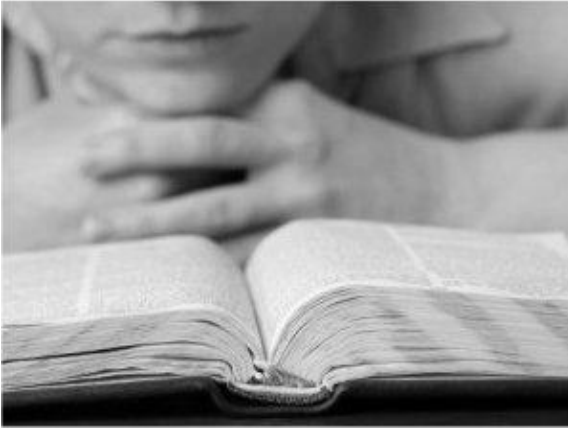


HIDE THE WORD

II



**“THY WORD HAVE I HID IN MY
HEART”**

Dave Matthews

HIDE THE WORD II

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DEDICATION



I dedicate this book to my dad, Rev Don Matthews. I grew up in his home, under his and mom's loving guidance for eighteen years. Dad pastored Bethel Memorial Church full time and also worked very hard as an industrial engineer at Ford Motor Company. I learned so much from his hard work, dedication and sacrifice for our family and devoted ministry to the Lord.

Like many dual-career pastors, Dad spent more hours than I could count doing both jobs well, teaching me an exemplary work ethic and a deep love for the Lord. It was probably his example that inspired me to do as many things in life as I could fit in, while hopefully never sacrificing the most important ones.

So much of my doctrinal understanding of the Word comes from his teaching and preaching for all those years I grew up listening to him and learning. I remember so many times hearing him cry out in prayer to the Lord to bless the ministry and lead us in the paths of righteousness.

I will forever be indebted to Dad's outstanding example of what it means to be a good father, a devoted and hard-working pastor and an honest and sincere man. I can only hope to come as close to his example as possible. Thanks Dad! Love you lots.

David

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome back for Part 2. If you are reading this, I assume you are anxiously anticipating the next 25 memory verses on our way to memorizing 100. As a reminder, we already discussed the seven reasons to memorize the Word, but those are certainly worth repeating:

Seven Reasons to Memorize the Word

To not sin

To receive guidance

To minister and reach others

To defend myself, especially against the devil

To use and practice in praise and worship

To comfort and give me peace

To draw nearer to my Lord

Remember also, the purpose of this (now these) book(s) is to motivate and encourage you to memorize the Word. Our goal is to memorize 100 Scriptures. Our secondary purpose is to provide a source of study and devotionals for the owner. The added value we mentioned was to provide a resource for some of the central doctrines of the faith, to dive deeper into understanding some fundamental as well as deeper truths of the Word.

A brief word on Scripture selection might be appropriate. We do not ever want to be accused of “cherry picking” our favorite verses to memorize or just memorizing the simplest ones. We purposely chose easier Scriptures to memorize early on to help you see that it isn’t as hard as we sometimes think it is. However, as we go into the next twenty five verses, you might find them a bit more challenging.

I hope it is apparent that I spend lots of time seeking the right Scripture to memorize next. I spend time in prayer and often feel the Lord directing me about which one to choose next. I also have memory verses that I have personally memorized over many years that have been used to guide me along the way of my walk with the Lord. Sometimes, that makes those Scriptures more challenging to memorize.

I will suggest some verses now in volume 2 that might be longer and more demanding for you to memorize. I do that mostly because they have become so important to me for many years. I have preached several of these truths because they are vital, timely and essential to our walk in the faith.

