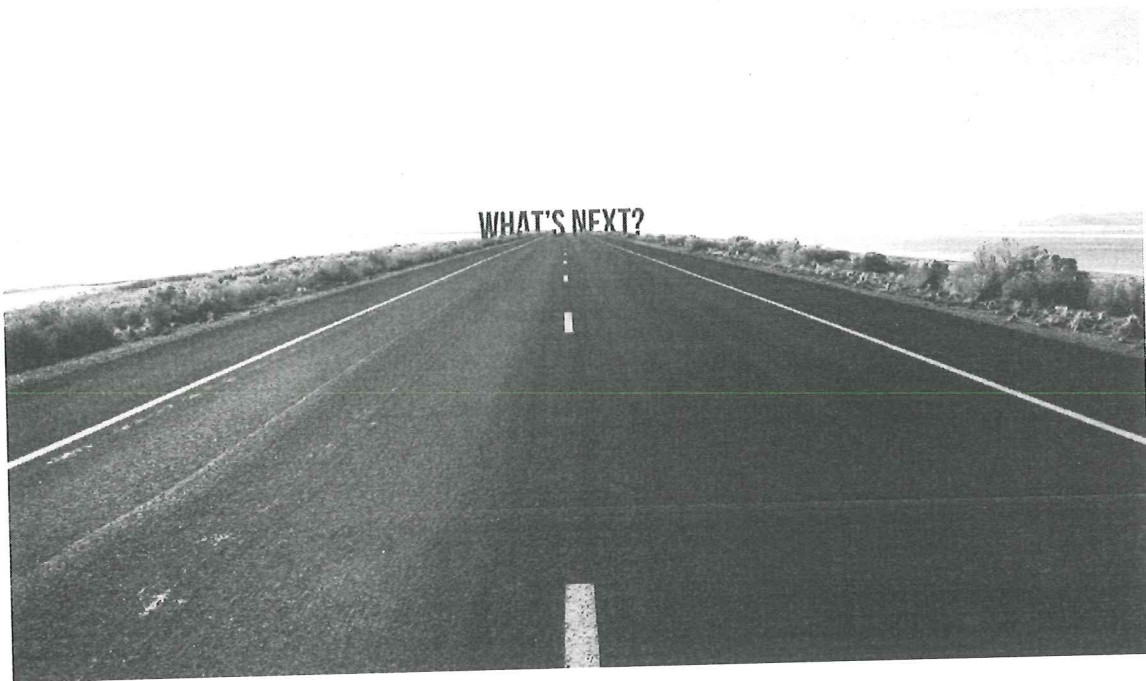
Shin
Shine-in - Teeth - Action - Big smile

My coach is on me without a reason, but my reverend respect is for your word.
My joy is in your promise to me, as much as if I'd found a winning lottery ticket.
I detest lies and deception, My desire is for a word from you.
I've made a habit of praising you for judgments on my behalf.
Those who practice your instructions have a calm assurance, and are kept from the turnovers of life.
We patiently hope for victory, for we focus on following your instructions.
Body, soul and spirit are into your word, with great affection I listen.
Well aware of my path in life, you make it clear to me how to follow you.

169 - 176

Taw
Mark - Cross - Seal in Covenant

I'm asking for a listening ear Lord, let me understand your plan for my life.
I'm begging for your favor to free me as you promised.
In spite of my circumstances I'm singing praise songs to you, giving due diligence to following your plan.
I sing in the Spirit and he interrupts for me according to your will; the right word for me today.
Your own guiding hand is there for me, I've chosen your ways.
I long to see your deliverance Lord, as I delight to follow you.
If I live may it be to praise you, for it's you who sustains me to obey.
I admit that I wander away from you, but your word is my GPS that takes me back, you are my home sweet home.



As we bring this DEVO to a close, what will your next step be to continue to

.....hear from God for yourself?

Write down your plans to continue knowing God through His Word?

What do you plan to read?

When do you plan on doing it?

*Remember spending time with God *alone* is a big part of spending time with God. It's not just reading His Word or worshipping with other believers. Spending time *alone* with God is where we develop a prayer life that is satisfying.

suggestions

1

Go through the *Bible Reading Plan* on the next page. Start with a small goal and work from there. Can you read through the entire New Testament in a year along with 5 books from the Old Testament?

