

THE NEXT GREAT GENERATION

One2Won

God can change the world through me

Next Great Generation

On Dec 7, 1941 this nation was attacked by Japan. That attack led our country into the horrors of WWII. That enemy, along with Hitler's Germany, threatened to destroy the world. The men and women of that generation sacrificed their own comfort and immediate futures to maintain the viability of this nation and the world for future generations. Through their sacrifice and their trust in God they led the world to defeat the combined armies of Japan and Germany. They then led the way to rebuild Europe after the devastation of the war.

Our nation and our world are under a more insidious attack today. The combined armies of an unholy spirit have undermined our families, communities, our churches, our nation and our world. The very survival of our future generations is at stake. We must declare ourselves the generation that will defeat this enemy. We must become known as the Next Great Generation.

Gulf South Men is challenging the Men of God in our nation to lead the way. The purpose of this course is to equip you, the Man of God, to save a nation. Use it as your catalyst in being the leader you were meant to be.

We not only can defeat this enemy but we can rebuild our families and our nation. We can once again be one nation under God. Yes, it will take sacrifice. Yes, it will take effort. God's word has guaranteed us the victory because we are more than conquerors through Jesus Christ. The generation before us saved a nation and a world. We can save a people for all eternity. I challenge every man to join us in the fight. Your family, your church, your community and your nation are worth the fight. It is a fight we must win. Let us become known as the Next Great Generation.



After completing this E-Course let me challenge you to take the Right Next Steps. There are millions of men in our country and in our world that are desperate to have a Man of God speak into their lives.

- Don't allow completing this course to be the last step. Be intentional in establishing another small group of men and lead them into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ.
- Work with your pastor to establish or strengthen the men's ministry in your church. You be the one who says "I will do my part to save a generation".
- Visit the GS Men web site at gulfsouthmen.org. There you will find additional E-Course and video series that will challenge you and equip you to become a great leader and a great Man of God.
- Log into the GS Men website and provide your feedback .

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The Huddle

As we break the team huddle and come to the playing fields together each week we'll be calling signals brought in from the Head Coach who'll be watching intently from the sidelines. He's covered the scouting report well and knows our adversary like the back of His hand.

Our Playbook is the greatest single piece of wisdom ever brought to the gridiron of life. This Playbook was written by our Head Coach. He's the most brilliant of all coaches. He created the game and the field on which we compete.

With each lesson we have included passages of Scripture. As you read the passages with your teammate and mark certain words in the verses, you'll be amazed how marking the text helps you uncover exactly what God says, understand what He means and know how to apply it to your life. Each lesson will ask you to underline, circle or otherwise indicate key words. As you identify these key words, **also mark any pronouns or terms that directly refer to that key word**, i.e. if Jesus is the term to be underlined, also underline terms like Savior, Lord, Son, He, Him, etc.

As we move the ball down the field each week, each lesson has insightful questions designed to spark discussion of the Scriptures. As you discuss the passages, answer the questions directly from the text. Answering the questions directly from the text forces us to engage the Scripture and not necessarily someone's opinion. It is more important that we know what the Word itself says, than know what others say about the Word.

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." (II Timothy 3:16 & 17)

As we pass the ball around the "Red Zone", each Game Day has questions and comments designed to help you apply the truth to your own life. Without application and life change the truth is just theory. God needs people who have been radically changed because they engaged the Word of God and determined to live it out.

Most importantly, begin and consummate the process with fervent prayer and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you into all truth. "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come." (John 16:13) "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth." (John 17:17)

Welcome to the championship series! It's game day! You were born to win this one. Defeat is not an option. If you'll put your heart across the goal line and pursue the end zone with everything that's in you this will be the most competitive, most thrilling, most rewarding game you've ever played.

Enjoy the study and savor every succesful pass, every goal scored. Together we can change the world!

The Paul / Timothy Covenant

Every college recruit, every professional player of every sport, every groom and every bride, and every successful team endeavor begins with a contract and terms of the covenant.

Take the “Baton of Faith” that will change the world, for the Kingdom rests in your hands. This study is the exchange zone. We will win this race and God’s Kingdom will be known by every person, every tribe and every nation if the Baton is never dropped.

By entering into this “leg” of the race you are entering into a covenant with God and thousands of believers worldwide that you will continue to pass the “Baton of Faith” securely into the hands of others as we “love someone to Jesus until that person is ready to love another person to Jesus.”

I, _____, covenant to be your “Paul.” I will pray for you and serve you. I will meet with you, study with you and seek to co-labor with the Holy Spirit to impart these truths into your life so that you will be able to impart these truths into the lives of others.

Signature

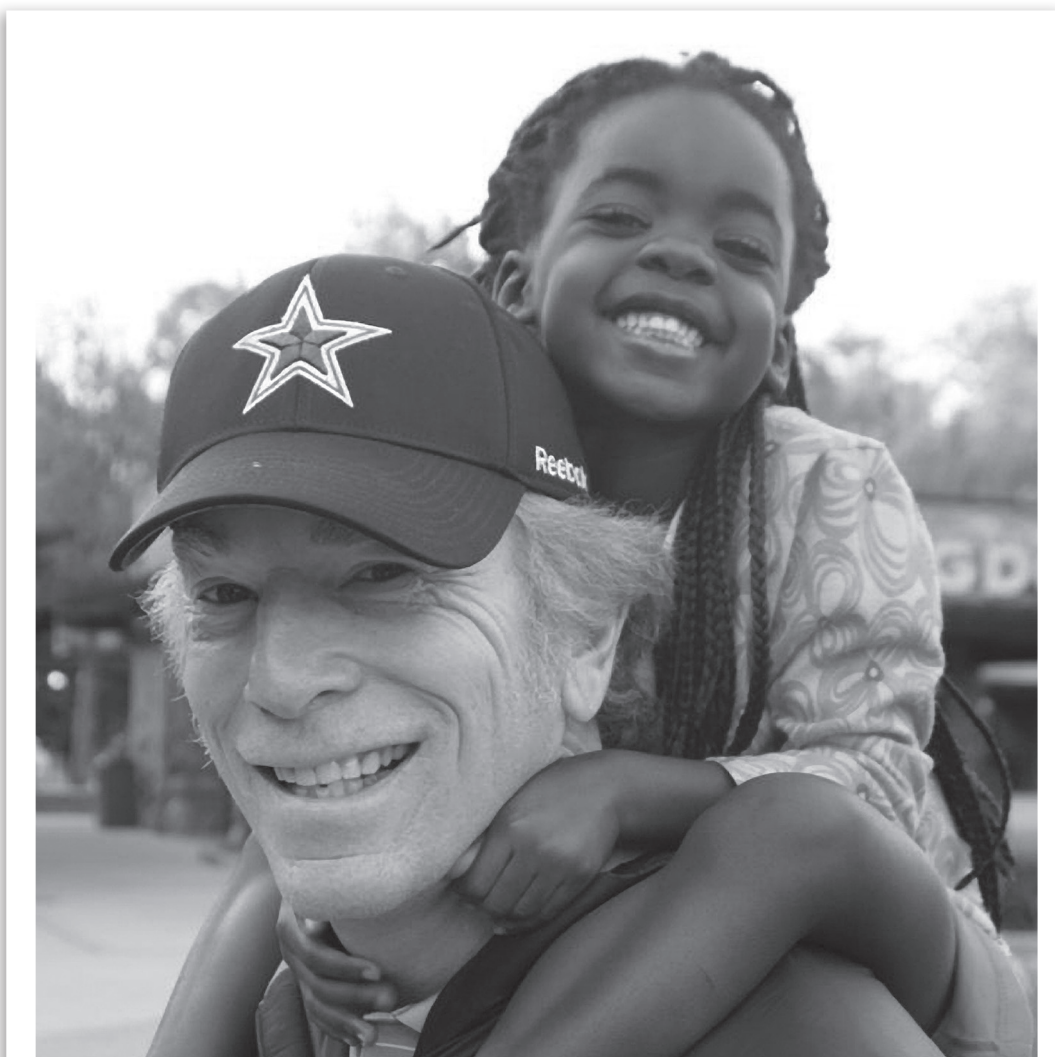
I, _____, covenant to be your “Timothy.” I will pray for you and diligently study with you and pursue this training process until completion. I will further agree to take this “Baton of Faith” and pass it to another and another as I fulfill my calling in “The Great Commission.”

Signature



The Homecoming

My first daughter, Jamie Jo, was seven years old when she first thumbtacked a picture of a Cambodian orphan child in the middle of her bedroom bulletin board in our cliff side Ozark Mountain home.



Gabby

Those trusting brown eyes of that baby burned an image in my daughter's heart that branded her with compassion for every "broken winged" animal and person she would ever encounter. Adopting baby deer, raccoons, ducks, geese, squirrels and even one tiny opossum was her way of life until she left home for college.

As an adult and mother of three, one glimpse of the tiny abandoned Rwandan child from "Chantel's orphanage" was all Jamie needed to begin her long heroic trek to Kigali, Rwanda, still reeling from the 1994 genocide that claimed the lives of 800,000 helpless citizens and left 95,000 orphaned children fighting the elements of intense poverty for survival.

"Little Gabby's" feet have hardly touched the ground since she arrived in our neighborhood where my grown children, my wife and I now enjoy hosting 22,000 kids each summer in our twelve summer sports camps surrounding scenic Table Rock and Taneycomo Lakes in southwest Missouri. Our neighborhood is literally filled with nurturing homes and kid-loving people. Gabriella is "The Homecoming Queen" of our community and treated with all the amenities of an heiress to a royal throne.

From abandoned to adored, from orphaned to adopted, from unwanted to undenied, from intense poverty to intentionally pampered, little Gabriella's dark ebony eyes will never have to see the plight she might have endured, but will never have to know.

Grace, simply put, is unmerited favor. Gabriella did no more to merit the lavishing grace she enjoys today than you or I did to inherit the grace of our loving Creator and the life of fulfillment and eternal rewards He promises to His adopted children of faith. All of us, like Gabriella, were born into spiritual poverty without even a hint of hope on our own ability to gain anything better than a life of futility and eternal desperation. But God saw your picture and His Father's heart was moved like Jamie's to travel from Heaven to Earth, and from a throne to a cross to extend His hand of grace to give you access to His Royal Family and His endless relinquishment of favor far beyond our ability to comprehend or describe.

"I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." (Ephesians 1:18)

It is with that very prayer that this book is written and with just such hope that each page you turn will render to your mind, heart, body and soul.

Mark these Key Words:

grace

Lord

Jesus

Old Testament Viewpoint

2 Samuel 11:1-4, 11:14-15, 12:13

2 Samuel 11:1-4 Then it happened in the spring, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him and all Israel, and they destroyed the sons of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David stayed at Jerusalem. Now when evening came David arose from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king's house, and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful in appearance. So David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" David sent messengers and took her, and when she came to him, he lay with her; and when she had purified herself from her uncleanness, she returned to her house.

2 Samuel 11:14-15 Now in the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah. He had written in the letter saying, "Place Uriah in the front line of the fiercest battle and withdraw from him, so that he may be struck down to die."

(After a realization of extreme anguish and repentance)

2 Samuel 12:13 Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has taken away your sin; you shall not die."

Reference in Acts to 1 Samuel 13:14 After He had removed him, He raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified and said, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My heart who will do all My will." – Acts 13:22

New Testament Viewpoint

Acts 9:17-22; Galatians 1:11-16(a)

Acts 9:17-22 So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized; and he took food and was strengthened. Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus, and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God." All those hearing him continued to be amazed, and were saying, "Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this name, and who had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?" But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this Jesus is the Christ.

Galatians 1:11-16(a) For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it; and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions. But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles.



OBSERVATION: What is God saying?

1) What theme do the two Testaments have in common in these passages?

2) Lovingkindness means love that is completely based upon what the giver of love (God) has done for the one receiving the love (us!). What has God done for us that makes us love Him so?

3) How does grace compensate for our sin?

4) Even though both David and Paul endure much pain and suffering, describe the extent of God's grace and mercy they were granted.

5) How does God's example of grace with Paul and David encourage you?

6) Why can we not earn God's love?



PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: *What else of significance do you see God saying in these passages of scripture?*



APPLICATION: *How do these passages relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?*



LOCKER ROOM: *How should realizing God's grace towards you affect the way you treat other significant people in your life?*



MEMORY VERSE: *Ephesians 2:8-9*

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast



My Prayers

A

Adoration: Father, today I praise You for...

C

Confession: Father, please forgive me for...

T

Thanksgiving: Father, today I'm thankful for...

S

Supplication: Father, the people and things that I wish to pray for today are...

Truth

Three weary travelers on the brink of exhaustion and starvation trudged across the desert in search of an oasis. They stood in amazement as two riders appeared over the distant horizon. As the strangers were encountered they told the travelers that in one day's journey they would cross a dry riverbed with many curious stones. They told the famished men, "Fill your backpacks with stones when you get to the riverbed and in just one more day's journey when you come to the city you'll be both happy and sad."

With this perplexing instruction and no apparent explanation, off the strangers rode. At the conclusion of one day's ride the riverbed appeared just as promised. One rider scoffed at the stones in the riverbed. A second rider, weak and weary from the journey, picked up two stones and placed them in his pack. The third rider, in faith, filled his backpack with all it would hold. By sunset the next day they arrived in the promised city. Upon opening their backpacks, they discovered that the stones were pure gold. Alas! They were both happy and sad; happy for what they picked up and sad that they hadn't picked up more.

So it is with the pure gold from God's Word in both the Old and New Testaments. At the end of each day, and surely at the end of our life on this earth, we'll be happy for what we took of it and sad we didn't take more.

How do we know the Bible is God's Word?

- 1) **The Bible says so.** 2,700 times the Bible claims to be the authentic, intentional Word of God.
- 2) **People say so.** Nine billion Bibles have been published in the last 50 years in 2,303 languages on all seven continents.
- 3) **Continuity says so.** Imagine one book written over a time span of 1600 years with 66 books inside itself penned by 40 different scholars. These authors were farmers, peasants, fishermen and even kings from three continents telling one continuous, congruent story from the first word in Genesis to the last word in Revelation. It is as if one person had written the entire book in one sitting!! Thus, the divinely inspired continuity of the Bible is the gift from God we have in our possession today.
- 4) **Archeology says so.** One of thousands of archeological documentations of the Bible's historicity came in 1991 when a team of archeologists found a stone in the ancient city of Dan. The stone was from the 9th Century B.C. and read

“King of Israel” and “House of David” ending a long held skeptics criticism that “King David” was only a mythical Jewish story and not an historical King. (US News, Oct. 7, 1991) Astute archaeology and Scripture have never been in conflict.

- 5) **Manuscript reliability says so.** The New Testament has over 25,000 original manuscripts (5366 Greek, 10,000 Latin and 9,284 in other languages) in our museums today. One manuscript dates back to as little as 50 years from the original writing. The writings of Plato have only 9 manuscripts with a gap of 1300 years between the original and first copy we have in our libraries today. The New Testament has greater manuscript reliability than any Top Ten pieces of classical literature combined.
- 6) **Accuracy says so.** The Old Testament book of Isaiah was written in the time frame of 600-700 BC. In 1948 in the Qumran desert, approximately fifteen miles from Jerusalem, a group of sealed clay pots were discovered in a cave by a shepherd boy, and contained Biblical manuscripts that were written between 100 BC and 100 AD. In one of the clay pots, a manuscript of the book of Isaiah was found. It was identical to the book of Isaiah that is in our Bible today. In the entire book, only twelve very minor variances were found. (US News, September 5, 1991)
- 7) **Prophecy says so.** Every prophecy; 61 individual prophecies with over 300 prophetic details made in the Old Testament about Christ’s first coming came true. (The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict, Josh McDowell) There are literally hundreds of prophecies of Christ’s second coming that are coming true today with incredible candor and accuracy.

Paul, the apostle, writes to the Colossians in Chapter 3 verse 16 and he writes to us today, “Let the Word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

As you walk through this discipleship training and dig deeply into God’s Word you’ll be digging into Ft. Knox gold. The riches of wisdom, the courage to fight the battle, the conviction to live by God’s standards, and the grace to overcome our life’s failures will all be yours in abundance.

This is God’s Word we are holding in our hands. (Got room in your backpack for a nugget as you travel today?)

Mark these Key Words:

God word

Old Testament Viewpoint

Psalms 119:105; Psalms 119:9-16; Psalms 119:33-37

Psalms 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Psalms 119:9-16 How can a young man keep his way pure?

By keeping it according to Your word.
With all my heart I have sought You;
Do not let me wander from Your commandments.
Your word I have treasured in my heart,
That I may not sin against You.
Blessed are You, O LORD;
Teach me Your statutes.
With my lips I have told of
All the ordinances of Your mouth.
I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies,
As much as in all riches.
I will meditate on Your precepts
And regard Your ways.
I shall delight in Your statutes;
I shall not forget Your word.