I'm not saying that all Scripture isn't vital, timely and essential. But you have to agree that "There is therefore no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." (Rom 8:1) might be far more important for us to memorize than "A horse is a vain hope for deliverance." (Ps 33:17)

In another direction, I hope you are finding the listing of our verses in different versions to be challenging and instructive. I have already admitted that I personally have memorized most verses in King James. That often makes it difficult to use them or quote them with different versions. But I also know that many of our readers express their preference to use versions other than King James. And sometimes, reading a Scripture in a different version can give us greater understanding about the verse's context...and that is a good thing.

I would never demand that you use one version over another. However, I would ask you to keep an open mind and maintain grace toward me if I suggest certain problems with some of the other versions. Don't be offended. Just pray about it (and pray for

me if you feel led) to see what the Holy Spirit might say to you about those opinions. Don't back down from the challenge of knowing the Word better and knowing how it got to us in our native tongue. I think you will be better off for it.

Having said those things, let's dive into the challenge once again. Keep our eyes on the goal. We want to memorize 100 Scriptures when we finish. But more importantly, we also want to "hide them in our heart" so they become a dear and important part of how we live our lives. Like a coach at half time, let me tell you, "YOU CAN DO THIS!" God bless you as you "press toward the mark" that the Lord has given us!

God bless,
Dave

CHAPTER TWENTY SIX

MAJESTY



PSALM 8:9 “OH LORD, OUR LORD, HOW MAJESTIC IS YOUR NAME IN ALL THE EARTH!” (NASB, RSV, NIV)

“O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!” (KJV, NKJV)

“O Jehovah, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!” (ASV)

Most Christians have heard a rendition of this Scripture in song famously sung by Sandi Patti. If you haven’t heard it or would like to hear it again, go to this website address:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch/?v=UlgeisMkJjw>

You won’t have to listen to this song very many times to solidly remember the verse, “Oh Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.” And, you probably like listening to Sandi Patti sing a lot more than you do me!

Of course, even if you have the words to the verse memorized now, you still need to remember where it is found: Psalm 8:9. If you have already gone through the first course of memorization in Book 1, you know how to do this by now. Take note how long it takes you to memorize the verse and reference. It will probably be quick. Well done!

Majesty is one of those terms we aren't real familiar with in America. We would never give any President the title of "your majesty." They are much more familiar with the concept of majesty in the oldest monarchy in the world, the United Kingdom. While Cheryl and I were stationed in England on two separate tours with the Air Force, we could see this demonstrated regularly.

Every British citizen can tell you all about their monarch. They might complain about the very high cost to support the royal family, but put any one of them in front of the queen and you would watch them turn into respectful, almost worshipful adoration of "her royal highness."

I don't mind the other translations saying "how excellent is your name," but it kind of loses the same meaning as the word majestic. Webster uses synonyms for majestic such as imposing, stately, grand, magnificent. Have you ever thought of Jesus in those terms? Those of us who witnessed the royal wedding of Charles and Dianna in 1981 remember those superlatives being used to describe the event. How imposing and stately that was!

Put a British citizen before Queen Elizabeth, and now King Charles, and you will see some serious bowing, honor being given, succumbing to how grand and magnificent one perceives their presence to be that it makes you wonder why. I honestly think that despite any misgivings, the average Brit loves the pomp and circumstance that comes with the recognition of royalty.

Where is that kind of love and respect for our Lord? Bowing before the Lord...even kneeling for prayer...is an often-forgotten act. Many times, I'd rather complain about how loud the volume of music is during praise and worship rather than praising and worshipping. How quickly we just choose to forget that we are in the presence of greater royalty than the world has ever known.

So, while you are learning this precious verse and committing it to memory, take some time in quiet meditation and prayer and recognize the true meaning of the words. Jesus, you are worthy of our praise! Your very name is worth us honoring, respecting and loving with all our hearts. O Lord....OUR LORD...how majestic is your name in all the earth. Other Scriptures tell us that all creation...even the heavens and the universe...worship and cry out praise to You. Here on this earth that you have blessed us with, why should we do any less?