2

Download two devotional apps to read while you're going about your day:

Solid Joys by John Piper or *Daily Truth for Life* by Alistair Begg

Links to download can be found here: www.StartRunFinish.com/links

September

New Testament		Old Testament	
► LUKE		► HEBREWS	
1. <input type="checkbox"/> 20:27-40	<input type="checkbox"/> 1:1-9	► PROVERBS	
2. <input type="checkbox"/> 20:41-47	<input type="checkbox"/> 1:10-14	► ISAIAH	
3. <input type="checkbox"/> 21:1-19	<input type="checkbox"/> 2:1-9	► JAMES	
4. <input type="checkbox"/> 21:20-28	<input type="checkbox"/> 2:10-18	► JOHN	
5. <input type="checkbox"/> 21:29-38	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	1. <input type="checkbox"/> 1:1-18	<input type="checkbox"/> 1:1-11
6. <input type="checkbox"/> 22:1-13	<input type="checkbox"/> 4:1-11	2. <input type="checkbox"/> 1:19-28	<input type="checkbox"/> 1:12-18
7. <input type="checkbox"/> 22:14-23	<input type="checkbox"/> 4:12-16	3. <input type="checkbox"/> 1:29-34	<input type="checkbox"/> 1:19-27
8. <input type="checkbox"/> 22:24-30	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	4. <input type="checkbox"/> 1:35-42	<input type="checkbox"/> 2:1-13
9. <input type="checkbox"/> 22:31-38	<input type="checkbox"/> 6:1-12	5. <input type="checkbox"/> 1:43-51	<input type="checkbox"/> 2:14-26
10. <input type="checkbox"/> 22:39-46	<input type="checkbox"/> 6:13-20	6. <input type="checkbox"/> 2:1-11	<input type="checkbox"/> 3:1-12
11. <input type="checkbox"/> 22:47-53	<input type="checkbox"/> 7:1-10	7. <input type="checkbox"/> 2:12-25	<input type="checkbox"/> 3:13-18
12. <input type="checkbox"/> 22:54-62	<input type="checkbox"/> 7:11-28	8. <input type="checkbox"/> 3:1-15	<input type="checkbox"/> 4:1-10
13. <input type="checkbox"/> 22:63-71	<input type="checkbox"/> 8:1-6	9. <input type="checkbox"/> 3:16-21	<input type="checkbox"/> 4:11-17
14. <input type="checkbox"/> 23:1-12	<input type="checkbox"/> 8:7-13	10. <input type="checkbox"/> 3:22-36	<input type="checkbox"/> 5:1-6
15. <input type="checkbox"/> 23:13-25	<input type="checkbox"/> 9:1-10	11. <input type="checkbox"/> 4:1-14	<input type="checkbox"/> 5:7-12
16. <input type="checkbox"/> 23:26-31	<input type="checkbox"/> 9:11-28	12. <input type="checkbox"/> 4:15-26	<input type="checkbox"/> 5:13-20
17. <input type="checkbox"/> 23:32-37	<input type="checkbox"/> 10:1-18	► 1 PETER	
18. <input type="checkbox"/> 23:38-43	<input type="checkbox"/> 10:19-39	1. <input type="checkbox"/> 1:1-9	<input type="checkbox"/> 1:1-9
19. <input type="checkbox"/> 23:44-49	<input type="checkbox"/> 11:1-16	2. <input type="checkbox"/> 1:10-16	<input type="checkbox"/> 1:10-16
20. <input type="checkbox"/> 23:50-56	<input type="checkbox"/> 11:17-31	3. <input type="checkbox"/> 1:17-25	<input type="checkbox"/> 1:17-25
21. <input type="checkbox"/> 24:1-12	<input type="checkbox"/> 11:32-40	4. <input type="checkbox"/> 1:26-30	<input type="checkbox"/> 1:26-30
22. <input type="checkbox"/> 24:13-27	<input type="checkbox"/> 12:1-13	5. <input type="checkbox"/> 1:31-33	<input type="checkbox"/> 1:31-33
23. <input type="checkbox"/> 24:28-35	<input type="checkbox"/> 12:14-29	6. <input type="checkbox"/> 1:34-36	<input type="checkbox"/> 1:34-36
24. <input type="checkbox"/> 24:36-44	<input type="checkbox"/> 13:1-8	7. <input type="checkbox"/> 1:37-39	<input type="checkbox"/> 1:37-39
25. <input type="checkbox"/> 24:45-53	<input type="checkbox"/> 13:9-25	8. <input type="checkbox"/> 1:40-41	<input type="checkbox"/> 1:40-41