Psalms, 119: 33-37 teach me, O LORD, to follow Your decrees;

then I will keep them to the end.
Give me understanding, and I will keep Your law
and obey it with all my heart.
Direct me in the path of Your commands,
for there I find delight.
Turn my heart toward Your statutes
and not toward selfish gain.
Turn my eyes away from worthless things;
preserve my life according to Your word.

New Testament Viewpoint

1 Peter 2:2; Hebrews 4:12; James 1:22; Matthew 7:24; John 8:31-32

1 Peter 2:2 Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

James 1:22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

Matthew 7:24 Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock.

John 8:31-32 So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."



OBSERVATION: What is God saying?

1) Describe the importance of the "Word" in the life of a believer.

2) What are three attitudes that a true believer should have towards the "Word"?

3) What are 3 things/responses that a true believer should have towards the **"Word"**?

4) What three metaphors do these passages use for the **"Word"**? What truth does each metaphor teach?



PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: *What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?*



APPLICATION: *How does this passage relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?*



PAUL/TIMOTHY DIGGING DEEPER:
Who are the three-five most important relationships in your life right now, and how are things going with them?



MEMORY VERSE: 2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.



My Prayers

A

Adoration: Father, today I praise You for...

C

Confession: Father, please forgive me for...

T

Thanksgiving: Father, today I'm thankful for...

S

Supplication: Father, the people & things that I wish to pray for today are...

Holy

Trying to write today's brief introduction has been laborious and futile. I've greatly enjoyed writing countless chapters in many books through the years, but this one just won't compute. I've attempted to place my pen to the pad over and over again, but to no avail. Describing God's holiness is difficult. Actually, it's far beyond difficult, It's impossible. I thought about the bacteria and contaminate free, pure spring water from the seemingly bottomless Blue Spring in the Current River in southeast Missouri. Nice try, but far from perfection. My mind raced back to one unforgettable majestic evening atop Predeal Mountain on the southern tip of the Baja Peninsula when the giant burning orange solar ball sank into the Pacific Ocean over my western shoulder and simultaneously the giant yellow lunar ball "arose out of the water" of the sea of Cortez over my eastern shoulder. Majestic, yes. Holy...hardly. First glance at the Grand Canyon? Awe and wonder! Yes! But holy? Not a chance.

As a spelunker, an unforgettable pristine moment was crawling into a newly opened underground crystal passageway and observing stalactites and stalagmites and flowstone that no one had ever seen or touched was breathtaking and unforgettable, but a far cry from holy.

I even travelled back a few years to the first glimpse of my two daughters adorned in pristine white lace as they "floated gracefully" on white rose petals down the sacred wedding aisle. I had guarded the front door of our home like a rabid Doberman from any boy who came by seeking to place a blemish on that moment! (Ask one of them sometime what I put those high school boys through who sought a date with my daughters!) Admiring your daughter in a wedding gown is about as close to holiness as you can get...but it still falls hopelessly short of the mark!

I suppose the Apostle John in his latter years cast into exile on the island of Patmos, now caught up in a divine vision from which he wrote the final book in our Bible, describes God's holiness best:

"And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, 'HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME.' And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 'Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for

You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.”
(Revelation 4:8-11)

“Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, ‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.’ And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, ‘To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.’ And the four living creatures kept saying, ‘Amen’. And the elders fell down and worshiped.” (Revelation 5:11-14)

Holiness is a word reserved for God alone. He owns all the stock. He’s the sole proprietor. Yet, as we’ll see throughout this study, in His grace, His absolutely amazing grace, He gives it away to true, sincere believers. He gives it away to those who are filled with His Spirit and kneel at the foot of the cross.

Mark these Key Words:

God

holy

Old Testament Viewpoint

Exodus 15:11, Psalms, 47:7-8; Psalms, 93:4-5; Zephaniah 3:17

Exodus 15:11 Who is like You among the gods, O LORD? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, awesome in praises, working wonders?

Psalms, 47:7-8 For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with a skillful psalm. God reigns over the nations, God sits on His holy throne.

Psalms, 93:4-5 More than the sounds of many waters, Than the mighty breakers of the sea, The LORD on high is mighty. Your testimonies are fully confirmed; holiness befits Your house, O LORD, forevermore.

Zephaniah 3:17 The LORD your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy.

New Testament Viewpoint

Revelation 15:3-4, 4:8-11

Revelation 15:3-4 And they sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; Righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations! Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy; For ALL THE NATIONS WILL COME AND WORSHIP BEFORE YOU, FOR YOUR RIGHTEOUS ACTS HAVE BEEN REVEALED."

Revelation 4:8-11 And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, IS THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME. And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, "Worthy art thou, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for thou didst create all things, and by thy will they existed and were created."



OBSERVATION: What is God saying?

1) Describe and define "holiness" in your own words.

2) Describe "reverence".

3) How do we show worship to a holy God in practical ways through our lives today?

4) If God is holy, what does that say about your relationship to him?

5) What does Zephaniah 3:17 say to you about a God of this magnitude who will think this highly of you?

6) How, therefore, should we treat God?

7) When we spend time and money at a movie or TV show or listen to music that profanes God's name, how are we offending the holiness of God?



PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: *What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?*



APPLICATION: *Can you identify any areas in your life that inhibit you from enjoying a great relationship with God?*



LOCKER ROOM:

Describe your feelings about your personal pursuit of holiness.



MEMORY VERSE: Zephaniah 3:17

The LORD your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy.



My Prayers



Adoration: Father, today I praise You for...



Confession: Father, please forgive me for...



Thanksgiving: Father, today I'm thankful for...



Supplication: Father, the people & things that I wish to pray for today are...

Omni

NASA's premier intergalactic telescope is strategically positioned aboard the WMAP satellite orbiting the earth and transmitting never-before-seen images of the majestic cosmos to Mission Control in Houston. There, the team of stellar scientists ponder and computer enhance the findings and interpret their significance to the mysteries of our origin. In April, 2006, a retroactive computerization from one such telescopic discovery was released on the media airways that brought NASA to its knees.

"From the moment of inception, the cosmos expanded billions of light years in the first trillionth of a second."

Defying all laws of physics and far exceeding every natural explanation, our visible universe today contains more than 100 billion galaxies, arrayed through space in gigantic clusters that seem to form spidery webs of matter."

Majesty.

So great was the realization that NASA's scientific research lab's director, Dr. Robert Jastrow, explained, "Now we know with absolute certainty that supernatural forces were at work in the creation of the universe."

One scientist at NASA exclaimed as he stared in to the awesomeness of the inception of the cosmos, "I used to worship science as my god. Now I worship on my knees."

If His majesty is seen in the macro, it is even more evident in the micro. If the telescope bears witness of His omnipotence, the microscope testifies of His brilliance.

One cell, for example, in the retina of the human eye (of which there are approximately ten million such cells working together like a finely tuned machine), performs a function simultaneously every thousandth of a second that would require five-hundred non linear differential equations one hundred times each to accomplish. It would take the Cray Super computer years to accomplish what the human eye can accomplish in seconds. (Can Evolution Produce an Eye? Not a chance! Dr. David N. Menton, April 1994, Vol. 4, No. 4)

No wonder Darwin himself was forced to confess in his own book Origin of the Species, "To suppose that the eye with all of its inimitable contrivances for adjusting to focus to different distances for many different amounts of light and

for the correction of the spherical and chromatic aberrations could have been formed by natural selection seems, I freely confess, absurd in the highest degree." (Darwin, C., 1872. Origin of Species, Sixth Edition. Senate, London, chpt. 6)

Awe.

Our God is beyond explanation.

Omnipotent.

Our God is more powerful than our ability to explain.

Omnipresent.

He is everywhere at the same time.

Sovereignty.

He does what He desires. He rules over all. He makes no mistakes.

He has a careful purpose for every moment of your life.

He carefully weaves each event, each circumstance, each success, and each failure to accomplish His divine plan "to make you like Jesus."

Like a tiny piece of mosaic tile uniquely shaped by the mallet and the chisel of the craftsman who trims it for the masterpiece work of art hidden in the mind of the artist, so God fashions you and shapes you for the great purpose for which He's created you; all your gifts, all your talents, all your hills, all your valleys, every moment of grandeur and every moment of descent. "For we are His workmanship, created in Him to do good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." (Ephesians 2:10)

Mark these Key Words:

Sovereignty Jesus God

Old Testament Viewpoint

Psalms, 103:19; Daniel 7:27; Daniel 11:4; Jeremiah 32:37; Genesis 1:1

Psalms, 103:19 The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, and His sovereignty rules over all.

Daniel 7:27 "Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him."

Daniel 11:4 But as soon as he has arisen, his kingdom will be broken up and parceled out toward the four points of the compass, though not to his own descendants, nor according to his authority which he wielded, for his sovereignty will be uprooted and given to others besides them.

Jeremiah 32:27 "Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; is anything too difficult for me?"

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

New Testament Viewpoint

Mark 4:39; Mark 5:35, 36, 41; Mark 9:20, 25; Philippians 2:9-11

Mark 4:39 And being aroused, He rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still." And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm.

Mark 5:35,36,41 While He was still speaking, they came from the house of the synagogue official, saying, "Your daughter has died; why trouble the teacher anymore?" But Jesus, overhearing what was being spoken, said to the synagogue official, "Do not be afraid any longer, only believe." 41 And taking the child by the hand, He said to her, "Talitha kum!" (Which translated means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!").

Mark 9:20,25 They brought the boy to Him. When he saw Him, immediately the spirit threw him into a convulsion, and falling to the ground, he began rolling about and foaming at the mouth. 25 When Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again."

Philippians 2:9-11 For this reason, also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.



OBSERVATION: What is God saying?

- 1) Sovereignty is defined as the supreme status, dominion, or power. This person surpasses all others in rank and authority. How do you see this expressed in the Old Testament passages?

- 2) Deism teaches that God began the process but sits idly by and passively allows life to proceed without His direct involvement. How does God's Word differ from this philosophy?

- 3) How do you see God's sovereignty differently now than you did before this study?

- 4) In what four ways did Jesus demonstrate God's sovereignty in these New Testament passages?
 - A. Power over _____
 - B. Power over _____
 - C. Power over _____
 - D. Power over _____

5) What does Jesus' resurrection tell you about God's sovereignty?

6) What sovereignty status does God give Jesus in eternity?



PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: *What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?*



APPLICATION: *How does this passage relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?*

LOCKER ROOM:



What do you want more than anything else in the world today?

MEMORY VERSE: Psalms, 103:19



The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, and His sovereignty rules over all.



My Prayers



Adoration: Father, today I praise You for...



Confession: Father, please forgive me for...



Thanksgiving: Father, today I'm thankful for...



Supplication: Father, the people & things that I wish to pray for today are...

Incomprehensible

What is the mathematical likelihood that our universe, capable of originating life, could have been randomly brought into being by a “Big Bang” accidental explosion? One chance in a billion (10^9)? One chance in a trillion (10^{12})? One chance in a billion trillion (10^{21})? According to Dr. Roger Penrose, Emeritus professor of mathematics at Oxford University, the odds are far greater against such an occurrence.

He stated, “This now tells how precise the Creator’s aim must have been, namely to an accuracy of one part in 10 to the 10^{123} rd power. This is an extraordinary figure. One could not possibly even write the number down in full in the ordinary denary notation: it would be 1 followed by 10^{123} successive 0’s.” Even if we were to write a 0 on each separate proton and on each separate neutron in the entire universe—and we could throw in all the other particles for good measure—we would fall far short of writing down the figure needed.¹ Penrose’s number tells us that the “accidental” or “coincidental” creation of our universe is an impossibility. It takes far more “faith” to believe that this happened by chance than to believe that it was instigated by an incredibly powerful mind.

Sir Fred Hoyle, noted by the London Telegraph as England’s foremost mathematician and cosmologist, states this argument by the following word picture: “The chance that higher life forms might have emerged in this way is comparable to the chance that a tornado sweeping through a junkyard might assemble a Boeing 747 from the materials therein.”

Dr. Pierre-Paul Grassé, former President of the French Academie des Science and the scientist who held the Chair of Evolution at the Sorbonne in Paris for twenty years agreed. “No matter how numerous they may be, mutations do not produce any kind of evolution. There is no law against daydreaming, but science must not indulge in it.” (Pierre-Paul Grassé, Past-President, French Academie des Science, *Evolution of Living Organisms* Academic Press, New York p.88).

Mysteriously masked from our textbooks are literally hundreds of the world’s most renowned scientists who have abandoned Darwinistic Evolution as scientific truth.

Dr. Robert Jastrow, the recent director of the Goddard Institute (the scientific crown jewel of NASA), is one such dissenting voice in the wilderness of hopeless assumptions that have defined evolution since Darwin first proposed his now highly skeptical theory in 1859. After studying the most recent glimpses of the ever expanding cosmos, Dr. Jastrow said, “Most remarkable of all is the fact that in science, as in the Bible, the world begins with an act of creation.” Now we see how the astronomical evidence leads to a Biblical view of the origin of the world.... The astronomers are so embarrassed by this, for the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountain of ignorance, and he is about to conquer the highest peak when he finds himself face to face with a group of theologians who have been there for centuries!” (*Intellectuals Speak Out About God* New York: Regenery Gateway 1984 p 52)

¹ (References: Roger Penrose, *The Emperor’s New Mind*, 1989; Michael Denton, *Nature’s Destiny*, The New York: The Free Press, 1998, p. 9)

After studying Evolutionary dogma in my biology based pre-med degree from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, I, too, was duped into the single-minded bias of modern day "science" that conjured up a belief system that "nothing" inadvertently exploded and over a long period of time became an intricately ordered, elaborate universe. With even greater astonishment, somehow a pool of lifeless chemicals, through random chemical accidents, somehow gave birth to living organisms. Subsequently, random mutations supposedly elevated those simple life forms to more complex species until eventually fish became frogs, lizards became birds, cows became whales and monkeys became man.

A vast chorus of dissenting scientists has recently cried out for scientific reason. Regarding the so called Big Bang, Andrei Linde (Stanford cosmo physicist) reported, "The Big Bang theory is scientifically brain dead.....one may wonder what came before the Big Bang? If space and time did not exist then, how could everything appear from nothing?" (The Mathematical Journal, 1992. Vol. 2, Issue 1)

In a debate with atheist, Richard Dawkins in November 2006, the renowned human genome expert, Dr. Francis Collins, caused the ground to tremble beneath the feet of the non-theist Darwin community. "The gravitational constant, if it were off by one part in a hundred million million, then the expansion of the universe after the big bang would not have occurred in the fashion that was necessary for life to occur. When you look at the evidence, it is very difficult to adopt the view that this was just chance. But if you're willing to consider the possibility of a designer, this becomes a rather plausible explanation for what is otherwise an exceedingly improbable event - namely, our existence. God is the answer to all those 'how must it have come to be' questions." (Dr. Francis Collins, Time Magazine, Nov. 13, 2006)

Regarding the supposed beginning of life in the pre-biotic pool of lifelessness on planet Earth, British mathematician Sir Fred Hoyle said, "The notion that a living cell could be arrived at by chance in a primordial organic soup here on earth is evidently nonsense of a high order." ("Hoyle on Evolution:", Nature, Vol 294, Nov. 12, 1981 and "The Big Bang in Astronomy", pg. 527)

Sir John Eccles, Nobel Laureate in Medicine and Physiology: Neuroscientist
"Modern Biology and the Turn to Belief in God", *The Intellectuals Speak Out About God*.
"We come to exist through a divine act."

It is the only view consistent with all the evidence." (Eccles 1984a, 50).

The Voice of Genius (1995) "There is a Divine Providence over and above the materialistic happenings of biological evolution." (Eccles, as cited in Brian 1995, 371.)

Putting a nail into the coffin of the vast agnostic scientific community of Biblical dissidents, Dr. Soren Lovtrup, Professor of Zoo-physiology at the University of Umea in Sweden, joined an ever-expanding list of renowned professors and researchers who no longer accept "blind chance" biology. "I suppose that nobody will deny that it is a great misfortune if an entire branch of science becomes addicted to a false theory, but this is what happened in biology.... I believe that one day the Darwinian myth will be ranked the greatest deceit in the history of science. When this happens, many people will pose the question, 'How did this ever happen?'" (Darwinism: Refutation of a Myth p. 30 Dr. Soren Lovtrup, Professor of Zoo-physiology at the University of Umea in Sweden).

Giving scientific support and unwavering confidence in the first chapter of the most widely read and universally accepted book ever written, Dr. Arthur Compton, Nobel Prize winner in Physics, documented the following historical statement, "For myself, faith begins with a realization that a supreme intelligence brought the universe into being and created man an orderly, unfolding universe and testifies to the truth of the most majestic statement ever uttered: 'In the beginning God'." (Chicago Daily News- 12 April 1936).