Questions to ponder: What most effectively distracts you and draws you away from total worship of the Lord? Why do we find it so easy to take for granted the greatest, most awe-inspiring things in life while devoting so much time to worthless endeavors? How long has it been since you approached our awesome Lord on your knees? What is it about kneeling in prayer that is so hard...yet might also be so important? Is it so easy to imagine bowing before a man who has been appointed king of a nation and so hard to visualize the realness of bowing before our God? Try that out right now.

Other Scriptures to consider: Psalm 103 "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name!" Psalm 34 "I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth." "Praise the Lord and sing praises to him all you

peoples.” Rom 15:11 “They shouted, ‘Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest.’ Jesus said, ‘I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out.’” Luke 19:38-40

Consider: <https://www.youtube.com/watch/?v=NpdRhdt-7xs>
Majesty, Worship His Majesty



(Author’s note: At the end of every chapter, I include an image of both sides of a 3x5 card. One side has the Scripture reference and the other has the verse. I used 3x5’s to memorize important memory items while I was in the Air Force flying fighters and training aircraft as well as at UPS flying big heavies. These were often called “Bold Face” steps in checklists which were required to be memorized so we could perform them immediately, and without reference to a written checklist. I have found them very useful in memorizing Scriptures as well.

If you haven’t yet checked it out, the online version of this book also includes what I call a “Sword Drill.” This is essentially the same as the 3x5 cards, but drilled for the viewer electronically. Check it out at: www.daveweb1a.com/hide/drill.html)

CHAPTER TWENTY SEVEN

PRIDE



1 CORINTHIANS 10:12 “WHEREFORE LET HIM THAT THINKETH HE STANDETH TAKE HEED LEST HE FALL.” (KJV, NKJV, ASV)

“Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall.” (NASB)

“So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!” (NIV)

“So be careful. If you are thinking, ‘Oh, I would never behave like that’-let this be a warning to you. For you too may fall into sin.” (TLB)

The seven deadly sins, also known as the capital vices or cardinal sins, function as a grouping and classification of major vices within the teachings in Christianity and Islam. According to the standard list, the seven deadly sins in Christianity are pride, greed, wrath, envy, lust, gluttony and sloth.

I don’t think we will memorize Scriptures warning against all seven of the “deadly sins.” But I do find it interesting that PRIDE is listed first. I wonder why that is?

A good definition might be: **“Pride is an excessive view of one's self without regard for others.”**

Jeremiah 9:23-24 tells us, “...Let not the mighty man boast of his might...but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me...” Pride is also mentioned most famously in Proverbs 16:18, “Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.”

I am proud to say that I am completely unqualified to teach this lesson. Of course, that is sarcasm...I have learned of this deadly sin in my life from years of experience. I have embarrassingly learned after a fall that pride is alive and well in me way too often. Honestly though, pride is a quality that our culture tends to teach us quite well.

Raising my boys, how many times did I try to teach them to dress nicely, be polite and smell good by admonishing them to “have some pride, boys!” In how many athletic competitions do we promote pride in our team, our skills and our superiority so we can defeat our opponent? Even cancel culture gets in on the act by letting us know that we all need to be proud of who we are and what we can do by awarding everyone for “participating.”

I have to admit that it was pride that drove me to always want to be the best, to win every competition. When I went to the Air Force Academy, I found I was surrounded by 4,000 other “strivers” who were constantly being motivated to perform, be the best and win at everything they did so they could beat the competition. Oh, and I think I already confessed that the environment of being the best fighter pilot in the world was what we expected of all our professional aviators.

I think Ricky Bobby probably said it best: “If you aren’t first, your last.” There’s the winner and then there is everyone else. I’m really good if I am better than you. Oh my!