October

New Testament		Old Testament	
► JOHN		► ECCLES.	
1. <input type="checkbox"/> 1:1-18	<input type="checkbox"/> 1:1-11	► JEREMIAH	
2. <input type="checkbox"/> 1:19-28	<input type="checkbox"/> 1:12-18	► SONG OF SONGS	
3. <input type="checkbox"/> 1:29-34	<input type="checkbox"/> 1:19-27	1. <input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-2
4. <input type="checkbox"/> 1:35-42	<input type="checkbox"/> 2:1-13	2. <input type="checkbox"/> 2:1-16	<input type="checkbox"/> 3-4
5. <input type="checkbox"/> 1:43-51	<input type="checkbox"/> 2:14-26	3. <input type="checkbox"/> 2:17-26	<input type="checkbox"/> 5-6
6. <input type="checkbox"/> 2:1-11	<input type="checkbox"/> 3:1-12	4. <input type="checkbox"/> 3:1-15	<input type="checkbox"/> 7-9
7. <input type="checkbox"/> 2:12-25	<input type="checkbox"/> 3:13-18	5. <input type="checkbox"/> 3:16-22	<input type="checkbox"/> 10-11
8. <input type="checkbox"/> 3:1-15	<input type="checkbox"/> 4:1-10	6. <input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 12-13
9. <input type="checkbox"/> 3:16-21	<input type="checkbox"/> 4:11-17	7. <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 14-15
10. <input type="checkbox"/> 3:22-36	<input type="checkbox"/> 5:1-6	8. <input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 16-18
11. <input type="checkbox"/> 4:1-14	<input type="checkbox"/> 5:7-12	9. <input type="checkbox"/> 7:1-14	<input type="checkbox"/> 19-22
12. <input type="checkbox"/> 4:15-26	<input type="checkbox"/> 5:13-20	10. <input type="checkbox"/> 7:15-29	<input type="checkbox"/> 23-25
13. <input type="checkbox"/> 4:27-42	<input type="checkbox"/> 5:21-33	11. <input type="checkbox"/> 8	<input type="checkbox"/> 26-29
14. <input type="checkbox"/> 4:43-54	<input type="checkbox"/> 5:31-33	12. <input type="checkbox"/> 9	<input type="checkbox"/> 30-31
15. <input type="checkbox"/> 5:1-15	<input type="checkbox"/> 5:34-36	► 2 PETER	
16. <input type="checkbox"/> 5:16-30	<input type="checkbox"/> 6:1-18	1. <input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-2
17. <input type="checkbox"/> 5:31-47	<input type="checkbox"/> 6:19-17	2. <input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3-4
18. <input type="checkbox"/> 6:1-15	<input type="checkbox"/> 6:20-25	3. <input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 5-6
19. <input type="checkbox"/> 6:16-24	<input type="checkbox"/> 6:26-33	4. <input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 7-8
20. <input type="checkbox"/> 6:25-40	<input type="checkbox"/> 6:34-41	5. <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 9-12
21. <input type="checkbox"/> 6:41-59	<input type="checkbox"/> 6:42-51	6. <input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 13-14
22. <input type="checkbox"/> 6:60-71	<input type="checkbox"/> 6:43-54	7. <input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 15-16
23. <input type="checkbox"/> 7:1-13	<input type="checkbox"/> 6:45-54	8. <input type="checkbox"/> 8	<input type="checkbox"/> 17-18
24. <input type="checkbox"/> 7:14-24	<input type="checkbox"/> 6:46-54	9. <input type="checkbox"/> 9	<input type="checkbox"/> 19-20
25. <input type="checkbox"/> 7:25-36	<input type="checkbox"/> 6:47-54	10. <input type="checkbox"/> 10	<input type="checkbox"/> 21-22