Mark these Key Words:

God

created or made



day

Old Testament Viewpoint

Genesis 1:1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 11, 13, 16, 19, 20, 23, 25-28, 31; Genesis 2:1-2 – In the beginning God created the heavens and he earth. 3Then God said, Let there be light; and there was light. 5God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day. 7God made the expanse, and separated the waters which were below the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse; and it was so. 8God called the expanse heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day. 11Then God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them”; and it was so. 13There was evening and there was morning, a third day. 16God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; He made the stars also. 19There was evening and there was morning, a fourth day. 20Then God said, “Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens”. 23There was evening and there was morning, a fifth day. 25-28God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps on the ground after its kind; and God saw that it was good. Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth”. God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth”. 31God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Genesis 2:1-2 -THUS the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.

New Testament Viewpoint

Mark 10:6; John 1: 1-3; John 1:10-12

Mark 10:6 But from the beginning of creation, God made them (Adam and Eve) male and female.

John 1: 1-3 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

John 1: 10-12 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.



OBSERVATION: What is God saying?

- 1) List the main event that took place during each day of Creation i.e., what did God create on each day?

Day 1: _____
Day 2: _____
Day 3: _____
Day 4: _____
Day 5: _____
Day 6: _____

- 2) How does this study change your perception about God, knowing that He created you and you are a part of His good creation?

3) How does this fact change your perception about yourself and your purpose with your life?

4) Einstein's law of cause and effect says that where there is a watch, there must be a watchmaker. Where there is a design, there must be a designer. What does our cosmos tell you about God?

5) If Jesus was there in the beginning and He says that Adam and Eve were created "from the beginning of creation", what is he saying about all theories of evolution?



PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: *What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?*



APPLICATION: *If God created you, then God can recreate you (a new man/woman in Christ). How does this give you hope?*



LOCKER ROOM: *What is your biggest question about God? How does this discussion stir your intellect and emotions?*



MEMORY VERSE: **Genesis 1:26**

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness".



My Prayers

A

Adoration: Father, today I praise You for...

C

Confession: Father, please forgive me for...

T

Thanksgiving: Father, today I'm thankful for...

S

Supplication: Father, the people & things that I wish to pray for today are...

Separated

Recruiting (from 330 university campuses) our summer staff, of 2,700 college athletes, who love God and love kids, is a great annual adventure that takes a team of forty plus directors (of our twelve Christian sports camps) across tens of thousands of miles of U.S. highways each winter. Our counselors are truly champions and the cream of the crop, our kids deserve nothing less.

In the early days of our marriage, my wife and I did the recruiting alone. Traveling with my Homecoming Queen was pure pleasure for me. After our first child was born, she traveled beside us. But the joy of those early days of Holiday Inns and suitcase living came to a screeching halt when our second, third and fourth children were born. Traveling without my most cherished companions for weeks at a time was honestly depressing. Chuck Swindoll knew my heart well when he said, "The older I get, the more I realize that happiness is seeing anything but home in the rear view mirror of my car." Fifty days out in January and February literally broke my heart each winter. The last day of the journey was always the best day. I'd often drive through the night just to catch a 3 a.m. glimpse of all four little tykes snuggled peacefully in their beds, awaiting their daddy's long overdue homecoming and the surprises I'd bring them.

One trip home from my travels I'll never forget was the day I literally staggered into my house with an acute stomach virus I'd picked up on the last leg of my journey. I could barely get down our hillside walkway and into my house to rush to my bed in dizzy exhaustion. My youngest toddler, a joyful and effervescent one and a half year old named Cooper, saw me come in. He ran for his daddy's arms, but in my contagious sickness all I could do was close the bedroom door behind me and fall into bed. Cooper pounded on the door and cried out loud, "Daddy! Daddy open up! Pweeeeeeeze!" My heart shattered into pieces. The pain of our separation was far greater than the cramping in my abdomen. God's voice broke the silence as He spoke to my heart. "Joe, that's the same awful pain I felt when My Son was on the cross. He had to take your sins on His shoulders. In My holiness, I had to turn my back on Him. Your sin is a sickness that separated you from Me. Only in dying on your behalf could My Son become a 'curse' and atone for your sin." I'm sure His pain was a million times worse than mine!

"He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The message of Scripture is simple and concise.

Sin is a sickness that separates us from a holy God. "All have sinned..." (Romans 3:23). All have fallen short. All have missed the mark. All have transgressed. Every one of us. The door is closed. No amount of pounding on the door and pleading

for God to unlock it can gain entrance into His holy presence because “the wages of sin is death”. (Romans 6:23)

One day God would have to bring the sickness to a perfect, sacrificial Lamb. One day God would have to shut the door. One day God would have to turn His back. This time, this time, this final time the door would have to be closed to His Son. This time, the sins would have to be claimed by Jesus.

Mark these Key Words:

Sin

God

Old Testament Viewpoint

Numbers 32:23; Psalms, 14:3; Exodus 20:20; Psalms, 97:10; Zechariah 8:17

Numbers 32:23 But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the LORD, and be sure your sin will find you out.

Psalms, 14:3 There is no one who does good, not even one.

Exodus 20:20 Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin."

Psalms, 97:10 Hate evil, you who love the LORD, who preserves the souls of His godly ones; He delivers them from the hand of the wicked.

Zechariah 8:17 "Also let none of you devise evil in your heart against another, and do not love perjury; for all these are what I hate," declares the LORD.

New Testament Viewpoint

1 John 3:9, 1 John 1:6-10, Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23

1 John 3:9 No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

1 John 1:6-10 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

Romans 3:23 For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.



OBSERVATION: What is God saying?

1) Describe and define sin according to Scripture:

2) How does sin affect our relationships here on earth and our relationship with God?

3) If sin is "missing the bull's eye" of God's best for your life, how are you outside the target today?

4) What personal sin do you tend to rationalize?

5) What is God's remedy for our sin problem?

A) Our Past Sin _____

B) Our Present Sin _____

6) What is our responsibility in that solution?



PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: *What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?*



APPLICATION: *How does this passage relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?*

LOCKER ROOM:



How is "knowing Jesus" helping you with the sin issue?

MEMORY VERSE: Romans 3:23



For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.



My Prayers

A

Adoration: Father, today I praise You for...

C

Confession: Father, please forgive me for...

T

Thanksgiving: Father, today I'm thankful for...

S

Supplication: Father, the people & things that I wish to pray for today are...

Opponent

Playing “nose tackle” in college suited my “appetite for action” to near perfection. Lining up against the Buckeyes of Ohio State, the Tigers of Auburn, the Arkansas Razorbacks, the Texas Tech Red Raiders and other formidable foes was thrilling to say the least. But standing over the football as the eleven best in college football approached the line of scrimmage like a band of ruthless gladiators dressed in “burnt orange” uniforms was down right awful. Thirty-eight straight victories and two national titles gave the Texas Longhorns the awe, fear and respect as the most dominating team in America. For three straight years they embarrassed me. Three lopsided victories. Three humiliating defeats. “Down set hut hut” might as well have been the whistle of a freight train roaring down the Astro turf. I hated their arrogance. I dreamt bad dreams about them. My pickup license plate even had an anti-U.T. slogan printed on it. But the more I fought them, the worse I performed on the field.

The only enemy I’ve ever fought that was more humiliating than the Longhorns was the one who “breaks the huddle” every day and comes after me with all out vengeance. His I.Q. is like six million and he knows every weak spot in my defensive formation. He has more offensive plays than the Dallas Cowboys and more shots on goal than a Russian Hockey team.

He hides in the internet behind the scantily clothed and misguided women who try to make a buck off of our straying basal instincts. He disguises himself in Victoria Secret underwear and Sports Illustrated swimsuit models’ lusty poses. He broadly beckons his prey from Hollywood’s screenplays on movie and T.V. screens throughout our land. His many degrees in psychology make our minds a playground as he drags up old failures and allures us into new and greater ones.

A close friend of mine, noted author and speaker, met this arch rival face to face when his admiration for a woman turned into an 18 month bout of lust. One day as this woman was walking away from him and into a room, his eyes followed after her and his mind imagined an intimate relationship. His fantasy came to a screeching halt when his mind played a trick on him. In a virtual dream, the woman stopped as she went through the doorway and in his imagination, she turned around and stared at him. A pair of slimy red hands extended from her shirt sleeves and long bloody fingers reached up and began to peel the skin down off of her forehead to expose a face inside her skin that was not her own. The face was that of Satan, sticking his tongue out and jeering at my friend.

The woman wasn’t Satan in any way. But the devil was using the woman as a front to ruin my friend’s marriage, his ministry and his life.

The man’s emotional affair ended in a split second. Recognizing the devil jolted

him into sanity, and sent his heart running home like a lost puppy dog; who had just caught a glimpse of a home he'd been missing for years.

If Hell is everything Satan deserves and heaven is everything Jesus deserves, imagine the gratitude, the amazement, the awe, the fear, the respect, and the life-changing thrill it is to run from the enemy and run to the cross. To run to the heart of the One who bought your freedom and your ticket from eternal darkness to eternal paradise.

Mark these Key Words:

Satan

Old Testament Viewpoint

Ezekiel 28:14-15; Isaiah 14:12-14;

Ezekiel 28:14-15 You were the anointed cherub who covers, and I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked in the midst of the stones of fire. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created until unrighteousness was found in you.

Isaiah 14:12-14 How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, You who have weakened the nations! But you said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'

New Testament Viewpoint

1 Timothy 4:1; 1 Peter 5:8; John 10:10; Revelation 20:10

1 Timothy 4:1 But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.

1 Peter 5:8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

Revelation 20:10 And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.



OBSERVATION: *What is God saying?*

1) Describe Satan's early days before his fall.

2) What was Satan's original downfall?

3) What metaphors are used for Satan?

- A.

- B.

- C.

- D.

4) What other actual names does Scripture use for Satan?

5) How does Satan work on believers? What is his goal for you and me?

6) What is Satan's ultimate destiny?

7) How can you avoid that destiny?



PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: *What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?*



APPLICATION: *How does this passage relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?*



LOCKER ROOM: *What is your greatest battle with Satan? How are you doing in that battle?*



MEMORY VERSE: 1 Peter 5:8

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.



My Prayers

A

Adoration: Father, today I praise You for...

C

Confession: Father, please forgive me for...

T

Thanksgiving: Father, today I'm thankful for...

S

Supplication: Father, the people & things that I wish to pray for today are...

Jesus

And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me." (Luke 9:23)

Following Christ is a radical, sold out, all-encompassing commitment dwarfed only by His trip to planet earth to reconcile you and me to God.

How can I follow someone I have never touched?

Why would I put my eternal trust in Jesus Christ and single out His claims from all other world religions?

How can I believe the Word of God is true and infallible?

How can I believe what I believe?

How can I be sure that God truly exists?

How do I know that Jesus is all He claimed to be?

How do I know that my faith is not in vain?

Would I be willing to sacrifice everything I have to follow Him?

If he hasn't already, the adversary will eventually permeate your mind with these and other questions that can make your knees quiver with doubt.

Historic evidence and a few key real life experiences have helped shed light on questions like these that I, too, have asked in my own personal pilgrimage with God.

One memorable experience happened to me when my oldest son, Brady, and I got lost in a taxi in Chicago, with a very pleasant Muslim driver from Syria named Imod. Some time and \$60 later, he found the driveway of our friend's house where we were staying.

If I was going to demolish \$60 in this taxi (I thought), at least I am going to walk away with a new friendship.

Imod and I exchanged stories, laughs, and personal experiences. We did become friends that morning. The personal encounter would have been worth twice the expense! As I was about to disembark, I hesitated momentarily and looked keenly into Imod's eyes.

"Imod, may I ask you a question?"

He gladly gave me permission. "According to your Muslim faith, what will happen to you when you die?"

Imod quickly responded, "When I die, there will be judgment. As I stand before Allah he will put all of my good deeds on my right side and all of my bad deeds on my left side. If my good deeds outweigh my bad deeds," his countenance brightened, "I will go to heaven."

As he concluded his statement of faith I probed, "And what if your bad deeds outweigh your good deeds?"

"Well," his countenance lowered, "I suppose I will go to hell."

"Imod," I spoke tenderly, "that worries me deeply, for you."

"Because?"

"If I had to live my life worrying that if my bad deeds outweighed my good deeds I would go to hell, I would be scared to death."
(Trust me I am not counting!)

Knowing that under those conditions he was paddling the same sinking ship as I, Imod returned the question to me.

"What does your faith teach you?"

"Well," (our eyes were welded in earnestness), "my faith clearly teaches me that when I die there will be judgment. But upon judgment God will not look at my good deeds and compare them to my bad deeds. God will look at me based upon the righteousness of Jesus Christ who lives in my heart, and because of Him, I will go to heaven."

Imod received my friendship and my faith with gratitude. "No one ever told me that before, ... By the way, where are you going to church tomorrow?"

I told him and he eagerly wrote it down on a piece of brown paper torn from a grocery bag that he was carrying in the front seat of his taxi.

Friends, the difference between the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and the teachings of all the other religions of the world, is the distance of infinity. Let me briefly (and I mean briefly) begin to build a thick steel platform under your faith.

Jesus, Son of God, Prince of Peace, God Incarnate and Everlasting King is the most trusted, followed, written about, read about, talked about, loved, worshipped and powerful figure in human history.

With prophecies starting 1500 years before His birth and continuing to 400 years before His birth, 300 prophetic details foretold His arrival, life and death with uncanny accuracy.

It has been mathematically calculated that the odds of any other man fulfilling a mere 48 of these 300 prophetic details, in his life, would be the same odds that you could blindfold yourself and wade through a field of silver dollars, stacked one foot deep, across the state of Texas and pick up a predetermined certain silver dollar on the first attempt.

Just to name a few...

Born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14)

Born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2)

Betrayed for 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12)

Presented as king on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9)

Buried in a rich man's tomb (Isaiah 53:9)

Bones not broken (Psalms 34:20)

Seed of Abraham (Genesis 22:18)

Son of Isaac (Genesis 21:12)

Would bruise Satan on the head (Genesis 3:15)

Would be scourged (Isaiah 53:5)

Beaten beyond recognition (Isaiah 53:4)

Perhaps the most inexplicable prophecy of Jesus' earthly mission is in Psalm 22, written by David 1000 years before Jesus' birth and 800 years before the Assyrians even invented the hedonist death of a man by crucifixion. Excerpts from Psalm 22 sound more historical than prophetic:

"My God, My God, why has thou forsaken me. Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning....¹⁵ My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaves to my jaws; and You lay me in the dust of death. For dogs have surrounded me; a band of evildoers has encompassed me; they pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." (Psalm 22:1, 15-18)

How providential it is that Pontius Pilate would proclaim his innocence, "I find no fault in this man," and one of his executioners before He "pierced His hands and His feet" would claim His deity, "This man must truly be the Son of God."

Mark these Key Words:

Jesus God

Old Testament Viewpoint

Isaiah 9:6-7; Isaiah 53: 4-6

Isaiah 9:6-7 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over His kingdom. To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

Isaiah 53:4-6 Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.

New Testament Viewpoint

Colossians 1:15-20; John 6:46; John 14:6-7

I Colossians 1:15-20 And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities - all things have been created by Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything. For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness To dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

John 6:46 Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father.

John 14:6-7 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him."



OBSERVATION: What is God saying?

- 1) What do the many fulfilled prophecies about Jesus tell you about God?

- 2) What do you hear Isaiah saying about the Messiah who is to come?

- 3) Messiah comes from the Hebrew word "Messiach." The same Greek word is "Christos" from which we get the word Christ. He is to be "The Anointed One." Name five things Colossians points out that make Him unique from all other religious figures who ever lived.

- A.

- B.

- C.

- D.

- E.

4) What is the significance of Jesus' life on earth?

5) What does Jesus' life reveal about the character of God?



PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: *What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?*



APPLICATION: *How does this passage relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?*



LOCKER ROOM:

Describe who Jesus is to you and the difference He has made in your life.



MEMORY VERSE: *Isaiah 9:6*

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.



My Prayers

A

Adoration: Father, today I praise You for...

C

Confession: Father, please forgive me for...

T

Thanksgiving: Father, today I'm thankful for...

S

Supplication: Father, the people & things that I wish to pray for today are...

The Ultimate Sacrifice

For the last 50 years of Fran Gajowniczek's life, August 14th was a shrine, a day of remembering and a pilgrimage to a place where one life was given for another. For Maximillian Kolbe, August 14th will forever be ordained as a day of ultimate liberation and freedom from a place called "the death bunker" to the throne of grace and the outstretched arms of the Savior.