Two thousand years ago, Jesus came to earth to change that way of thinking. He said, “humble yourself in the sight of the Lord and He will lift you up.” (James 4:10) John the Baptist said, “He must increase but I must decrease.” (John 3:30, future memory verse). Mary said, “My soul doth magnify the Lord” (and not me!) (Luke 1:46)

Not too long ago I thought about writing a book: “Humility and How I Achieved It.” Of course, the minute you start bragging about how humble you are...well, you get the oxymoron. Humility is something you almost think cannot be achieved. However, although there are numerous examples of God needing to humble men after their pride had gone too far, I defy you to find me a Scriptural reference where the Bible does not lay the burden of humbling ourselves directly on us.

We cannot pray, “Lord, give me humility,” or “Lord, take away my proud spirit.” Instead, that task is put directly on our shoulders. “Humble Yourself!” “Do not be proud.” “Put to death whatever belongs to your earthly nature.” (Colossians 3:5) This being Christ-like is not easy, it’s not for sissies!

Well, I have been a Christian now for over sixty years and I have to admit, I am not there yet. Please, if you have arrived at this type of humility, step forward and teach the rest of us. I am humble enough to know I am not humble enough. But I’m still memorizing Scriptures like 1 Cor 10:12 and trying to apply the concept to my life so I know I should be. Please join me and come along with us on the lifetime struggle to become more like Jesus in this way.

Questions to Ponder: Why does the Bible encourage us to live our lives in such ways that seem almost impossible for us to achieve? Jesus was the greatest example of humility and total lack

of self-pride in history. Is it really reasonable for us to think we can achieve humility like He did? Lee Greenwood sang, “I’m proud to be an American.” Should we have a song like, “I’m proud to be a Christian?” We believe Paul when he told us we need to “crucify the flesh.” How do we do that with Pride? How does one crucify pride?

Other Scriptures to Consider: Romans 12:16, “Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.”

1 Corinthians 13:4, “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.” Galatians 6:3-5, “If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load.” and James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

**1 CORINTHIANS
10:12**

**WHEREFORE LET HIM THAT
THINKETH HE STANDETH
TAKE HEED
LEST HE FALL.**

CHAPTER TWENTY EIGHT

NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE



LUKE 1:37 “FOR WITH GOD NOTHING SHALL BE IMPOSSIBLE.” (KJV)

“For with God nothing will be impossible.” (NKJV, RSV)

“For nothing is impossible with God.” (NIV)

“For nothing will be impossible with God.” (NASB)

“For no word from God shall be void of power.” (ASV)

“For every promise from God shall surely come true.” (TLB)

I apologize if this makes anyone unhappy, but I couldn't resist. I don't imagine anyone is unfamiliar with the photos above. Face it, we all know about “Mission Impossible.”

In case you aren't familiar, our buddy Ethan Hunt, famously portrayed by the actor Tom Cruise, is always assigned “impossible” tasks which, surprisingly, he never refuses. (The recording does say, “should you choose to accept it.”) This is always followed by seemingly impossible feats he accomplishes that amaze and astound us.

I often wonder, why does he always choose to accept such missions? The “super hero” he portrays seems to always accomplish the impossible, doesn't he? This has become even

more incredible as the actor is now 62 and rapidly approaching (just like me) his 70s. Yet, movie after movie, we watch Tom do the seemingly impossible! I can hear the theme song pounding in my head right now!

I have to admit, it is great entertainment, especially in his last fighter pilot movie, since he is doing the stuff I did many years ago myself. But I reckon it would be just as impossible for me to manage some of those maneuvers now at 70 as it seems impossible for his character to accomplish in the movie. “Remember Dave, it’s just a movie.”

So, how can I relate that to the impossible things it seems like the Lord assigns us as we travel through this life? The preceding verses in this passage involve a young virgin named Mary to whom an angel had just declared that the Holy Spirit would come upon her and cause her to bear the long awaited Messiah, whom she would call Jesus.