November

New Testament		Old Testament	
► JOHN		► JOB	
1. <input type="checkbox"/> 7:37-44	<input type="checkbox"/> 1:1-11	► EZEKIEL	
2. <input type="checkbox"/> 7:45-53	<input type="checkbox"/> 1:12-21	1. <input type="checkbox"/> 1-3	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-3
3. <input type="checkbox"/> 8:1-11	<input type="checkbox"/> 2:1-9	2. <input type="checkbox"/> 4-8	<input type="checkbox"/> 4-6
4. <input type="checkbox"/> 8:12-20	<input type="checkbox"/> 2:10-16	3. <input type="checkbox"/> 9-12	<input type="checkbox"/> 7-8
5. <input type="checkbox"/> 8:21-30	<input type="checkbox"/> 2:17-22	4. <input type="checkbox"/> 13-15	<input type="checkbox"/> 9-12
6. <input type="checkbox"/> 8:31-47	<input type="checkbox"/> 3:1-9	5. <input type="checkbox"/> 16	<input type="checkbox"/> 13-14
7. <input type="checkbox"/> 8:48-59	<input type="checkbox"/> 3:10-18	6. <input type="checkbox"/> 17-19	<input type="checkbox"/> 15-16
8. <input type="checkbox"/> 9:1-12	<input type="checkbox"/> 1:1-4	7. <input type="checkbox"/> 20-21	<input type="checkbox"/> 17-19
9. <input type="checkbox"/> 9:13-25	<input type="checkbox"/> 1:5-10	8. <input type="checkbox"/> 22-23	<input type="checkbox"/> 20-21
10. <input type="checkbox"/> 9:26-41	<input type="checkbox"/> 2:1-11	9. <input type="checkbox"/> 24-26	<input type="checkbox"/> 22-23
11. <input type="checkbox"/> 10:1-10	<input type="checkbox"/> 2:12-17	10. <input type="checkbox"/> 27-28	<input type="checkbox"/> 24-26
12. <input type="checkbox"/> 10:11-21	<input type="checkbox"/> 2:18-23	11. <input type="checkbox"/> 29-30	<input type="checkbox"/> 27-28
13. <input type="checkbox"/> 10:22-29	<input type="checkbox"/> 2:30-34	12. <input type="checkbox"/> 31-32	<input type="checkbox"/> 29-30
14. <input type="checkbox"/> 11:1-16	<input type="checkbox"/> 3:1-10	13. <input type="checkbox"/> 33-34	<input type="checkbox"/> 31-32
15. <input type="checkbox"/> 11:17-37	<input type="checkbox"/> 3:11-18	14. <input type="checkbox"/> 35-37	<input type="checkbox"/> 33-34
16. <input type="checkbox"/> 11:38-44	<input type="checkbox"/> 3:19-24	15. <input type="checkbox"/> 38-39	<input type="checkbox"/> 35-37
17. <input type="checkbox"/> 11:45-57	<input type="checkbox"/> 4:1-6	16. <input type="checkbox"/> 40-41	<input type="checkbox"/> 38-39
18. <input type="checkbox"/> 12:1-11	<input type="checkbox"/> 4:7-21	17. <input type="checkbox"/> 42-44	<input type="checkbox"/> 40-41
19. <input type="checkbox"/> 12:12-19	<input type="checkbox"/> 5:1-12	18. <input type="checkbox"/> 45-47	<input type="checkbox"/> 42-44
20. <input type="checkbox"/> 12:20-36	<input type="checkbox"/> 5:13-21	19. <input type="checkbox"/> 48	<input type="checkbox"/> 45-47
21. <input type="checkbox"/> 12:37-50	<input type="checkbox"/> 6:1-13	20. <input type="checkbox"/> 49	<input type="checkbox"/> 48
22. <input type="checkbox"/> 13:1-11	<input type="checkbox"/> 6:14-16	21. <input type="checkbox"/> 50	<input type="checkbox"/> 49
23. <input type="checkbox"/> 13:12-17	<input type="checkbox"/> 6:17-19	22. <input type="checkbox"/> 51	<input type="checkbox"/> 50
24. <input type="checkbox"/> 13:18-30	<input type="checkbox"/> 6:20-22	23. <input type="checkbox"/> 52	<input type="checkbox"/> 51
25. <input type="checkbox"/> 13:31-38	<input type="checkbox"/> 6:23-25	24. <input type="checkbox"/> 53	<input type="checkbox"/> 52

December

New Testament		Old Testament	
► JOHN		► JOB	
1. <input type="checkbox"/> 14:1-14	<input type="checkbox"/> 1:1-8	► HOSSEA	
2. <input type="checkbox"/> 14:15-21	<input type="checkbox"/> 1:9-20	1. <input type="checkbox"/> 1-3	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-3
3. <input type="checkbox"/> 14:22-31	<input type="checkbox"/> 2:1-7	2. <input type="checkbox"/> 4-6	<input type="checkbox"/> 4-6
4. <input type="checkbox"/> 15:1-8	<input type="checkbox"/> 2:8-13	3. <input type="checkbox"/> 7-8	<input type="checkbox"/> 7-8
5. <input type="checkbox"/> 15:9-17	<input type="checkbox"/> 3:1-13	4. <input type="checkbox"/> 9-12	<input type="checkbox"/> 9-12
6. <input type="checkbox"/> 15:18-27	<input type="checkbox"/> 3:14-22	5. <input type="checkbox"/> 13-14	<input type="checkbox"/> 13-14
7. <input type="checkbox"/> 16:1-11	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	6. <input type="checkbox"/> 15	<input type="checkbox"/> 15
8. <input type="checkbox"/> 16:12-24	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	7. <input type="checkbox"/> 16	<input type="checkbox"/> 16
9. <input type="checkbox"/> 16:25-33	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	8. <input type="checkbox"/> 17	<input type="checkbox"/> 17
10. <input type="checkbox"/> 17:1-5	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	9. <input type="checkbox"/> 18	<input type="checkbox"/> 18
11. <input type="checkbox"/> 17:6-19	<input type="checkbox"/> 8	10. <input type="checkbox"/> 19	<input type="checkbox"/> 19
12. <input type="checkbox"/> 17:20-26	<input type="checkbox"/> 9	11. <input type="checkbox"/> 20	<input type="checkbox"/> 20
13. <input type="checkbox"/> 18:1-18	<input type="checkbox"/> 10	12. <input type="checkbox"/> 21	<input type="checkbox"/> 21
14. <input type="checkbox"/> 18:19-27	<input type="checkbox"/> 11	13. <input type="checkbox"/> 22	<input type="checkbox"/> 22
15. <input type="checkbox"/> 18:28-40	<input type="checkbox"/> 12	14. <input type="checkbox"/> 23	<input type="checkbox"/> 23
16. <input type="checkbox"/> 18:41-16	<input type="checkbox"/> 13	15. <input type="checkbox"/> 24	<input type="checkbox"/> 24
17. <input type="checkbox"/> 19:1-27	<input type="checkbox"/> 14	16. <input type="checkbox"/> 25	<input type="checkbox"/> 25
18. <input type="checkbox"/> 19:28-37	<input type="checkbox"/> 15	17. <input type="checkbox"/> 26	<input type="checkbox"/> 26
19. <input type="checkbox"/> 19:38-42	<input type="checkbox"/> 16	18. <input type="checkbox"/> 27	<input type="checkbox"/> 27
20. <input type="checkbox"/> 20:1-9	<input type="checkbox"/> 17	19. <input type="checkbox"/> 28	<input type="checkbox"/> 28
21. <input type="checkbox"/> 20:10-18	<input type="checkbox"/> 18	20. <input type="checkbox"/> 29	<input type="checkbox"/> 29
22. <input type="checkbox"/> 20:19-23	<input type="checkbox"/> 19	21. <input type="checkbox"/> 30	<input type="checkbox"/> 30
23. <input type="checkbox"/> 20:24-31	<input type="checkbox"/> 20	22. <input type="checkbox"/> 31	<input type="checkbox"/> 31
24. <input type="checkbox"/> 21:1-14	<input type="checkbox"/> 21	23. <input type="checkbox"/> 32	<input type="checkbox"/> 32