The Nazi prison camp at Auschwitz was the greatly feared extermination facility for hundreds of thousands of Jewish citizens and their Polish sympathizers who hid them and protected them from Hitler's heartless killing squads. Kolbe had served as a Franciscan monk for 31 years when he organized a shelter for 2,000 Jewish refugees who had fled Germany in a wave of genocide. When the shelter was discovered, Kolbe was sentenced to the Nazi prison camp where he would be known as "a sublime example of the love of God and one's neighbor." The daily rations were sparse and the stench of starvation filled the air. The malnourished and famished Kolbe would often give his daily bread to those with the greatest need.

To intimidate those who would contemplate an escape, the Nazi guards threatened that for everyone who attempted an escape ten cell mates would be thrown into the death bunker until complete starvation claimed their lives.

On August 1, 1941, a prisoner in Block 12 was missing and assumed to have escaped. Block 12 stood in horror as commander Karl Fritzsche screamed, "The fugitive has not been found, you will all pay for this. Ten of you will be locked into the starvation bunker without food or water until you die." One by one, the names were randomly called. When the name of Fran Gajowniczek was announced, he cried in anguish, "My poor wife! My poor children! What will they do?" Kolbe heroically stepped forward and asked if he could take the man's place in the bunker. "I am a priest. He has a wife and children. Let me take his place."

To Gajowniczek's astonishment, the guard granted Kolbe's heroic request. For 14 days, Kolbe sang hymns and quoted Scripture to comfort the other men who starved with him. Their stomachs shriveled to nothing and their minds were set on fire. One by one, they died until the final day that Kolbe and three others were given lethal injections to clear the bunk for others.

After Allied forces overthrew the Nazi regime, the grateful Gajowniczek was reunited with his wife, and he spent his last 50 years telling the story of the sacrificial love of the humble Franciscan monk who offered his life as a ransom; an act of kindness that could never be repaid.

"No greater love has any man than to lay down his life for his friends." Jesus. (John 15:13).

Mark these Key Words:

Lamb blood Jesus

Old Testament Viewpoint

Exodus 12:1, 5, 7, 13, 26, & 27; Exodus 12:2-7, 12-13; Isaiah 53:3-5, 7-8, 11

Exodus 12:1, 5, 7, 13, 26 & 27 NOW the LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt. 5 "Your lamb shall be an unblemished male a year old; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats.

7 "Moreover, they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. 13 "The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. 26 And when your children say to you, 'What does this rite mean to you?' you shall say 'It is a Passover sacrifice to the LORD who passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians, but spared our homes.'" And the people bowed low and worshiped.

Exodus 12:2-7 This month shall be the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year to you. "Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'On the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves, according to their fathers' households, a lamb for each household. 'Now if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his neighbor nearest to his house are to take one according to the number of persons in them; according to what each man should eat, you are to divide the lamb. Your lamb shall be an unblemished male a year old; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight. Moreover, they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two door posts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it."

Exodus 12: 12-13 "For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments-- I am the LORD. The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt."

Isaiah 53:3-5, 7-8, 11

3 He was despised and forsaken of men,
A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
And like one from whom men hide their face
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.
Surely our griefs He Himself bore,
And our sorrows He carried;
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.
But He was pierced through for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.
7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
Yet He did not open His mouth;
Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,
And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers,
So He did not open His mouth.
By oppression and judgment He was taken away;
And as for His generation, who considered
That He was cut off out of the land of the living
For the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due?
11 As a result of the anguish of His soul,
He will see it and be satisfied;
By His knowledge the Righteous One,
My Servant, will justify the many,
As He will bear their iniquities.

Mark these Key Words:

Lamb blood Jesus

New Testament Viewpoint

John 3:16; Hebrews 10:10,12, 19-22; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Romans 5:8; John 15:13

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

Hebrews 10:10, 12, 19-22 By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. But He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, 19Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

1 Peter 1:18-19 Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.



OBSERVATION: What is God saying?

- 1) What is the relationship between Jesus of the New Testament and the sacrificial lamb of the Old Testament?

- 2) Why was sacrifice necessary to restore our relationship with God?

- 3) How does Jesus' sacrifice change your position before God?

4) Why did God use His most prized relationship as a sacrifice for your sins?

5) How will understanding Jesus' sacrifice for you change the way you love those closest to you?



PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: *What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?*



APPLICATION: *How does this passage relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?*



LOCKER ROOM:

Who is your greatest hero and what is it about that person you most admire?



MEMORY VERSE: Romans 5:8

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.



My Prayers



Adoration: Father, today I praise You for...



Confession: Father, please forgive me for...



Thanksgiving: Father, today I'm thankful for...



Supplication: Father, the people & things that I wish to pray for today are...

Metamorphosis

Of all the magnificent mysteries of God's intelligent design of our cosmos, and the creatures that inhabit our highly favored earthly home, is the metamorphosis and incomprehensible migratory flight of the tiny Monarch butterfly from its summer home near Saskatchewan, Canada, to its winter residence in the Sierra Nevada Mountains of southern Mexico. This annual 3,000 mile, four generational air voyage defies the laws of reason and leaves the naturalist reeling in bewilderment. The unsolved scientific mystery of the metamorphosis itself whereby a helplessly aging caterpillar spins a cocoon around himself; dies and is born again into the picturesque, aerodynamic butterfly should be enough to convince any open-minded naturalist that Somebody with a mind that dwarfs the Cray Supercomputer designed and created the supernaturally derived wonder - world in which we live.

Using a time-compensated sun compass and a mysterious weather center, the butterfly computes wind speed, wind direction, barometric pressure and a global positioning system with pinpoint accuracy. Over a twelve-month period and four generations of complete metamorphosis a multi-generational butterfly leaves a certain tree in Mexico and completes a round trip, transcontinental voyage to a specific tree in Canada and returns without any communication from the generations that preceded him.

The caterpillar phase is restricted to slow meticulous travel along dirt paths, leaves, and tree limbs. The butterfly phase is ounce for ounce the most picturesque flying machine to ever take flight.

Blind chance? Mindless evolution? Random chemical accidents? Happenstance biology?

When Nicodemus, a Jewish ruler, encountered Jesus one evening in the first year of Jesus' public ministry and commented on Jesus' deity, Jesus told Nicodemus that a man would have to undergo a similar process as the butterfly to gain eternal life. He would have to be "born again." The "old man" would have to die and a "new man" would have to come alive. A man, once enslaved to a lifestyle crawling on the dirt of sinful addictions, would spin himself into a cocoon of prayer and leave the cocoon a new creation in Christ.

From death to life.

From darkness to light.

From eternal condemnation to eternal life.

A majestic butterfly would never go back and recommit his life to the lowly crawl of a caterpillar anymore than a truly regenerated follower of Christ would return to his life of blind foolishness before he gave his life to Christ.

No transformation could be more richly rewarded! No regeneration could be more complete!



Mark these Key Words:

Believe

faith

Old Testament Viewpoint

Genesis 15:1-6; Psalms, 32:5

Genesis 15:1-6 After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great." Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir." Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir." And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

Psalms, 32:5 I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"; and You forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah.

New Testament Viewpoint

Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 10:9-12, 17; John 1:12; John 3:3; Hebrews 11:1

Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Romans 10:9-11, 17 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. 17 For the Scripture says, WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED. So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

John 1:12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.

John 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.



OBSERVATION: What is God saying?

1) How does one obtain salvation (eternal life) according to God's Word?

2) How did Abraham gain righteous approval from God?

3) What amount of works can earn our salvation? Why?

3) Who gets the glory for our salvation?

Why did God do it this way?

4) How do you confirm what you believe in your heart?

5) How does true faith differ from intellectual belief?



PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: *What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?*



APPLICATION: *How does this passage relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?*



LOCKER ROOM: *Describe your salvation journey.*



MEMORY VERSE: *John 1:12*

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.



My Prayers

A

Adoration: Father, today I praise You for...

C

Confession: Father, please forgive me for...

T

Thanksgiving: Father, today I'm thankful for...

S

Supplication: Father, the people & things that I wish to pray for today are...

Undeserving

Like a 10 karat diamond, hidden just beneath the surface of a sandy beach on a remote South African seashore, a keenly insightful story and picture window into God's heart resides in 1 Samuel. Familiar to most Old Testament readers is the intense friendship between David and Jonathan. The historical friendship, like those rare, truly great friendships today, began with a commitment of loyalty and trust. Theirs went a step further. David and Jonathan made a "covenant." 1 Samuel 20:11-17 records the moment candidly, "Jonathan said to David, 'Come and let us go into the field.' So both of them went out to the field. Then Jonathan said to David, 'The LORD, the God of Israel, be witness! When I have sounded out my father about this time tomorrow, or the third day, behold, if there is a good feeling toward David, shall I not then send to you and make it known to you? If it please my father to do you harm, may the LORD do so to Jonathan and more also, if I do not make it known to you and send you away, that you may go in safety. And may the LORD be with you as he has been with my father. If I am still alive, will you not show me the loving-kindness of the LORD that I may not die? You shall not cut off your loving-kindness from my house forever, not even when the LORD cuts off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth.' So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, 'May the LORD require it at the hands of David's enemies.' Jonathan made David vow again because of his love for him, because he loved him as he loved his own life."

A Biblical covenant was much more than a handshake! Any two people desiring a covenant went through an ordeal to formalize and seal the relationship. First, the two parties would cut their right palm or right wrist. As they shook hands and "mixed their blood," they would pledge themselves to each other. They would put dye into the wound causing a noticeable scar where the covenant had been cut. Next, the two covenant partners would exchange coats saying, "All that I have is yours." They would exchange belts with weapons attached saying "If you ever have an enemy, he is my enemy as well. I'll give my life to defend yours." An enemy could see the scar on the wrist and take great caution in the fact that if he hurt this man, there's another man who would give his life to revenge the harm they had caused. After these things, the two would split an animal in half and separate the two halves on the ground. The two would walk through the animal halves in a figure-eight fashion saying, "If I ever break this covenant, may God do this to me and worse." After this foreboding ceremony, the two would exchange a meal and share bread and wine saying "I am yours. You are mine. If you ever have a need, I will automatically meet it. If you have an enemy, I have an enemy." Then and only then, they'd pledge "loving-kindness" (friendship) saying, "My love for you is based solely on what I do for you. The more I do for you, the more I love you." The pledge was not only to the man who made the covenant but to his children and grandchildren.

And so it was with David and Jonathan. After Jonathan's death and David's intense period of mourning was over, David said, "Is there yet anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" (2 Samuel 9:1)

History records that Jonathan had a son named Mephibosheth, who was crippled in both feet. After Jonathan's death and David's successful quest to find Jonathan's offspring, David spoke resolutely to Mephibosheth. "I will surely show kindness to you for the sake of your father Jonathan, and will restore to you all the land of your grandfather Saul; and you shall eat at my table regularly." (2 Samuel 9:7) Mephibosheth did nothing to deserve this incredible endowment. It was bequeathed to him by the king because David and Jonathan had made a covenant.

When Jesus took the nails of crucifixion, He cut such a covenant on your behalf with the God of the universe. When you receive Him by faith and become a child of God, you became an "heir of God, a co-heir with Christ." Mephibosheth's amazement before David is a fraction of the amazement we walk in and live in before God because Jesus cut the covenant on our behalf.

In reverence and awe, we will sing to our dying day, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me."

Mark these Key Words:

Covenant

blood

Old Testament Viewpoint

Jeremiah 31:31-34

Jeremiah 31:31-34 "Behold, days are coming", declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them", declares the LORD. "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days", declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them", declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

New Testament Viewpoint

Hebrews 9:15-22; Luke 22:20

Hebrews 9:15-22 For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it. For a covenant is valid only when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives.

Therefore even the first covenant was not inaugurated without blood. For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the Law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, "THIS IS THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT WHICH GOD COMMANDED YOU." And in the same way he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with the blood. And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

Luke 22:20 And in the same way He (*Jesus at the Last supper*) took the cup after they (*the disciples*) had eaten, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood." (*Italics added*)



OBSERVATION: What is God saying?

- 1) The term "covenant" is an unbreakable promise made by God. The "old covenant" law was written on tablets of stone. The "new covenant" is written where? _____

- 2) What is necessary for the inauguration of the "new covenant"?

A. _____

B. _____

- 3) How did Christ fulfill the requirements of the covenant?

4) What do the “new covenant” and “old covenant” have in common?

- A. _____
B. _____

5) How do the “new covenant” and “old covenant” differ?

- A. _____
B. _____



PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: *What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?*



APPLICATION: *How does this passage relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?*

LOCKER ROOM:



What are some “spiritual disciplines” you can establish that will help you follow Jesus more fully?

MEMORY VERSE: Jeremiah 31:34



“They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them”, declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”



My Prayers



Adoration: Father, today I praise You for...



Confession: Father, please forgive me for...



Thanksgiving: Father, today I’m thankful for...



Supplication: Father, the people & things that I wish to pray for today are...

Spirit

It was a brisk, but beautiful, Christmas day in Hereford, Texas, when a teenage friend, named Jason Paetzold, watched his dad step into the small single engine airplane his uncle had just received as a Christmas gift. A short routine flight, and "I'll be back in 30 minutes, Son," were his dad's final words as he latched the door and waived "adios." Jason's big blue eyes were filled with wonder as the plane crewed by the two men he loved the most parted and soared above him. Then in an instant, the morning of beauty turned into a morning of horror. On final descent back into the airport the plane crashed.

The landing was a ball of fire and smoke. Jason's uncle somehow escaped unscathed and ran for an ambulance. Jason's dad was severely burned and unable to move. As he lay dying on the west Texas soil, he was granted thirty minutes of consciousness alone with his son, expressing his final words of exhortation and encouragement. He quoted Scripture to Jason. He affirmed his love. In tears the boy and his dad sang parts of hymns they had shared in church together. The dad gave the boy his final words of wisdom and then he was gone.

Jason came to our sports camp that next summer and recounted the experience. With tear-filled eyes, he clung to every word and every precious moment they had shared. In those cherished final moments, Jason's heart was filled with memories from the hero he'd never forget.

So it was with Jesus and His followers the night before the crucifixion. John recalls the final night in great detail: "Jesus, knowing that His hour had come, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end." (John 13:1)

Though they understood little that night, they never forgot His words. "I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you. I will ask the Father and He will give you another Helper, that is, the Spirit of Truth. He will bring to you remembrance all that I told you. He will guide you into truth. He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment. He will comfort you and glorify Me. He will speak God's words to your heart." (John 14:15-16 excerpts)

Like Jason, the disciples cherished those final departing words and walked in those words every day of their lives. Romans 8:9-10 promises that when you trust Christ and give Him your heart, you, too, will receive the Holy Spirit to live in you and do His work through you. "Walking in the Spirit" is the privilege available to every follower of Christ as we "put to death the deeds of the flesh" and "seek the things above." "Walking in the Spirit" enables you to say, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

"Walking in the Spirit" not only gives you freedom from the penalty of sin but also

freedom from the power of sin. The Holy Spirit convicts a believer of things that are dishonoring and displeasing to God as He subsequently gives you and me the strength to deny that sin and abandon it in freedom. The Holy Spirit is the “engine under the hood with two four-barrel carburetors and power to burn”. Following Christ without Him is like pushing the car up the hill. Depending on and abiding in the Spirit is firing up the engine and embarking on the greatest drive a person could ever imagine.

Mark these Key Words: Spirit God

Old Testament Viewpoint

Ezekiel 3:14; Numbers 11:26; 1 Samuel 10:10; 1 Samuel 16:14a; Joel 2:28

Ezekiel 3:14 So the Spirit lifted me up and took me away; and I went embittered in the rage of my spirit, and the hand of the LORD was strong on me.

Numbers 11:26 But two men had remained in the camp; the name of one was Eldad and the name of the other Medad. And the Spirit rested upon them (now they were among those who had been registered, but had not gone out to the tent), and they prophesied in the camp.

1 Samuel 10:10 When they came to the hill there, behold, a group of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him mightily, so that he prophesied among them.

1 Samuel 16:14a Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul.

Joel 2:28 It will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions.

New Testament Viewpoint

John 14:16, 17, 26 & John 16:8, 13-14; 2 Corinthians 1:4

John 14:16-17, 26 I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. 26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

John 16:8 And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment;

John 16:13-14 But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you.

2 Corinthians 1:4 Who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

OBSERVATION: What is God saying?

- 1) What is the difference in the role the Holy Spirit plays in the Old Testament and the New Testament? Compare and contrast the different ways He worked before Christ and after Christ.

- 2) Joel's prophecy gives an amazing prophetic description of the Holy Spirit's new role. What event changed His role and style of work so drastically?

- 3) Describe the attributes (characteristics) of the Holy Spirit, as written in the book of John.

A.

B.

C.

D.