Just like we all would, Mary asks, “how can this impossible thing be?” She had never been married nor known a man. History had never witnessed an immaculate conception. If she had been Moses, she might have said “get someone else.” If she had been Esther, she would have required an uncle who told her, “you have been born for such a time as this.” The angel said, “with God, nothing will be impossible.” And Mary, full of faith, responded with “behold, I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be just as you have said.” Just WOW!

The Lord tells us all the time, “just tell your neighbor about me.” We respond with, “Lord, that is hard!” Or He tells us, “I’m taking you through some really hard trials right now. But you can trust me to get you through it!” And we respond with, “Lord, this is really hard. Please take it away from me!”

Here's one. Maybe the Lord has actually told you that He *does* want you to memorize a hundred Scripture verses of His Word. I'm sure a lot of us have said, "Lord, that is impossible!" Do we really need an angel to tell us, "with God nothing is impossible" for us to decide that we believe God can really do impossible things through us?

An old chorus says, "Nothing is impossible when you put your trust in God. Nothing is impossible when you're trusting in His Word." Come on "man of God," let God do the impossible through you. Come on "daughter of faith," tell Jesus "whatever you ask of me, whatever you want me to do, no matter how seemingly impossible it might be, I know you can do it!"

I know I can't move a mountain. But I have absolutely no doubt God can! The disciples asked Jesus why they couldn't cast out a particular demon. He told them their unbelief prevented the impossible. He told them that with even the smallest faith that they could say to a mountain, "move from here to there" and it would move! (Matthew 17:20) Then He told them, "nothing will be impossible for you." What is your impossible mountain? What is your Mission Impossible that the Lord would choose, just for you?

Questions to ponder: Does it help to verbalize the impossible that God gives us? Is it possible that the real reason we don't think the Lord can do the impossible is because we have a small view of His power and ability to do what we cannot? How easy is it to give up when we don't immediately get the answer to our prayers that we expect to get? What did Jesus mean when He said in the following verse, "this kind doesn't happen without prayer and fasting?"

Other Scriptures to consider: Matthew 19:26, Mark 10:27, Luke 18:27 "...with God all things are possible." Hebrews 11:6 "without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." (Following verses) Noah built an ark, Abraham waited for a city founded by God, Moses delivered the Israelites, the walls of Jericho fell, verse 33: they subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched violent fire, escaped the sword, became valiant in battle, turned enemies to flight. So, what really is too big, too impossible for God to do? Genesis 18:14 "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Jeremiah 32:27 "I am the Lord, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?"

A Song to Remember: Listen to this chorus a few times and see if it helps you remember this verse.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=riLy6pSeobo>

**Luke
1:37**

**FOR WITH GOD
NOTHING SHALL BE
IMPOSSIBLE.**

CHAPTER TWENTY NINE

NO CONDEMNATION



ROMANS 8:1 “THERE IS THEREFORE NOW NO CONDEMNATION TO THEM WHICH ARE IN CHRIST JESUS, WHO WALK NOT AFTER THE FLESH, BUT AFTER THE SPIRIT.” (KJV)

“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.” (NKJV)

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (NIV, NASB, ASV, ESV)

“So there is now no condemnation awaiting those who belong to Christ Jesus.” (TLB)

If you have gotten this far in our mission to memorize 100 verses, you have already seen that I list each verse in several translations. I have kind of decided that the argument over which translation should be considered accurate is probably not worth

fighting. That argument isn't for this book, but if you want to discuss it, I would be pleased to spend time telling you why I prefer the translation I do.

I do think comparing the different translations of the Bible is a worthy exercise. The study will reveal that some of the translations delete texts that are in others. You handle that fact any way you want. However, when that happens, I would strongly encourage you to look at different versions in your study of the Word to make sure you understand what the verse is trying to say. Romans 8:1 is a good example of that.

In the versions that delete the last part of Romans 8:1, if you read further you will discover that Paul's text discusses the issue in later verses that some translations have deleted in the first verse. That is why, beyond memorizing the verse that I recommend to you, we really need to read the verses around it to make sure we understand the context and meaning of what we are memorizing. (Can I get an "Amen"?)