The Discipleship Journal® Bible Reading Plan

The Discipleship Journal Bible Reading Plan offers special features that will aid you in your journey through the Bible.

- By reading from four separate places in the Scriptures every day, you should be able to better grasp the unity of the Scriptures, as well as enjoy the variety of four different viewpoints.
- You can begin at any point during the year.
- To prevent the frustration of falling behind, which most of us tend to do when following a Bible reading plan, each month of this plan gives you only 25 readings. Since you'll have several "free days" each month, you could set aside Sundays either not to read at all or to catch up on any readings you may have missed in the past week.

- If you finish the month's readings by the twenty-fifth, you could use the final days of the month to study the passages that challenged or intrigued you.
- If reading through the entire Bible in one year looms as too large a task, you can alter the plan to meet your needs. For example, you could read the gospels and the wisdom books this year, and the other two categories next year.

In the year ahead, ask God each day to speak directly to you from the Scripture portions you read. Be expectant, and let your continual exposure to God's Word reshape your attitudes and behavior as you gain a better understanding of every part of His written testimony to us.



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January

February

May

June

New Testament	Old Testament
Matthew 1. 1:1-17 2. 1:18-25 3. 2:1-12 4. 2:13-23 5. 3:1-12 6. 3:13-17 7. 4:1-22 8. 4:23-37 9. 4:31-42 10. 5:1-12 11. 5:13-20 12. 5:21-32 13. 5:33-48 14. 6:1-15 15. 6:16-24 16. 6:25-34 17. 7:1-14 18. 7:15-29 19. 8:1-13 20. 8:14-22 21. 8:23-34 22. 9:1-13 23. 9:14-26 24. 9:27-38 25. 10:1-20	Acts 1. 1:1-11 2. 1:12-26 3. 2:1-21 4. 2:22-47 5. 3:1-12 6. 3:13-17 7. 4:1-22 8. 4:23-37 9. 4:31-42 10. 5:1-12 11. 5:13-20 12. 5:21-32 13. 5:33-48 14. 6:1-15 15. 6:16-24 16. 6:25-34 17. 7:1-14 18. 7:15-29 19. 8:1-13 20. 8:14-22 21. 8:23-34 22. 9:1-13 23. 9:14-26 24. 9:27-38 25. 10:1-20

New Testament	Old Testament
Matthew 1. 10:21-42 2. 11:1-19 3. 11:20-30 4. 12:1-21 5. 12:22-37 6. 12:38-50 7. 13:1-23 8. 13:24-43 9. 13:44-58 10. 14:1-21 11. 14:22-36 12. 15:1-20 13. 15:21-39 14. 16:1-12 15. 16:13-28 16. 17:1-13 17. 17:14-27 18. 18:1-14 19. 18:15-35 20. 19:1-15 21. 19:16-30 22. 20:1-16 23. 20:17-34 24. 21:1-11 25. 21:12-22	Exodus 1. 1:3 2. 4:6 3. 7:9 4. 10:12 5. 10:13-15 6. 16:18 7. 19:20 8. 21:23 9. 24:26 10. 27:29 11. 30:31 12. 32:33 13. 34:36 14. 37:23-40 15. 38:40 16. 1:4 17. 5:7 18. 8:10 19. 11:13 20. 14:15 21. 16:17 22. 18:20 23. 21:23 24. 24:25 25. 26:27