4) The word for “helper” Jesus uses to describe the Holy Spirit is the Greek word “paraklete” which means “the one called alongside,” He comforts us or gives us bravery in times of personal difficulty. When have you experienced His “comfort”?

5) Name two specific works or ministries the Holy Spirit accomplishes in a believer’s life.

A. _____

B. _____



PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: *What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?*



APPLICATION: *How does this passage relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?*



LOCKER ROOM:
*How can you walk more fully “in the Spirit” this week?
 What is hampering you from succeeding in that?*



MEMORY VERSE: 2 Corinthians 1:4

Who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.



My Prayers

A

Adoration: Father, today I praise You for...

C

Confession: Father, please forgive me for...

T

Thanksgiving: Father, today I’m thankful for...

S

Supplication: Father, the people & things that I wish to pray for today are...

“Who’s Your Timothy?”

When I first met Troy, he was twenty-four years old and preparing his mind for his third suicidal attempt and the courage to jump off the tall water tower from which he had climbed and from which he had retreated twice before. I had the humble privilege of leading Troy to Christ and subsequently encouraging him in the faith over the following several years.

Last weekend I met Troy in our small country church proudly smiling over his revolutionized life in Christ and his brand new baby girl who will grow up to admire and respect and love her dad as a loving father and solid man of faith.

The community around you is filled with “Troy’s”. They meander aimlessly through life in every neighborhood, every family, every church and every place of business. Young and old, rich and poor, church and un-church, self confident and insecure, the Troy’s of this world are spiritually dying and craving a mentor.

In a few short weeks, you’ll graduate from “basic Timothy training” and be prayerfully committed to finding a “Timothy” of your own to pour the principles of this book into their life the way your “Paul” has poured into you.

Who is my next Timothy? To whom will I give the blessing of discipleship training?

1. Name three to five people in your extended family, neighborhood, church, or place of business who need someone in their life to bring them to Jesus and mentor in their faith? (Your Timothy may be a believer already and needing someone to equip them or perhaps a person who needs to “come to Jesus” in the process.)

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

E. _____

2. Pray for these people daily and ask God for discernment and opportunity to pick one to approach.
3. Realize that your own personal adequacy is in Christ and Christ alone. “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:13). This is your promise from God.

4. Rejoice in the calling that “making disciples” is God’s command for every believer. It’s our highest calling, greatest privilege, and immeasurable eternal reward.
5. If no one drops the baton, by discipling and sending one person each year, in 33 years you and your Paul can create a down line of 8,589,934,592 disciplined people (that’s actual math)!

Year	Disciplers	New Disciples	Total Followers
1	1	1	2
2	2	2	4
3	4	4	8
4	8	8	16
5	16	16	32
6	32	32	64
7	64	64	128
8	128	128	256
9	256	256	512
10	512	512	1,024
11	1,024	1,024	2,048
12	2,048	2,048	4,096
13	4,096	4,096	8,192
14	8,192	8,192	16,384
15	16,384	16,384	32,768
16	32,768	32,768	65,538
17	65,538	65,538	131,072
18	131,072	131,072	262,144
19	262,144	262,144	524,288
20	524,288	524,288	1,048,576
21	1,048,576	1,048,576	2,097,152
22	2,097,152	2,097,152	4,194,304
23	4,194,304	4,194,304	8,388,608
24	8,388,608	8,388,608	16,777,216
25	16,777,216	16,777,216	33,554,432
26	33,554,432	33,554,432	67,108,864
27	67,108,864	67,108,864	134,217,728
28	134,217,728	134,217,728	268,435,456
29	268,435,456	268,435,456	536,870,912
30	536,870,912	536,870,912	1,073,741,824
31	1,073,741,824	1,073,741,824	2,147,483,648
32	2,147,483,648	2,147,483,648	4,294,967,296
33	4,294,967,296	4,294,967,296	8,589,934,592

The Pinnacle

The resurrection of Jesus after His torture and crucifixion is the single most important historical factor in all of Christianity. Jesus is the only religious figure in the history of mankind to make the claim of deity and subsequently rise from the dead. The resurrection alone puts Jesus light years ahead of all other religious figures in history and in a category all His own.

The Christian faith is a historical faith. It is an intellectual faith. It is an experiential faith. And yes, it is an emotional faith, as well. Jesus' resurrection from the grave was documented 15 times in Scripture.

1. To Mary Magdalene: Mark 16:9, John 20:14
2. To women returning from the tomb: Matthew 28:9, 10
3. To Peter later in the day: Luke 24:34; 1 Corinthians 15:5
4. To the Emmaus disciples: Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-24
5. To the apostles without Thomas present: Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-24
6. To the apostles with Thomas present: John 20:26-29
7. To the seven by the Lake of Tiberias: John 21:1-23
8. To a multitude of 500-plus believers: 1 Corinthians 15:6
9. To James: 1 Corinthians 15:7
10. To the eleven: Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:14-20; Luke 24:33-52; Acts 1:3-12
11. At the ascension: Acts 1:3-12
12. To Paul: Acts 9:3-6; 1 Corinthians 15:8
13. To Stephen: Acts 7:55
14. To Paul in the temple: Acts 22:17-21; 23:11
15. To John on Patmos: Revelation 1:10-19

The historicity of His resurrection is based on at least 7 major defenses:

1. The Roman Crucifixion: It meant absolute death. According to Roman Law, two Roman coroners would examine the dead body and sign his death certificate. A coroner's mistake rendered his own immediate crucifixion.
2. The Roman Seal: Roman historians report that after death on a Roman cross, the ruthless government of Rome stood behind the death and burial of the victim. Over the tomb of a crucified man, Roman soldiers placed the Roman seal which was two crossing strips of leather and a clay pack in the middle with the official seal of the government of Rome stamped on it. The penalty for any human breaking the seal was the wrath of Rome. An earlier Biblical account of Daniel describes this precaution, "A stone was brought and laid over the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signet rings of his nobles, so that nothing would be changed in regard to Daniel." (Daniel 6:17).
3. The Roman Guard: The Roman guard of 4, 8, 12 or 16 men was trained to defend a piece of ground against an entire invading army! The Jewish temple guard, was a highly disciplined group of soldiers, who if any member was caught sleeping on duty would all be burned alive with the fire started from their own clothing. As Jesus' death was a Roman crucifixion, a

Roman guard was probably used. But whichever guard was stationed there, Scripture is clear on this point: The Jews and the Romans took great care to place a guard before Jesus' tomb.

4. The Changed Lives of the Disciples: Ten of the disciples died martyr's deaths based on their absolute certainty of Jesus' resurrection. Before the resurrection, these men fled in fear! Peter repeatedly denied ever knowing Jesus. After the resurrection, "boldness unto death" seized their hearts. They were completely transformed by what they saw.
5. The Jewish Burial: "Nicodemus, who had first come to Him by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight. So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of Jews." (John 19:39-40) Mummies can't breathe!
6. The Roman Flogging: The most feared, brutal, inhumane torture in the history of mankind was the endless application of the ["cat of nine tails"] on the back, chest, face and legs of the condemned victim. The Roman "cat of nine tails" was a whip made of multiple leather strips with pieces of bone, rock and metal tied to the ends designed to remove pieces of flesh with each brutal application.
7. The Private Burial Ground of Joseph of Arimathea: "And a man named Joseph, who was a member of the Council, a good and righteous man (he had not consented to their plan and action), a man from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who was waiting for the kingdom of God; this man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. And he took it down and wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid Him in a tomb cut into the rock, where no one had ever lain." (Luke 23:50-53)
8. Arguments and Rebuttals of the Resurrection of Jesus: Considering these historical factors, the arguments of the reliability of the accounts of Jesus' resurrection carry very little, if any, plausibility.
 - A. *"Jesus really didn't die!"* The Roman flogging, the coroner's reports, the finality of the crucifixion, the mummification, the tomb, the stone, the seal, and the guard mute this argument.
 - B. *"The women went to the wrong tomb."* It was a private burial tomb. Surely the women, the Jews, the Romans, the disciples and the owner of the tomb didn't get confused and forget the tomb's location.
 - C. *"The Jews stole the body."* All they would have had to do was put the body on a wagon and parade it down Main Street and Christianity would be dead in the womb. They didn't because they couldn't.
 - D. *"The disciples stole the body."* The very nature of man overrules this argument. Men will die for a lie if they believe it is the truth. But ten sane men will never give their lives for a lie if they know it is a lie.

History is filled with men who claimed to be God, but only one God claimed to be man.
(special thanks to Josh McDowell for his research provided for this study)

Mark these Key Words:

resurrection

Jesus **God**

Old Testament Viewpoint

Isaiah 53:10; Psalms, 22: 16-17; Daniel 6:17

Isaiah 53:10 But the LORD was pleased
To crush Him, putting Him to grief;
If He would render Himself as a guilt offering,
He will see His offspring,
He will prolong His days,
And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand.

Psalms, 22:16-17 For dogs have surrounded me;
A band of evildoers has encompassed me;
They pierced my hands and my feet.
I can count all my bones.
They look, they stare at me;

Daniel 6:17 A stone was brought and laid over the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signet rings of his nobles, so that nothing would be changed in regard to Daniel.

New Testament Viewpoint

1 Corinthians 15:3-6; 1 Peter 1:3-4; John 11:25; Mark 16:1-7

1 Corinthians 15:3-6 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep;

1 Peter 1:3-4 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies."

Mark 16:1-7 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might come and anoint Him. Very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. They were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" Looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away, although it was extremely large. Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed. And he said to them, "Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here; behold, here is the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He told you.'"



OBSERVATION: What is God saying?

1) How does the resurrection of Jesus substantiate His claims of deity?

2) Why is the resurrection important to you as a believer?

- 3) Name three evidences of the resurrection that give the event the most credibility to you.
 - A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____

- 4) Paul makes some very bold claims about Jesus' resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15. What are they and why are they important?

- 5) What effect did the resurrection have on the disciples?

- 6) What effect does the resurrection have on your faith today?



PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?



APPLICATION: How does this passage relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?



LOCKER ROOM: If indeed Jesus is alive and if indeed He lives in you, what kind of person ought you to be at home, at work and in your private life? What does "living the resurrected life" look like to you?



MEMORY VERSE: John 11:25

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies."



My Prayers



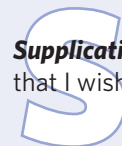
Adoration: Father, today I praise You for...



Confession: Father, please forgive me for...



Thanksgiving: Father, today I'm thankful for...



Supplication: Father, the people & things that I wish to pray for today are...

Lamb Over Me

For decades and decades, he prayed for a son. He dreamed of the day his wife would conceive. To hear the word “Daddy” from the mouth of a toddler that bore his name was his hope and daily request before God. His vanishing desire became an aging disappointment. His wife had long since passed the age of fertility. His family tree had resolutely ended. Then he heard her whisper as she lay by his side, “I feel something inside of me. It’s growing. It’s moving. It’s alive. It’s a child. You’re a Dad! Let’s call him Isaac.”

Abraham had seen the hand of God. Everyday together must have been a lifetime. His first words. His first steps. His first smile. The first time he reached up to take his father’s hand.

Then the unbelievable was overcome by the unimaginable. God’s words bit his heart like a viper, “Take Isaac to the mountain and sacrifice him. Demonstrate your love. Show me your trust. Take his life from him with the knife and pass his body through the flames.”

“No, God. Why, God? Anything but him, God. Anything... Anything... Anything... Not my son!”

Abraham’s cries were unanswered. “Demonstrate for me,” the mysterious voice urged him onward.

As the two laid the firewood on the altar, Abraham’s face contorted in excruciating agony! Somehow he gathered the strength to overcome his boundless love with his unquenchable obedience. The child cried out, “Where’s the lamb for the sacrifice? Daddy, where’s the lamb? God will provide a lamb.”

“Baaaaa!”

Astonishment took over as father’s and son’s heads turned abruptly to see a ram caught in a nearby bush. Abraham’s heart felt like it was pounding a thousand beats a second as his eyes filled with tears and the knife fell to the ground. God had provided. The lamb was sufficient.

(This story is paraphrased from the Biblical account in Genesis 22)

As the descendants of Isaac, and his half-brother Ishmael migrated, the story was passed from generation to generation, from tribe to tribe, from wandering pilgrim to new land in foreign regions of the world. God provided a lamb. The lamb was sufficient to appease the requirements of a just and holy God.

Fast forward --2,160 years to the historical exploration, Marco Polo and his “discovery” of a people group who until that time had not been known by the Western world. Marco Polo was enamored by the beauty of their tapestry and their use of silk to weave their luxuriously fine cloth. The European explorer was also amazed by the strange stick figures that made up their 3200-year-old language. Though no Bible had been seen or used where their language was first written, their word for “righteousness”, to Marco Polo’s surprise then and to our amazement today, is the stick figure of a lamb over the stick figure that represents “Me”.

義我

"Righteousness", lamb over me.

"Where is the lamb, Daddy? Surely God will provide the lamb." Young Isaac's words traveled the highways of the world. Two thousand years later, God provided Jesus, the "Lamb" for the salvation of all mankind.

Mark these Key Words:

Jesus **Spirit**

New Testament Viewpoint

I'M IN CHRIST.

2 Cor. 5:17 Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

CHRIST IN ME.

Col. 1:27 To whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

JESUS IS MY FRIEND.

John 15:15 "No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you."

I AM NOT CONDEMNED!

Romans 8:1-2 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

I AM A CHILD OF GOD.

Romans. 8:16 The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God.

I AM A CO-HEIR WITH JESUS.

Romans 8:17 And if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.

I AM CHRIST'S AMBASSADOR.

Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.

MY BODY IS HIS TEMPLE.

1 Cor 3:16 Do you know that you are a temple of God. And that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

I CAN APPROACH GOD WITH CONFIDENCE.

Ephesians 3:12 In whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him.

MY SALVATION IS SEALED IN CHRIST

Ephesians 1:13(b) Having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise.



OBSERVATION: What is God saying?

- 1) From the above verses, describe your true relationship as a Christian with Christ (from God's viewpoint).

- 2) What does it mean to you (very personally)

A. To be Jesus' friend: _____

B. To be in Jesus' family: _____

- C. To be forgiven: _____

- D. To be a co-heir of God's inheritance with Christ:

- E. To have your body a temple His Spirit indwells:

- F. To be an ambassador of Christ's:

- G. To be "sealed in Christ" by the Holy Spirit?



PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: *What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?*



APPLICATION: *How does this passage relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?*



LOCKER ROOM: *How does realizing your position in Christ help you with your greatest doubts and fears?*



MEMORY VERSE: **Romans 8:1-2**

Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.



My Prayers

A

Adoration: Father, today I praise You for...

C

Confession: Father, please forgive me for...

T

Thanksgiving: Father, today I'm thankful for...

S

Supplication: Father, the people & things that I wish to pray for today are...

Craftsmanship

The winter of 1494 was memorable for its bitter cold. The city of Florence, Italy, was blanketed in snow, and Michelangelo Buonarroti's heart was as heavy as the gray clouds that dipped low and blocked out the sun.

The Grand Duke of Florence, Lorenzo de' Medici, had been the young artist's benefactor. It was this great supporter of the arts who had given Michelangelo the numerous slabs of marble he needed to refine his incredible talents. But before Michelangelo was able to create his masterpieces, the old duke died, and his son, Piero, had no use for a sculptor on the payroll. So the great artist's talents were put on the shelf, and Michelangelo sat and waited. That is, until a few days before a great party at the new duke's palace.

In what looked like an incredible answer to his prayers, Michelangelo was summoned before Piero. He'd never been to the palace, even when the grand duke had been alive, and he hurried down the streets, past the guards, and in to see Duke Piero.

While he was afraid to believe it, the rumor circulated by the servant who came to fetch Michelangelo was that he was being commissioned to carve a great statue! At last!

When Michelangelo arrived at the palace, he was ushered into a large room where not only Duke Piero de' Medici but also a crowd of the duke's friends awaited his arrival. He was indeed told that his services as a sculptor were needed by his new patron. All he had to do was to go down to the garden, and he'd find all the white marble he needed to make a masterpiece for the duke's party.

Can you guess by now what the duke was actually asking Michelangelo to do? All the white marble in the garden was... snow. Perhaps the greatest sculptor of all time had been brought to the palace to create a snow sculpture for a royal dinner party!

Just imagine for a moment what was going through Michelangelo's mind as he walked from the room and down to the garden. If it had been me, I'd have been furious. What an embarrassment! What a colossal waste of time -to put all that effort into something that would melt as soon as the sun broke through the clouds!

Michelangelo could have stormed out or at least left the duke's presence with an angry, unwilling heart. Instead, he simply went to work. Hour after hour he gathered snow and packed it tightly into a great mound. Then, at last, he began to carve.

Working from the top down a head appeared, and then shoulders, limbs, torso, and legs. A figure was emerging from the white snow that would be viewed as a joke by Duke Piero and his guests, and then melt away in no time.

Yet still, Michelangelo worked. That's because he had decided in his heart that even if all he could do was make Florence a more beautiful place for a few hours -he would put all his heart into carving that block of snow. And then it came time for Piero's party.

The guests arrived. The snow carving finally was unveiled... and instead of laughter came breathless silence. The duke and his guests were staring in awe and amazement at the figure in the snow that seemed able to breathe and walk and even sling a rock at a giant.

The Duke was silenced by the tireless efforts of the young artist who had created a masterpiece of the Biblical David made of snow.

Then, amazingly, that statue turned to marble. Not that hour, of course, for it wasn't magic. But in the years that followed, Michelangelo's David was replicated in marble -given to him by none other than Duke Piero himself. This priceless work has drawn millions of people to Florence since it was unveiled -all because Michelangelo was willing to carve something of beauty out of snow....

(The above story is paraphrased from John Trent's "The Light of Home".)

As the snowflakes were to Michelangelo, so we are to God. So many days in our brokenness, we bring Him seemingly valueless snowflakes. In humility and in trust, we submit our frailties to the Master Craftsman's hand. By His strength alone, we walk away from the process in sheer amazement that He can accomplish something of eternal value with our availability. I look at the "Billy Grahams" and "Mother Teresa's" of the world and see fine marble sculpture. I turn to the mirror and see so little to place in His hands. Someone once said, "God doesn't need our ability, He needs our availability." I like that. It gives me hope. One thing we can be sure of. Give God snowflakes or give Him premium marble raw material, you can be certain that He is at work in you and me and He has a plan for our lives. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." (Ephesians 2:10)

Psalm 51 gives me great comfort. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. A broken and a contrite heart, God will not despise."

The other side of the coin is just as certain. When I put myself ahead of God and vainly attempt to accomplish goals for my benefit, my success is as vain as sculpting sand castles on the edge of an incoming tide.

As a granddad of 8, believe me, I have piled and shaped many a shovelful of beach front sand. Like the countless, fleshly indulgences that surround us and lure our time, talents and treasures, the sand castles of sordid gain vanish painfully in the ever-devouring tide of futility, leaving not even a trace of the labor of the mind and hand that built them.

A laborer brings his hands to the job. An artist brings his hands and his mind. A craftsman brings his mind, his hands, and his heart. I love to build and do life with three remarkable friends. Richard Parton is a heavy equipment operator. Byron Joplin is a framer. Jerry Nichols is a mechanic. All three men are craftsmen and close friends. Their hands, minds, and hearts come to work everyday using the talents God has given them to "build the Kingdom" for God's glory.

The Master Craftsman gives them fulfillment. Their significance comes from the hand of their Sculptor to whom they each say, "The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my rock, in whom I have refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge." (2 Samuel 22:2-3)

Mark these Key Words: **God** **Jesus**

Old Testament Viewpoint

Psalms, 139:1-4,16-18; Psalms, 16:11; 1 Samuel 13:14; Exodus 6:12

Psalms, 139:1-4,16-18 O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you understand my thought from afar. You scrutinize my path and my lying down, and are intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, behold, O LORD, You know it all.

16 Your eyes have seen my unformed substance;
And in your book were all written
The days that were ordained for me,
When as yet there was not one of them.
How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!
If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand
When I awake, I am still with You.

Psalms, 16:11 You will make known to me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

1 Samuel 13:14 "But now your kingdom shall not endure. The LORD has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has appointed him as ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you."

Exodus 6:12 But Moses spoke before the LORD, saying, "Behold, the sons of Israel have not listened to me; how then will Pharaoh listen to me, for I am unskilled in speech?"

New Testament Viewpoint

Ephesians 2:10; John 3:17-18; Acts 9:3-6; II Corinthians 1:4; John 13: 37-38

Ephesians 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

John 3:17-18 "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

Acts 9:3-6 As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do."

II Corinthians 1:4 Who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

John 13: 37-38 Peter said to Him, "Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You." Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly, I say to you, a rooster will not crow until you deny Me three times."

OBSERVATION: What is God saying?

1) Just as you are, you are God's "workmanship". You are "fiercely and wonderfully made". What does that mean to you?

2) God is a whole lot more interested in our availability than our ability. He's a whole lot more concerned with the intentions of our heart than the perfection of our product! (Good thing!)

A. Describe David's shortcomings and failures: _____

B. Describe Peter's shortcomings and failures: _____

C. Describe Paul's shortcomings and failures: _____

3) How does knowing how greatly God used these three in spite of their failures encourage you today?

4) What do the passages say to you about your gifts and talents and God's plan for your life?

5) In II Corinthians 1:4 God says He always uses our pain, failures and scars to make us more effective in ministry. How do you see Him using yours?



PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: *What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?*



APPLICATION: *How does this passage relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?*



LOCKER ROOM: *How did you measure success before you sold out to Christ? How do you measure success today?*



MEMORY VERSE: *Ephesians 2:10*

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.



My Prayers

A

Adoration: Father, today I praise You for...

C

Confession: Father, please forgive me for...

T

Thanksgiving: Father, today I'm thankful for...

S

Supplication: Father, the people & things that I wish to pray for today are...

Overboard

I'm guilty as charged. I overdid it big time! I was one big easy pushover with my kids...especially my two girls! If that wasn't bad enough, I'm worse with my grandkids. I do find comfort in two things! Thanks to my down-to-earth wife, they didn't turn out spoiled (far from it)! Funny thing about a lot of granddads I know. The more I look around, I see a lot of pitiful old guys like me who are equally guilty of the same crime! My good friend, and the man I coached under at Texas A&M, Gene Stallings, told me a story the other day that tickled me to death about his 7-year-old granddaughter, whom he absolutely adores. For some reason, she wanted a little donkey. Her mom said "No way I'll ever get you a donkey." The little girl responded hastily, "Pa Pa will get me one."

I asked Coach if he did and he fired back, like I was nuts to even ask, "You're darn right I did! I got her four of them."

Maybe we're beyond repair or maybe, just maybe, we got it from God. Paul the apostle thought so, "Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think..." (Ephesians 3:20)

John heard Jesus talk about it and wrote it down so we wouldn't forget it, "Ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full." (John 16:24)

The night before His crucifixion, Jesus said it again and then repeated it, "Whatever you ask in My name... ask Me anything in My name and I will do it." (John 14:14)

Matthew heard Jesus say it again in Jesus' famous "Sermon on the Mount", "Ask and it will be given to you; seek; and you will find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." (Matthew 7:7)

I look around and see all my undeserved blessings and I find God's Word amazingly true! I received a death sentence from a doctor 7 years ago when my body showed up with a drastic case of leukemia. I asked for more time to build crosses so people could meet Jesus at those crosses. Today, I'm almost cancer-free!

I asked for a wife to love for a lifetime and He blessed me beyond measure with a bride I love beyond words. I wanted a child and I have 4. Are you kidding?! Do I deserve any of these blessings? Hardly! I've met men with better hearts than mine behind prison walls! Have there been surgeries, difficult days and years of desperation? Countless!!! (Try receiving bone marrow a few times...that is really fun!) Did I feel like in my 60 years many prayers went unanswered? Sure. My timing isn't His timing. My ways aren't His ways (fortunately – ever so, fortunately).

But through it all ... tears, pains, sickness, health, laughter, depression, guilt, good days and tough days, I have found a Dad in Jesus that makes my football coaching friend with four donkeys for his granddaughter look like an amateur.

“What man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!” (Matthew 7:9-11)

Mark these Key Words:

Prayer

ask

Old Testament Viewpoint

Jeremiah 33:3; Psalms, 37:4; 2 Chronicles 7:14; Proverbs 15:8

Jeremiah 33:3 Call to me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know.

Psalms, 37:4 Delight yourself in the LORD, and He will give you the desires of your heart.

II Chronicles 7:14 If My people, who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from the heavens, and forgive their sin and heal their land.

Proverbs 15:8 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord; but the prayer of the upright is His delight.

New Testament Viewpoint

John 14:13 - 14; Luke 11:5-10

John 14:13-14 "Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it."

Luke 11:5-9 Then He said unto them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and goes to him at midnight and says to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and from the inside he answers and says 'Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.' I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs. So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it will be opened to you."



OBSERVATION: *What is God saying?*

1) God can do anything He wants to alone! Why does He allow us to participate in His plans with prayer?

- A. _____
B. _____

2) Why is a strong relationship with God key to understanding our prayers?

3) Why does God ask you to pray before He grants you success?

4) Why do many prayers appear not to get answered?

5) What does it mean to “delight yourself in the Lord”?

6) Why does Jesus ask you to keep praying continuously about what’s on your heart?



PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: *What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?*



APPLICATION: *How does this passage relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?*



LOCKER ROOM:
What have been some of your greatest difficulties with God during your life?



MEMORY VERSE: *Jeremiah 33:3*

Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know.



My Prayers

A

Adoration: Father, today I praise You for...

C

Confession: Father, please forgive me for...

T

Thanksgiving: Father, today I’m thankful for...

S

Supplication: Father, the people & things that I wish to pray for today are...

M&Ms (Memorize & Meditate)

If you divided all the stars in the known cosmos and distributed them equally to every human on earth, we'd each have about 6 trillion stars to account for. **Our God is Big!**

If the Cray Supercomputer was going all out, full steam ahead on one project, it would take years to accomplish what the human eye accomplishes in seconds. Every cell (approximately 10 million total) in the retina computes 500 non-linear differential calculus equations 100 times every 1000th of a second (Can Evolution Produce an Eye? Not a chance! Dr. David N. Menton, April 1994, Vol. 4, No. 4). **Our God is brilliant.**

But of all God's limitless attributes, the one that amazes me the most is the fact that He desires an intimate relationship with someone as undeserving and irresponsible as me. That single thought will keep me running for His heart until the day I die.

Psalms 8 expresses my deepest longings for His will, "Oh Lord, our God, how majestic is Your name in all the earth....When I consider Thy heavens and the works of Thy hands, the moon and stars that Thou hast ordained, who is man that Thou does consider him or the son of man that Thou does care for him. For Thou has made him a little lower than God. Thou has crowned him with glory and majesty....Oh Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth."

To think that Jesus would give His life to grant you and me the ability to know God intimately, far more intimately than I know my wife whom I've adored for more than 35 years! Beyond comprehension!

My dear friend, Jonny Musso, one of the legendary football giants of Bear Bryant's Alabama teams, prays every day for the same intimacy with God that he feels for his wife in the times he has felt his love for her the most.

Tony Boselli, the all pro offensive tackle for the Jacksonville Jaguars, at 6'7", 348 lbs., tells me he loves to praise God, to sing his praises, to speak his praises, to meditate his praises as often as he can.

Ohio State football Coach Jim Tressell, Clemson Coach Tommy Bowden, Appalachian State Coach Jerry Moore, Georgia Coach Mark Richt, (some current and some past) and countless other men tell me they find intimacy in their devotional times and prayer times as they pour themselves into God's heart daily. While tenderly hugging and sharing faith stories with two American Presidents, I witnessed the same affection and the same quest for intimacy. I have found it in countless men's hugs, in pregame chapels, in the National Football League and professional baseball chapel across America. The presidents and the players

alike all crave intimacy with God.

God says we'll be blessed in that intimacy. In fact, He promises His blessing as you "meditate on His word day and night." For me, as ADHD and strung out as I usually am, I find incredible peace and intimacy tucking the Psalms into my memory bank daily and meditating on them as often as I get a moment of peace; late at night, early morning, driving, aerobic training or flying. "M&Ms" stands for "memorize and meditate". M&Ms are not only candy to the taste buds, but **M**emorizing and **M**editating on God's Word brings blessings and eternal richness that this world can't contain.

When God ceases to be our handy vending machine and becomes our deepest desire, a world of blessings begins to pour itself into our heart and into our life. Open a pack and pour some into your heart today. Tasty!

Mark these Key Words:

Blessed

Old Testament Viewpoint

Psalms, 1:1-3

Psalms, 1:1-3 How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. And he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.

New Testament Viewpoint

Matthew 5:3-9

Matt. 5:3-9 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."



OBSERVATION: What is God saying?

1) The term "blessing" means to be happy, content, satisfied, and fulfilled. Name three choices or habits that hinder God's blessings to you?

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____

2) To what five kinds of people does God promise to give His blessings in these passages?

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____
- E. _____

3) What are your greatest delights in this world?

4) What would it look like if you loved God's Word more than that?

5) Why is memorizing and meditating on God's Word well worth the time and effort?

6) Why does God desire the practice or memorizing and meditating on His word in our daily lives?

6) Describe how meditating on God's word brings intimacy between you and God.



PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: *What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?*



APPLICATION: *How does this passage relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?*



LOCKER ROOM:

How's your thought life been this week? When you are struggling, who's the first person you call?



MEMORY VERSE: *Psalms, 1:1-2*

How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night.



My Prayers

A

Adoration: Father, today I praise You for...

C

Confession: Father, please forgive me for...

T

Thanksgiving: Father, today I'm thankful for...

S

Supplication: Father, the people & things that I wish to pray for today are...

Peacemaker

If there were a Heisman Trophy for high school football in Pennsylvania, it would go to Jim Shaughnessy. At least in football savvy Oil Trough, Pennsylvania where “Jim ShaughnessyDay” was celebrated annually for years. If a player can succeed by being mean, tough, angry and motivated by hatred, Jim was. Beaten severely by his dad on a regular occasion made Jim shoe-leather tough. “My dad would paint the kitchen with my blood,” Jim recalls. “And then he’d beat up my mom before my eyes.”

Jim had one hiding place to run to when his dad was drunk and abusive. When his father found it, he kicked Jim until Jim was black and blue. Jim’s outlet for his hatred was smash-mouthed football where he earned a full scholarship to Arizona State and eventually was drafted by the New England Patriots. “I was in hundreds of barroom fights,” Jim now recalls matter-of-factly. “I’ve never lost one.”

When Jim saw a man hurt or insult a woman, he’d “light the man up” in recompense for the abuse he’d seen his mom receive from his dad.

Jim’s junior year in college, his life changed drastically. He had a “head on collision” with a crucified Man and used those three nails to pin his anger resolutely and permanently on his own rugged cross. Jim was a new man!

His second collision was almost as big as the first. My next door neighbor, and down to earth friend, Gary Smalley, met Jim shortly after his conversion and challenged him to forgive his dad and go home to seek reconciliation. When Jim flatly refused, Gary said, “Jim, how much of your broken relationship with your dad is your fault?” Jim snapped back, “3% at most. 97% is my dad’s fault.”

Gary persisted. “As a follower of Christ, Jim, take 100% responsibility for your 3%. It made sense. Jim went home where he was met with his father’s typical obstinacy and ridicule. He took his aging dad behind the house and sought his forgiveness. Gallantly, Jim apologized for everything he had done to his dad. His dad responded harshly. Jim began to weep and pray with his eyes affectionately heavenward. “God, my Father, I just ask that someday my dad can know You as his father as you have allowed me to know You.”

To Jim’s surprise, his dad began to weep. This broken, bitter and beleaguered man began to pray, “God, someday, will You let me know You the way Jim does?” God granted his request. Like a caterpillar metamorphosing into a butterfly, Jim’s dad became a brand new creation and for the first time in his life, he began to experience peace. The two walked as friends the remaining 14 years of his dad’s life. They prayed together, played together and traveled together to places his dad had always wanted to see. On his dad’s deathbed, Jim fondly reaffirmed his

tender love for his dad and released him to join his mom in heaven. The reconciling blood of Christ that reinstated man to his right relationship with God had once again empowered two men in conflict to give each other the same priceless gift of reconciliation.

Mark these Key Words:

Joseph

Brothers

Forgive

Old Testament Viewpoint

Genesis 37:23, 28; Genesis 42: 6; Genesis 45:4-5, 15; Genesis 47:11

Genesis 37:23, 28 So it came about, when Joseph reached his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the varicolored tunic that was on him;

28 Then some Midianite traders passed by, so they pulled him up and lifted Joseph out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. Thus they brought Joseph into Egypt.

Genesis 42: 6 Now Joseph was the ruler over the land; he was the one who sold to all the people of the land and Joseph's brothers came and bowed down to him with their faces to the ground.

Genesis 45:4-5, 15 Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Please come closer to me." And they came closer. And he said, "I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life."

15 He kissed all his brothers and wept over them, and afterward his brothers talked with him.

Genesis 47:11 So Joseph settled his father and his brothers and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had ordered.

New Testament Viewpoint

Matthew 5:9, 44; Matthew 6:15; Revelation 12:10

Matthew 5:9, 44 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

44 But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

Matthew 6:15 But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.

Revelation 12:10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night.



OBSERVATION: What is God saying?

- 1) Enmity and strife are two of Satan's favorite and most lethal weapons for separating relationship and bringing division to the body of Christ. How do anger, bitterness and pride aid him in succeeding in his task?