New Testament	Old Testament
Mark 1. 9:33-50 2. 10:1-16 3. 10:17-34 4. 10:35-52 5. 11:1-11 6. 11:12-26 7. 11:27-33 8. 12:1-12 9. 12:13-27 10. 12:28-34 11. 12:35-44 12. 13:1-13 13. 13:14-31 14. 13:32-37 15. 14:1-11 16. 14:12-31 17. 14:32-42 18. 14:43-52 19. 14:53-65 20. 14:66-72 21. 15:1-15 22. 15:16-32 23. 15:33-41 24. 15:42-47 25. 16	1 Samuel 1. 1-2 2. 3-5 3. 6-8 4. 9-10 5. 11-13 6. 14 7. 15-16 8. 17-18 9. 19-20 10. 21-23 11. 24-25 12. 26-28 13. 29-31 14. 32-34 15. 35-37 16. 38-40 17. 41-43 18. 44-46 19. 47-49 20. 50-52 21. 53-55 22. 56-58 23. 59-61 24. 62-64 25. 65-67

New Testament	Old Testament
Luke 1. 1:1-25 2. 1:26-38 3. 1:39-56 4. 1:57-66 5. 1:67-80 6. 2:1-20 7. 2:21-40 8. 2:41-52 9. 3:1-20 10. 3:21-38 11. 4:1-12 12. 4:13-30 13. 4:31-37 14. 4:38-44 15. 5:1-11 16. 5:12-16 17. 5:17-26 18. 5:27-32 19. 5:33-39 20. 6:1-16 21. 6:17-26 22. 6:27-42 23. 8:37-42 24. 9:43-49 25. 10:1-10	1 Kings 1. 11:1-8 2. 11:9-16 3. 11:17-24 4. 11:25-32 5. 11:33-40 6. 11:41-48 7. 11:49-56 8. 11:57-64 9. 11:65-72 10. 11:73-80 11. 11:81-88 12. 11:89-96 13. 11:97-104 14. 11:105-112 15. 11:113-120 16. 11:121-128 17. 11:129-136 18. 11:137-144 19. 11:145-152 20. 11:153-160 21. 11:161-168 22. 11:169-176 23. 12:1 24. 12:2 25. 12:3

March

April

July

August

New Testament	Old Testament
Matthew 1. 21:23-32 2. 21:33-46 3. 22:1-14 4. 22:15-33 5. 22:34-46 6. 23:1-12 7. 23:13-24 8. 23:25-39 9. 24:1-14 10. 24:15-35 11. 24:36-51 12. 25:1-13 13. 25:14-30 14. 25:31-46 15. 26:1-16 16. 26:17-35 17. 26:36-56 18. 26:57-75 19. 27:1-10 20. 27:11-26 21. 27:27-44 22. 27:45-56 23. 27:57-66 24. 28:1-10 25. 28:11-20	Romans 1. 1:1-17 2. 1:18-32 3. 2:1-14 4. 2:15-33 5. 3:1-12 6. 3:13-24 7. 3:25-31 8. 3:32-41 9. 3:42-51 10. 3:52-61 11. 3:62-71 12. 3:72-81 13. 3:82-91 14. 3:92-101 15. 3:102-111 16. 3:112-121 17. 3:122-131 18. 3:132-141 19. 3:142-151 20. 3:152-161 21. 3:162-171 22. 3:172-181 23. 3:182-191 24. 3:192-201 25. 3:202-211

New Testament	Old Testament
Mark 1. 1:1-8 2. 1:9-20 3. 1:21-34 4. 1:35-45 5. 2:1-12 6. 2:13-17 7. 2:18-28 8. 3:1-19 9. 3:20-35 10. 4:1-20 11. 4:21-41 12. 5:1-20 13. 5:21-43 14. 6:1-13 15. 6:14-29 16. 6:30-44 17. 6:45-56 18. 7:1-23 19. 7:24-37 20. 8:1-13 21. 8:14-21 22. 8:22-30 23. 8:31-38 24. 9:1-13 25. 9:14-32	Joshua 1. 1:2 2. 3-5 3. 6-7 4. 8-9 5. 10-12 6. 13-14 7. 15-17 8. 18-19 9. 20-21 10. 22-23 11. 24 12. 25 13. 26 14. 27 15. 28 16. 29 17. 30 18. 31 19. 32 20. 33 21. 34 22. 35 23. 36 24. 37 25. 38

New Testament	Old Testament
Luke 1. 7:11-17 2. 7:18-35 3. 7:36-50 4. 8:1-15 5. 8:16-25 6. 8:26-39 7. 9:1-17 8. 9:18-27 9. 9:28-36 10. 9:37-50 11. 9:51-62 12. 10:1-16 13. 10:17-24 14. 10:25-37 15. 10:38-42 16. 11:1-13 17. 11:14-28 18. 11:29-36 19. 11:37-54 20. 12:1-12 21. 12:13-21 22. 12:22-34 23. 12:35-48 24. 12:49-59 25. 13	1 Chron. 1. 1-2 2. 3-4 3. 5-6 4. 7-8 5. 9-10 6. 11-12 7. 13-14 8. 15-16 9. 17-18 10. 19-20 11. 21-22 12. 23-24 13. 25-26 14. 27-28 15. 29-30 16. 31-32 17. 33-34 18. 35-36 19. 37-38 20. 39-40 21. 41-42 22. 43-44 23. 45-46 24. 47-48 25. 49-50

New Testament	Old Testament
Luke 1. 13:1-9 2. 13:10-21 3. 13:22-35 4. 14:1-14 5. 14:15-24 6. 14:25-35 7. 15:1-10 8. 15:11-32 9. 16:1-9 10. 16:10-18 11. 16:19-31 12. 17:1-10 13. 17:11-19 14. 17:20-37 15. 18:1-8 16. 18:9-17 17. 18:18-30 18. 18:31-43 19. 19:1-10 20. 19:11-27 21. 19:28-38 22. 19:39-48 23. 20:1-8 24. 20:9-19 25. 20:20-26	2 Kings 1. 1:1-11 2. 1:12-20 3. 1:21-30 4. 1:31-40 5. 1:41-50 6. 1:51-60 7. 1:61-70 8. 1:71-80 9. 1:81-90 10. 1:91-100 11. 1:101-110 12. 1:111-120 13. 1:121-130 14. 1:131-140 15. 1:141-150 16. 1:151-160 17. 1:161-170 18. 1:171-180 19. 1:181-190 20. 1:191-200 21. 1:201-210 22. 1:211-220 23. 1:221-230 24. 1:231-240 25. 1:241-250

The Leverage of Prayer

Read: Acts 8:30

We would be more able teachers, and not so easily carried away by every wind of doctrine, if we sought to have a more intelligent understanding of the Word of God. As the Holy Spirit, the Author of the Scriptures, is the only one who can enlighten us rightly to understand them, we should constantly ask His help to lead us into truth. When the prophet Daniel was called upon to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream, what did he do? He set himself to earnest prayer that God would open up the vision.

The apostle John, in his vision at Patmos, saw a book sealed with seven seals that none was found worthy to open or so much as to look upon. The book was afterward opened by the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who had prevailed to open it; but it is written first, "I wept much." The tears of John, which were his liquid prayers, were, so far as he was concerned, the sacred keys by which the folded book was opened.

Therefore, if, for your own and others' profiting, you desire to be "filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding (Colossians 1:9)." remember that prayer is your best means of study.

Like Daniel, you shall understand the dream and its interpretation when you have sought it from God; and like John you shall see the seven seals of precious truth unloosed after you have wept much.

Stones are not broken except by a constant, diligent use of the hammer; and the stone-breaker must go down on his knees. Use the hammer of diligence, and let the knee of prayer be exercised, and there is not a stony doctrine in revelation that is useful for you to understand that will not fly into shivers under the exercise of prayer and faith. You may force your way through anything with the leverage of prayer. Thoughts and reasoning are like the steel wedges that give a hold upon truth; but prayer is the lever that pries open the iron chest of sacred mystery, that we may get the treasure hidden inside.

Reading for April 3 from Desiring God's Daily Devotional app called *Solid Joys*, which features the best of over 30 years of John Piper's teaching to your everyday life and satisfaction in Jesus. Download it for free in the app store.

I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. (Romans 7:23)

All true believers have sin remaining in them in this life. Therefore, we are commanded to constantly kill this sin (Romans 8:13; Colossians 3:5). How is this to be done? Here are 11 practical steps for killing sin:

- 1) Take heart from the truth that the old sinful you is decisively already dead (Romans 6:6; Colossians 3:3; Galatians 5:24). This means three things: a) the mortal blow to our “old man” has been struck, b) he will not succeed in domination now, and c) his final obliteration is certain.
- 2) Consciously reckon the old man dead — that is, believe the truth of Scripture about the old man’s death, and seek to live in that freedom (Romans 6:11).
- 3) Cultivate enmity with sin. You don’t kill friends (Romans 8:13). Ponder how it killed your best friend, dishonors your Father, and aims to destroy you forever.
- 4) Rebel against sin’s coup. Refuse to be bullied by his deceits and manipulations (Romans 6:12). Fight your sinful impulses with all your might like a boxer fights an opponent and like a marathon runner fights fatigue (1 Corinthians 9:27; 2 Timothy 4:8).
- 5) Declare radical allegiance to the other side — to God! — and consciously put all your mind and heart and body at his disposal for righteousness and purity (Romans 6:13).
- 6) Don’t make any plans that open the door for sin’s entry (Romans 13:14). Don’t prove your purity in a pornography shop.
- 7) Develop mental habits that continually renew the mind in God-centeredness (Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 4:16). Fix attention daily on “the things of the Spirit” (Romans 8:5), “things that are above” (Colossians 3:2), “whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, gracious, excellent, praiseworthy” (Philippians 4:8).
- 8) Admit failure and confess all known sin every day (1 John 1:9). Ask for forgiveness (Matthew 6:12).
- 9) Ask for the Spirit’s help and power in all these things (Romans 8:13; Galatians 5:17, 22; Ezekiel 36:27; Isaiah 26:12).
- 10) Be part of a larger and smaller fellowship where you are exhorted often to beware of the deceitfulness of sin (Hebrews 3:13).
- 11) Beware of legalistic obedience, but let all your warfare be “the work of *faith*” (2 Thessalonians 1:11). That is, let your fight against sin spring from your confidence in the superior pleasures of closeness to Christ.

“Practical Steps to Kill Sin” (<http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/practical-steps-to-kill-sin>)

TASTE AND SEE

(A 31-Day Experiment)

Taste and see that the Lord is good. (Psalm 34:8)

Be still and know that I am God. (Psalm 46:10)

Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you. (Matthew 6:33)

This experiment is designed to build a habit into your life that will greatly enhance and develop your walk with God. As a Christian, you will need to seek God first every day of your life. By doing this, you will . . .

1. Develop a close personal relationship with God.
2. Train your mind to think thoughts of God and His ways.
3. Allow God to teach you about Himself and yourself.
4. Allow God to lead you through each day of your life.
5. Discipline yourself to grow consistently into the full maturity God has for you.

The best investment you could ever make with the most profitable returns will be the time you take each day to be alone and communicate with your God. This time each day will not only give you a heavenly outlook on each day, but on your entire life and those people and circumstances around you.

You must work at having a consistent time alone with God each day. It will not just happen. You must set the priority and let everything else revolve around that time with God. Satan can paralyze a Christian by making some "good excuses" for not communicating with your God. Decide today and now to build this habit into your life and protect it, for herein lies the secret to your own daily walk with God.

GUIDE FOR EACH DAY:

1. Write in a notebook: Day_____ Date_____ Scripture_____
2. Main thought:
 - a. Read the passage for the day.
 - b. Pray for insight as you meditate on what the passage says.
 - c. In one sentence, write out the main thought of the passage.
3. Application: Write out in less than 50 words how this scripture applies to your life.
4. Prayer: Pray that during the day, through the power of the Holy Spirit you will apply these principles from God's Word to your life.

DAY AND READING

1. Habakkuk 3:17-19
2. Isaiah 40:28-31
3. Joshua 1:8-9
4. Romans 12:1-2
5. Psalm 119:9-11
6. Matthew 7:24-27
7. Ephesians 5:3-5
8. Hebrews 11:24-26
9. Psalm 63:6-8
10. Nehemiah 9:5-6
11. Colossians 1:13
12. Psalm 37:3-5
13. II Corinthians 5:14-17
14. James 1:2-8
15. Philippians 4:6-7
16. II Timothy 2:1-4
17. Hebrews 12:1-3
18. John 14:12-15
19. Jeremiah 1:48
20. Acts 4:24-31
21. Philippians 3:7-11
22. Matthew 6:31-33
23. Proverbs 3:5-7
24. II Peter 1:4-8
25. II Corinthians 12:8-10
26. I Thessalonians 4:1-8
27. Romans 12:14
28. Titus 2:11-14
29. Ephesians 6:13-20
30. I Samuel 15:22-23
31. I John 2:11-17

How to Interpret the Bible:

*“What does the Bible mean to you?” is not nearly as helpful or accurate as asking
“What is the text itself saying?”*

1. HEAR/ READ God’s Word (Rom. 10:17)
2. Salvation / Holy Spirit (I Cor. 2:12-14, Ps. 119:18)
3. Look at the Context (use Scripture to interpret Scripture, ask “How does this passage fit into the Biblical narrative, which ultimately points to Messiah?”)
4. Prayer and reliance on the Holy Spirit (I John 2:27, John 14:26)
5. Study the words (look at different translations)
6. What do other Christians have to say?
7. Memorize the Scriptures in order to dwell on them (Ps. 119:9-11)
8. Believe & live out what you learn

Reference: _____

1. What is the author saying (main point(s))? About God? About man?

2. How can I apply this to my life (what am I called to do or believe)?

3. What question do I have?

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3. What question do I have?

One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek Him in His temple.

Psalm 27:4

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Matthew 6:33