- 2) What do you see in Joseph's life that would help you in a difficult relationship you are facing today?

- 3) A peacemaker is one who initiates reconciliation in broken relationships. Why is a peacemaker so blessed by God?

- 4) Forgiveness ... complete, total forgiveness is one of God's greatest virtues. How can you daily prepare your heart to be a heart of forgiveness?
- _____
- _____
- 5) Bitterness and grudges are silent weapons we carry when we've been hurt. Why are they sins and what needs to be done with them?
- _____
- _____
- 6) If Satan is "the accuser of the saints," how are we actively teaming up with him when we hold on to a grudge or harbor bitterness?
- _____
- _____



PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: *What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?*



APPLICATION: *How does this passage relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?*



LOCKER ROOM: *If you had one thing in your life you could do over, what would it be? Is there anything you can do now to reconcile that situation?*



MEMORY VERSE: *Matthew 6:15*

But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.



My Prayers

A

Adoration: Father, today I praise You for...

C

Confession: Father, please forgive me for...

T

Thanksgiving: Father, today I'm thankful for...

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Supplication: Father, the people & things that I wish to pray for today are...

Synergy

You don't expect to see a lovebird standing 6'3" tall with rippling muscles on every bone of his body and weighing 215 pounds donate vital body parts to his wife, but this love story isn't ordinary in any sense of the word.

My big brother, Bob, was always my hero in my growing up years. His athletic prowess is only surpassed by his love for the first and only love of his lifetime, his bride Mary Evelyn.

For thirty years he cherished her, provided bountifully for her, lavished her with gifts and vacations to exotic places. Then, in the apex of their life together, her days were seemingly coming quickly and tragically to a close. Her kidneys ceased their vital function due to a congenital disorder through her family line. No matching donor could be located. A cytogenic match was essential and non-available. In heroic desperation my brother Bob offered his own kidney as a possible match. The doctors scoffed at his initial plea, citing the near impossibility of a husband/wife match. But when the big strapping dentist persisted, the tests for compatibility were granted. To everyone's surprise, as if the miracle was made in heaven, his kidney was a perfect match.

Quickly, the two lovebirds were rushed into surgery. Mary Evelyn's blood was now saturated with dangerous poison.

The doctors cut my brother from his navel to his backbone, removing three ribs and the life-saving organ. (It only took Adam one rib to give life to Eve. Irony! It cost Bob three!) Swiftly, his kidney was placed into the abdomen of his bride. The vessels and tubes were skillfully joined. The next morning, her blood was being filtered perfectly through it. She will probably outlive him!

I know my brother Bob! If she would have needed both of his kidneys, he would gladly have given them. He would have given her his heart if she had needed it, too!

Great friendships aren't limited to the exchange of wedding bands. Though rare and invaluable, the literal survival of a Godly man depends on his willingness to "give a kidney" and care deeply for at least one really good friend.

A **real** friend will give you insight that will save you from a disastrous business, family or moral decision. "But in abundance of counselors there is victory." (Proverbs 11:14)

A **real** friend will lovingly but unashamedly "risk a kidney" and point out a blind spot or chisel off a rough edge that's holding you back from being all God intends for you to be. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend." (Proverbs 27:6)

A **real** friend will hold you accountable to the high calling of Christ-likeness that you're embarking upon.

A **real** friend is willing to ask you tough questions and willing to wait until he gets a straight answer.

Real friends bring synergy. Real friends bring reality to the equation, $1 \times 1 = 3$.

Many years ago at the Chicago World's Fair, a contest ensued to see how much weight a single mule could pull. One mule won by pulling a wagon with a load of 8,000 pounds. To the crowd's surprise two mules pulling in tandem could pull a wagon with four times that amount; a whopping 32,000 pounds!

Want a friendship like that? Want to embark on an iron-sharpening journey that will bring out your best, keep you from falling and push you to success in your spiritual quest to follow Christ? First commit yourself to loyalty. Next, commit yourself to stay in it no matter what the cost. Then commit yourself to regular weekly meetings and be willing to ask each other tough questions:

1. Have you intentionally read or seen anything this week that is sexually inappropriate?
2. Have you engaged in any impure activity this week?
3. Have you honored your wife (if applicable) this week?
4. Have you engaged in any inappropriate conversations or emotional or physical relationships?
5. Have you been in the Word and prayer every day this week?

We're in the arena and the gridiron is brutal. The enemy is in an all-out assault for your life and your soul. The stakes are high. As my football coach used to say, "Lace 'em tight and strap on your gear. We're going into that stadium tonight to win. We will fight and fight and fight until defeat is not an option."

Mark these Key Words:

friends

Old Testament Viewpoint

Proverbs 17:17; Proverbs 29:1; Proverbs 15:32; Proverbs 12:15; Proverbs 11:14; Proverbs 27:17

Proverbs 17:17 A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

Proverbs 29:1 A man who hardens his neck after much reproof will suddenly be broken beyond remedy.

Proverbs 15:32 He who neglects discipline despises himself, but he who listens to reproof acquires understanding.

Proverbs 12:15 The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man is he who listens to counsel.

Proverbs 11:14 Where there is no guidance the people fall, but in abundance of counselors there is victory.

Proverbs 27:17 Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.

New Testament Viewpoint

Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:24-25; John 15:15; Philippians 2:25

Acts 2:42-47 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Hebrews 10:24-25 And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

John 15:15 No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.

Philippians 2:25 But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need.



OBSERVATION: What is God saying?

- 1) What qualities make a "true friendship" or a "Biblical friendship" distinct from a "worldly" or non-Christ honoring friendship?

- 2) God loves us just as we are, but He loves us too much to leave us like we are. How do "real friends" model that same kind of love with each other?

- 3) In what ways do your key friendships and alliances today differ from the Biblical model?

- 4) Paul gives Epaphroditus four distinctions as a real friend. What are they and what do you think each one means?
- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____
- 5) In what ways is it difficult for you to be held accountable? How big of a factor does pride play in your ability to be "sharpened" by a close friend?
- _____
- _____
- 6) Which of today's verses speaks to you the loudest and clearest? Why?
- _____
- _____



PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: *What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?*



APPLICATION: *How does this passage relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?*



LOCKER ROOM: *Scripture makes it clear that in Christ we are a new creation (II Corin. 5:17). Scripture is also clear that the "old man" (the old sinful nature) is still trying to "wage war" with the "new man." How is that "old man" fighting in you now and how can we help each other with that fight?*



MEMORY VERSE: *Proverbs 27:17*

As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.



My Prayers



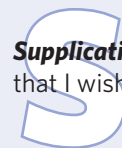
Adoration: Father, today I praise You for...



Confession: Father, please forgive me for...



Thanksgiving: Father, today I'm thankful for...



Supplication: Father, the people & things that I wish to pray for today are...

No Bad Days

Difficult days? Plenty – that’s inevitable. Challenging days? Countless – that’s a factor. Laborious days? Limitless – that’s a condition. Bad days? Banished – that’s a choice.

On March 15th, 1999, every parent’s worst fear came true for Mat and Cindy Lipscomb. After spending a fun “girl’s weekend” shopping in Chicago at the American Girl Doll Factory with her three young daughters, Rainey (11), Lacey (9), and Jesse (5), Cindy was just starting to drift off to sleep in a cozy Amtrak train sleeping car when her worst nightmare became a reality. She was awakened by a sudden jolt and the entire train started shaking uncontrollably. Remembering that she had let her oldest daughters, Rainey and Lacey, join their cousins for a sleepover party a few cars ahead, she jumped to her feet to find her precious girls. Even her wildest dreams couldn’t have prepared her for what she was going to see. Fire and smoke filled the air as the train’s cars had flipped in a terrible derauling accident.

Cindy’s husband, Mat, was awakened by his brother calling to inform him of this horrific accident. Not knowing any details other than the train that carried all the things in the world that Mat cared about most was in shambles, Mat jumped in a car and drove the four hours to get to his bride and his three young princesses. When he came upon the wreckage, grief and sorrow overcame him. His oldest daughters, Rainey and Lacey, had died instantly on impact.

I cannot imagine a greater tragedy or more heart wrenching loss. Mat and Cindy braced themselves for the difficult weeks ahead and the unanswerable questions that would loom in their minds. Instead of fighting God, they embraced God. Instead of pointing fingers at each other, they lifted their hands in submission. A mysterious peace prevailed in their hearts that began to eclipse the nightmare. Rainey and Lacey walk in peace with God today.

Cindy says today, “I do know there is no better place to be when tragedy strikes than in the center of the body of Christ.”

My dear friend and brother in Christ, Dr. Gary Oliver, is one of the finest Christian counselors in America. He has labored through five bouts of cancer of the mouth and tongue. The treatments have been lengthy and debilitating. Surviving each round miraculously, Gary continues to walk in his faithful, optimistic mind-set. Then in the midst of it all, the unthinkable occurred. His best hunting buddy, fishing buddy, and pal, his 20-year-old son was shot in a tragic hunting accident last spring. Two months later, his soul mate, lifetime lover, and wife Carrie died of breast cancer and a broken heart. A part of all of us who love Gary died that day. I drove to his home to sit by his side and listen. Tears of sadness flowed from his eyes like a heavy spring rain. He fought the monster of despair and depression

and stood in solidarity of faith and resolved to see the sun rise like a mighty army. "How do you do it, Gary? How do you remain optimistic and peaceful?" I asked. In amazement, His reply was steady and determined. "I turn my grief into praise. I just turn my grief into praise."

James says to "consider it all joy when various trials occur." (James 1:2) It's a great Bible lesson but tough to employ when inevitable tragedy strikes. For me, when leukemia and prostate cancer came out of nowhere like a rogue wind from a distant sea, I found peace like I've never known from 2 Corinthians 12: 9 & 10.

"And He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness' Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong."

My weakness, His strength. My weakness, His power. I am painfully aware of my weakness. Now, I'm learning daily about His untapped storehouses of strength.

As Gary, Mat, Cindy and I dive into the endless well of faith and the sufficiency of Christ, we find sufficient truth in God's sovereign hand as He "causes all things to work together for good, to those who love God and are called according to His purpose."

Bitter or better.

Pity or praise.

Revenge or resolve.

It's a choice. Joy is a decision. Happiness is always just one giant step of faith away.

Mark these Key Words:

God Trials

Old Testament Viewpoint

Psalms, 119:153-154; Psalms, 118:14; Job 19:7- 9, 17, 19, 23-26

Psalms, 119:153-154 Look upon my affliction and rescue me, for I do not forget Your law. Plead my cause and redeem me; revive me according to Your word.

Psalms, 118:14 The LORD is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation.

Job 19:7- 9, 17, 19, 23-26 Behold, I cry, "Violence!" but I get no answer; I shout for help, but there is no justice. He has walled up my way so that I cannot pass, and He has put darkness on my paths. He has stripped my honor from me and removed the crown from my head.

17 My breath is offensive to my wife, and I am loathsome to my own brothers.

19 All my associates abhor me, and those I love have turned against me.

23-26 Oh that my words were written! Oh that they were inscribed in a book! That with an iron stylus and lead they were engraved in the rock forever! As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God.

New Testament Viewpoint

James 1:2-4; Romans 5:2-5; Romans 8:28; Hebrews 5:8

James 1:2-4 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter, various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Romans 5:2-5 Through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Romans 8:28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

Hebrews 5:8 Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.



OBSERVATION: What is God saying?

- 1) How does Job's resolve to lift up God in the midst of his severe afflictions speak to you in your circumstances?

- 2) How do you see David responding to God in the Psalms that gives you insight in this season of your life?

- 3) How do trials progress to perseverance? Why is perseverance a personal attribute to be greatly desired?

4) How has God used trials and afflictions in your past days to bring out His character in your life?

5) How does Jesus' suffering encourage you in yours?

6) How does God's Word make all the difference when you are going through "the valley of the shadow of death?"



PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: *What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?*



APPLICATION: *How does this passage relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?*



LOCKER ROOM: *Legalism is a list of Do's and Don'ts. Grace is "Do's and How to's", i.e., because God loves us so much He gives us clear direction on how to succeed, and out of the love in our heart for Him we want to "get it right". How has this perspective helped you in your daily walk with Christ?*



MEMORY VERSE: *James 1:2-3*

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.



My Prayers

A

Adoration: Father, today I praise You for...

C

Confession: Father, please forgive me for...

T

Thanksgiving: Father, today I'm thankful for...

S

Supplication: Father, the people & things that I wish to pray for today are...

Majesty

Cairo, Egypt, a place where, even in recent years, Christians have been scoffed, mocked and even martyred, isn't perhaps the place you'd picture some of the sweetest, most intimate multinational worship ever offered up to the God of Isaac, Jacob and His Son Jesus Christ! But to my pleasure and surprise, it was one of the closest glimpses of heaven my eyes and ears have ever seen. For several days, I had the humble privilege of being able to train 450 leaders from a dozen Middle Eastern and African nations in "the shadow of the great pyramids" in a retreat and conference center just outside Cairo. From ages 17-65, these leaders from Jordan, Israel, Palestine, Qatar, Algeria and other Arab states gathered to praise, worship and strategically plan the pursuit of "the Great Commission" in their homelands. Many had become followers of Christ from dreams in their sleep where Jesus appeared to them. (I've actually heard many reports of this from various diversified sources throughout the Muslim world in recent years.)

The people's eyes were sparkling with the love of Christ. Their eyes were literally dancing with the joy of Christ's fresh love. Many of them, in the more hostile Muslim nations, risk their lives and the security of their families to outwardly proclaim the name of Jesus and evangelize in His name.

My favorite part of the conference in Egypt was the worship. The richness and majesty and awe that filled their hearts and filled the air was ... well, it was heavenly.

Funny thing about it was I couldn't understand a word they sang, but I comprehended every note. Their music was pristine. Nothing but reverent worship proceeded from their lips. My friends from South Africa, Haiti, Central and South America, India, Pakistan, Southeast Asia and other remote nations experience similar encounters. They sing because they love. They love because they live. They live because they sing.

Worship is as close to heaven as it gets this side of Jesus' return and the reunion of the saints. Worship is an encounter with God. It is a response to His love. Worship results in pressing yourself up to the divine mold of Christ. You have to walk away changed. If you don't walk away changed, you haven't encountered God.

My wife is absolutely "the best of the best" to me. She loves to dig in God's Word like the prospectors dug into the California mountains in the gold rush days of the 1840's. I love standing by her in church because she sings with all her heart. Guess what! She's tone deaf. She can't carry a note! Can't even get close! She got kicked out of sixth grade choir and was dispatched to the library! But it doesn't deter her for a second! Debbie Jo doesn't sing to impress men. She sings to God.

Worship doesn't wait for perfect pitch, a beautiful sanctuary or perfect people. All that is required is a sincere and humble heart, the welcoming of the work of Christ that leads you to the throne of grace and the Spirit of the living God. You can close your eyes and enter any second, any minute, any hour or any day.

Mark these Key Words:

God



Jesus

worship

Old Testament Viewpoint

Psalms, 145:1-7

Psalms, 145:1-7 I will extol You, my God, O King, and I will bless Your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless You, and I will praise Your name forever and ever. Great is the LORD, and highly to be praised, and His greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts. On the glorious splendor of Your majesty and on Your wonderful works, I will meditate. Men shall speak of the power of Your awesome acts, and I will tell of Your greatness. They shall eagerly utter the memory of Your abundant goodness and will shout joyfully of Your righteousness.

New Testament Viewpoint

Romans 12:1-2; Revelation 5:11-14

Romans 12:1-2 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Revelation 5:11-14 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing." And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever." And the four living creatures kept saying, "Amen" and the elders fell down and worshiped.



OBSERVATION: What is God saying?

- 1) Describe worship according to Psalm 145.

- 2) List all the terms that refer to God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit in these passages.

- 3) What attributes of God do you see in these passages that cause you to stand in reverence and awe?

4) In the Revelation passage, John sees God's future kingdom after it has been established in all its fullness.

Write in your own words what he sees in his vision.

5) Describe the depth and magnitude of worship in the glorified age to come.



PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: *What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?*



APPLICATION: *How does this passage relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?*



LOCKER ROOM: *What does it mean to be a godly person? How do you want to get there?*



MEMORY VERSE: *Romans 12:1-2*

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.



My Prayers

A

Adoration: Father, today I praise You for...

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Supplication: Father, the people & things that I wish to pray for today are...

Faith Works

My dad was a man's man. He taught hand-to-hand combat in WWII. He could work Superman into the ground. But the tenderness with which he honored my mom was his greatest sermon. At age 75, he kayaked the Grand Canyon for 261 miles and wrestled some of the most unforgiving white water on earth. But I never heard him say one negative word to my mom's face or when her back was turned. My dad's philosophy was simple, "Just work like it all depends on you and pray like it all depends on God, and between the two of you, you'll usually come out okay."

James would have liked my dad. In his New Testament letter, Jesus' half-brother said it this way, "Someone might well say, 'You have faith and I have works.' Show me your faith without works and I'll show you my faith by works. Faith without works is useless." "Men of faith" who sit piously in church pews listening to sermon after sermon (or even behind the pulpit preaching those sermons) who continue in bitterness, pornography, extramarital sex, financial dishonesty or passiveness to the cries of the less fortunate have become the greatest enemy of the Christian faith! The cults and world religions requiring discipline, fear and reprisals rooted in falsehood attract millions of naive followers worldwide. It is a great misfortune that misunderstood grace and "lip service" faith are turning men away from the Christian church in droves.

My dear 83 year old friend, Dr. Horace Wood, used to aptly remark, "God loves you just the way you are, but He loves you too much to leave you like that." No doubt, when we are saved by grace alone, God sees you through "cross-colored glasses." Equally certain is God's principle that, "To whom much is given, much is required." Grace is to a believer what 2x4's are to a framer and soil is to an excavator. Faith is the stuff in which we deeply root ourselves, grit our teeth, set our mind on things above, and pour our hearts out into the pursuit of holiness. Faith motivates us to dedicate our talents, time and treasures to care for the needs of the spiritually, economically and physically less fortunate. Faith is a catalyst for action.

The story goes of the poor blind lad, sitting on a stool at the busy train station selling pencils for a few coins to meet his daily needs. In the rush of the overcrowded corridor, a busy traveler carelessly runs into the lad, scattering pencils, the stool, and the boy sprawling across the concrete surface. Without missing a step the insensitive traveler rushes on haphazardly to catch his train.

Another gentleman sees the accident and lifts the kid to his feet. Embracing him and restoring him securely on his stool, the stranger devotes himself to picking up the pencils, scattered coins and places them neatly in their box. The man then reaches into his billfold and fills the money box to the brim.

The stunned lad reaches out to take the stranger's hand. "Mister, are you Jesus?"

"No," the man replies. "I'm just one of His followers."

The lad replies in astonishment, "I knew you had to be some kind of kin."

Mark these Key Words:

Lord



Wisdom

Old Testament Viewpoint

Proverbs 1:7, 29-31; Proverbs 2:6-7

Proverbs 1:7, 29-31 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

29 Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD. "They would not accept my counsel, they spurned all my reproof. So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way and be satiated with their own devices."

Proverbs 2:6-7 For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding. He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk in integrity.

New Testament Viewpoint

James 2:14-17; Romans 6:1-4,11; 1 John 2:3-6

James 2:14-17 What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.

Romans 6:1-4,11 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

1 John 2:3-6 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.



OBSERVATION: What is God saying?

1) Describe the synergy of faith and works; of faith and obedience.

2) What does James mean when he says, "Faith without works is dead."

3) Why is a grace-filled heart a heart committed to obedience?

4) When do works become legalism?

5) When does grace become an excuse to sin?

6) How does Satan deceive a believer to continue to practice sin using the excuse, "God will forgive me, so it's ok."

7) God's commandments are designed to protect us and provide for us. How does obedience bring peace and fulfillment to a believer?



PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: *What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?*



APPLICATION: *How does this passage relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?*



LOCKER ROOM: *How are you doing with your walk of grace and obedience?*



MEMORY VERSE: *Psalms, 119:9*

How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word.



My Prayers

A

Adoration: Father, today I praise You for...

C

Confession: Father, please forgive me for...

T

Thanksgiving: Father, today I'm thankful for...

S

Supplication: Father, the people & things that I wish to pray for today are...

Pursuit

As a tough and savvy undercover agent for the state of Texas, my brother Bill risked his life daily in undercover narcotics trafficking and organized crime. Of all the drugs he purchased and all the dope dealers he brought to justice, he said that cocaine was the most dangerous of all drugs and greatest to be feared.

"Heroin? Meth? LSD?" I asked him after watching a heroine-addicted snitch grope for the emaciated veins on her ankles and arms with a bloody needle. "Why cocaine?"

His reply was swift and certain, "Cocaine is instantly addictive. One hit and you're an addict. You'll steal, kill or betray for the next hit and you'll hit it and hit it and hit it until you're dead, broke or in prison."

Cocaine and pornography. Similar drug. Same release of the hormone dopamine on a fragile mind. The only difference is that cocaine eventually kills the user. Porn kills collaterally. It kills your marriage. It kills your children's belief in you. It kills your home. It kills your moral character. It kills the sanctity of your marital sex. It kills your dreams. No wonder Jesus said, "Gouge your eyes out if that's what it takes. Run for your life. Cut off your hand if you need to, but don't let it take you to Hell." (Paraphrase mine, but not far from the original Greek language in which it was written.)

Eleven simple reasons to absolutely, positively, without tolerance, run from sexual impurity like a crazy man is pursuing you with a 30-30 rifle:

1. The eye is a window to a humans soul.
2. Porn releases the hormone Epinephrine into the human mind. It's like a photographer's darkroom etching the picture on the paper of the user's mind for years, decades, or in some cases, forever.
3. Porn disenfranchises your wedding vows.
4. Porn causes a person to live in continual adultery.
5. Porn uses and abuses misguided women.
6. Porn degrades women.
7. Porn reduces women to objects to be used and discarded like trash in a dumpster.
8. Porn makes abuse look attractive.
9. Porn uses helpless children and rewards those who use them, kidnap them, rape them and kill them.
10. Porn comes straight from the heart of Satan. It will lure you, haunt you, use you and cook you.

Is freedom possible? Can a person walk away from the addiction? Absolutely. Many have and many never return. As my brother says about heroine addiction, "Only by the power of God."

There are seven steps to freedom from pornography for life.

1. See it for what it is – Satan’s bait to destroy you. Porn comes from the jaws of hell.
2. Get an accountability partner and meet with them weekly. Select someone who’ll ask you tough questions and isn’t afraid to call you on the carpet.
3. Memorize the Word and use it often. Psalms 101:3 and Psalms 51 are great places to start. Every time you are tempted, fill the moment with God’s Word.
4. Exercise the most powerful muscle in your body- **your will**. Say it and mean it, “Never again. I will not ever go there again.”
5. Hate it with the passion you’d use if your own daughter were getting used by a pornographer. Quit tolerating, rationalizing and justifying the decadent disease. Hate it! “Do I not hate those who hate You, O Lord? And do I not loathe those who rise up against You? I hate them with the utmost hatred; they have become my enemies.” (Psalms 139: 21 & 22).
6. Ask Christ daily for the filling of His Holy Spirit. To be filled is to be controlled and empowered. Yield it all to Him. “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.” (Ephesians 5:18).
7. Destroy any traces of it in your office and home. Put a filter on your computer like “Be Safe Online” and an accountability link like “Covenant Eyes” to someone who’ll hold you accountable to your commitment. (www.besafeonline.org, www.covenanteyes.com)

This honest and humble account from a student at the University of Alabama I encountered is as insightful as I’ve ever heard:

“Porn controlled me. I was numb. I had lost all my feelings. I hadn’t cried for five years. Every night I’d wait ‘till everyone was asleep and go to my bedroom for one more hit. Porn controlled me all day long. Everything in my day was built around my porn addiction. It destroyed all my morals. It totally devalued all women. I couldn’t have a friendship with a girl. It was all about sex. Porn ruins your life. There’s no normality. I even put a picture of myself on a web site to attract more girls for sex. I look back at that and am so ashamed. It was disgusting. Porn destroyed me as a man, it took away all my manhood. Even though I was in college, I became a child. I’d imagine it. I’d dream about it. I became an addicted liar.

Then came the night at the cross. It was a night of delivery. A night of complete transformation. There wasn’t enough paper in that huge room for me to write all my sins on. There weren’t enough nails to pound all my sins to that cross. But I finally saw the love of God. I saw God’s grace. I realized I was forgiven. I said, “Lord, heal me.” The Holy Spirit broke all my chains and like the snap of my fingers it was gone. I knew I was forgiven for all of it. That was two and a half years ago and I’ve never gone back. I’m dating an amazing girl now and I treat her like a queen. I’ve made a commitment to her that she’ll never be touched in a sexual way again until her wedding night. I have guys who hold me accountable to my commitments not to get in compromising places with her. I still get chills and cry when I think about that night at the cross. My life was totally transformed.”

Mark these Key Words:

Holy Spirit

Old Testament Viewpoint

Proverbs 2:16-18; II Samuel 11:2-4(a); Psalms, 101:3; Proverbs 12:7, 9-10

Proverbs 2:16-18 To deliver you from the strange woman, from the adulteress who flatters with her words; that leaves the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God; for her house sinks down to death and her tracks lead to the dead.

II Samuel 11:2-4(a) Now when evening came David arose from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king's house, and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful in appearance. So David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" David sent messengers and took her, and when she came to him, he lay with her.

Psalms, 101:3 I will set no worthless thing before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not fasten its grip on me.

Proverbs 12:7, 9-10 The wicked are overthrown and are no more, but the house of the righteous will stand.

9 Better is he who is lightly esteemed and has a servant than he who honors himself and lacks bread. A righteous man has regard for the life of his animal, but even the compassion of the wicked is cruel.

New Testament Viewpoint

1 Corinthians 6:18-20; Matthew 5:27-28; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4, 8; Matthew 5:8

1 Corinthians 6:18-20 Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

Matthew 5:27-28 "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY'; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

1 Thessalonians 4:3-4, 8 For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor.

8 So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.

Matthew 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

OBSERVATION: What is God saying?

1) Why does the issue of sexual purity carry such great rewards, great warnings and great consequences?

2) How can a person learn from David's experience with Bathsheba?

- a) His first mistake?

- b) His fall?

- c) His consequences?

- d) His restoration?

- 3) How does a person pursue and keep a pure heart? Why is the heart so pivotal to their success in their quest for sexual purity? _____

- 4) It has been said that a person's eyes are the window to their soul. Discuss the significance of how, where and what is placed before our eyes. _____

- 5) Give specific examples of practices you are learning with sexually-depraved media opportunities.

- 6) Why is accepting God's grace (Romans 8:1) and accepting God's call to explicit obedience (Romans 6:1) so important to our success in our walk in purity? _____



PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: *What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?*



APPLICATION: *How does this passage relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?*



LOCKER ROOM: *Will you commit to accountability with someone on a regular basis? Will you ask and answer these questions:*

- 1) *Have you had any improper sexual encounters this week?*
 - a) *With your heart?*
 - b) *With your eyes?*
 - c) *With your body?*



MEMORY VERSE: *Psalms, 101:3*

I will set no worthless thing before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not fasten its grip on me.



My Prayers

A

Adoration: Father, today I praise You for...

C

Confession: Father, please forgive me for...

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Thanksgiving: Father, today I'm thankful for...

S

Supplication: Father, the people & things that I wish to pray for today are...

Commission

At 6'4" tall and built like a gazelle, Greg Thomas has a golf swing that would make a cover shot for Golf Digest. PGA qualified and great with private lessons and course management, Greg is definitely a man with a bright future in golf. When I began playing Greg's "Top 100" golf club, his spiritually bankrupt life was pretty obvious. For two years, I prayed that I could lead him to Christ. Small talk in the clubhouse led to conversations about deeper things. Then one day, God opened the door. Greg asked me to do his wedding and I agreed on one condition; that he'd let me counsel with him and his fiancée before the ceremony. He agreed. Little did he know that his first wedding would be eternal and God had a plan to take him as His own. His prayer was humble and sincere. God moved into his yielded heart and everything began to change. Greg and I continue to meet regularly for one-on-one Bible study. He works on my golf game and together we grow with One who never shot a bogey in His life. Greg, too, will be leading men to Christ someday and I am confident that it will be Greg's turn to "love him to Jesus until that man is ready to love another man to Jesus."

Replication is a process Jesus started with eleven guys who practiced it until they died. Paul multiplied himself through Timothy as the Church of Antioch sent Paul out to "make disciples" and Barnabas encouraged the process. Paul multiplied himself through men like Timothy, his true child in the faith.

Everyone needs a Paul to look up to, a Timothy to pass off the baton of faith, an Antioch church home for oversight and accountability, and a Barnabas to exhort and encourage along the way.

Some of my greatest days have been in Marion High Security Prison where I've made many friends with murderers, gangsters and criminals of all makes and models. I've had the humbling honor of leading hundreds to the throne of grace. My expectations for my first trip to Marion were blown away by the peace and security on campus where the guards, the warden and the inmates walk as friends. For ten years now, their philosophy has been simple: "Love a man to Jesus until he's ready to love a man to Jesus." I suppose that 2,000 or more men, once thrown away and written off by society, have fallen in love with Jesus at Marion and eventually walk out of the gates never to return to crime again.

If God can transform a prison of angry murderers, imagine what he can do to a family, a neighborhood, a workplace, or even a dead church.

If two people would train two people a year and those four would train four and those eight would train eight, etc., etc., etc., in just 16 years, the entire population of the world would be trained disciples of Jesus.

Want to have an impact? Want to change the world? Want to make a difference

in your life? Want to live for significance? Want to spend eternity with some guys/gals you were used mightily to send there?

You could speak to 10,000 people about Jesus every year for 16 years and reach 160,000 people or you could thoroughly equip one person who could equip one person to train and equip two and in 16 years if no one drops the baton, you could span the globe.

Who's your Paul? Who's your Timothy? Where's your Antioch? Who's your Barnabas? This is precisely what Jesus' final words exhorted the disciples to accomplish, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20)

Mark these Key Words:

Daniel

Teach

Disciples

Holy Spirit

Old Testament Viewpoint

Daniel 1:2,8-9; Daniel 6:3,6,10,15,23,25-26

Daniel 1:2,8-9 The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the vessels of the house of God; and he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and he brought the vessels into the treasury of his god.

8 But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself. Now God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials.

Daniel 6:3,6,10,15,23,25-26 Then this Daniel began distinguishing himself among the commissioners and satraps because he possessed an extraordinary spirit, and the king planned to appoint him over the entire kingdom.

6 Then these commissioners and satraps came by agreement to the king and spoke to him as follows: "King Darius, live forever! "

10 Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house (now in his roof chamber he had windows open toward Jerusalem); and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously.

15 Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, "Recognize, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or statute which the king establishes may be changed."

23 Then the king was very pleased and gave orders for Daniel to be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den and no injury whatever was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

25-28 Then Darius the king wrote to all the peoples, nations and men of every language who were living in all the land: "May your peace abound! I make a decree that in all the dominion of my kingdom men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel; for He is the living God and enduring forever, and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed, and His dominion will be forever."

New Testament Viewpoint

II Timothy 2:2; Mathew 28:19; Acts 1:8

II Timothy 2:2 The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

Mathew 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.



OBSERVATION: What is God saying?

- 1) Mother Teresa and St. Augustine used to say, "Witness always, use words when necessary." How does your lifestyle need to lead in "making disciples" and multiplying the faith?

- 2) What does Daniel's testimony say to you about yours?

3) In what way has God changed and shaped your lifestyle to prepare you to be a more effective “disciple maker”?

4) Would you call “making disciples” a “choice”, a “responsibility”, a “calling” or a “task” and why?

5) How does the power of multiplication inspire you to disciple others? If one person invests in one person two times a year and equips those people to invest in and equip two other people to share their faith and make disciples and those people invest and equip two others..... How does this inspire you?



PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: *What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?*



APPLICATION: *How does this passage relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?*



LOCKER ROOM: *Who's your Timothy going to be in the upcoming year and how can you pray for them, begin to serve them and begin the discipleship process with them?*



MEMORY VERSE: *Acts 1:8*

You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”



My Prayers

A

Adoration: Father, today I praise You for...

C

Confession: Father, please forgive me for...

T

Thanksgiving: Father, today I'm thankful for...

S

Supplication: Father, the people & things that I wish to pray for today are...

Taking the Challenge with your next Timothy

The Victor's Crown

The Apostle Paul had seen a vision of the portals of eternity and proclaimed the imperishable prize for himself and all insightful believers. "Who is my hope, my joy, my crown of exultation? Is it not even you at the coming of our Lord Jesus? For you are our glory and joy." His "victor's crown" would be those he led to Christ and disciplined to be standing with him worshiping Jesus at His second coming. Those men and women and children in whom he had invested his life and God's Word, would be his imperishable crown of victory to celebrate for all of eternity.

And so it will be for you as you devote your life to "Timothy" after "Timothy" and those "Timothy's" go on to humbly receive their "victor's crown" with their "Timothy's".

The Discipleship Book

To receive your next two books for your next "Timothy" mail \$12 (this includes shipping and handling) to Project Timothy 1353 Lake Shore Dr, Branson, MO, 65616 for two printed copies.