No matter which version you choose to memorize here, I think we can all agree with Paul that walking after the flesh is BAD and walking after the Spirit is GOOD. Verse 13 tells us that if we live after the flesh, we shall die, but if we through the Spirit kill the deeds of the body, we shall live.

It is pretty clear then, that if we live after the flesh, we are condemned. That's kind of why I like to quote the version that says all of that. Again, the other versions say that...just several verses later.

I guess I fear the danger here is that it is easy to preach that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus...as if after we come into Christ Jesus we can live any way we want to live. No doubt, after we are born again we will still experience

battles with our fallen nature that Jesus has rescued us from. I do not believe we have to be born again over and over again.

We will fail in our attempt to live perfect, Christ-like lives for the rest of our lives. That does not mean we have to sin every time we are tempted though. Paul tells us that Jesus won't allow us to be tempted above what we are able to resist. Look at 1 Corinthians 10:13. Not only are we promised that our temptations are limited, but Jesus promises in every temptation that He will give us a way to escape. I am convinced that a lot of times we ignore the escape.

The most important lesson in this verse...and in the entire chapter...is our ability to walk in the Spirit. Paul talks a lot about this in several of his epistles. Check out Galatians 5:25. "Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." Later in verse 25, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." If we have given our hearts to Jesus, we are living in the Spirit. It takes a daily effort, prayer, resisting temptation, saying no and looking for that escape for us to make that living into an active walking in the Spirit.

Yes, many of us have to deal with the spirit of condemnation. That can be something we carry over from our former life before conversion. Some of us have a lot to feel condemned about in our past. But Jesus promises us that once we give our lives to Him, "old things are passed away and all things become new." We now live in the Spirit and have everything we need to also walk in the Spirit. That kind of life effectively deals with any feelings of condemnation and sets us free from sin and guilt.

Don't ever give in to carrying the guilt and condemnation of your past with you into your "newness of life." On the other hand, if after we have been saved, we sin again (notice that word "if") and we feel a sense of condemnation, that condemnation is there for a reason. That is the Holy Spirit telling you that such

unholiness does not belong with His holiness. Get it right. Confess it! 1 John 1:9 says that if “we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Give Jesus your all. You are in Christ Jesus. Walk not after the flesh...you know what that means to you. Walk in the Spirit. Read the Word daily, pray without ceasing, hide God’s Word in your heart. Those are the secrets to living a victorious life with absolutely no condemnation. It is not only a possible lifestyle, it is the lifestyle Jesus wants us all to live!

Questions to Ponder: I did not go into detail about all the actions in our lives that can be considered “walking after the flesh.” And, although I am not recommending a confession session at this time, what are some of those actions? See Galatians 5:19-21 for help. See the rest of the chapter to decide what walking after the Spirit looks like. The beginning of Galatians 5 talks about the liberty with which Christ has made us free. Where is the line between that liberty and walking in the flesh? Is there a line? Discuss the doctrine of holiness. Is holiness in our lives possible?

Other Scriptures to Consider: Galatians 5. 1 Corinthians 10:1-13. Ephesians 5:8-21 for a sharp contrast between walking in the flesh and walking in the Spirit. What is the difference between walking in the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit? See 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22.

ROMANS 8:1

THERE IS THEREFORE NOW
NO CONDEMNATION
TO THEM WHICH ARE IN CHRIST JESUS,
WHO WALK NOT AFTER THE FLESH,
BUT AFTER THE SPIRIT.

CHAPTER THIRTY

SAVED BY GRACE



EPHESIANS 2:8-9 “FOR BY GRACE ARE YE SAVED THROUGH FAITH: AND THAT NOT OF YOURSELVES: IT IS A GIFT OF GOD, NOT OF WORKS, LEST ANY MAN SHOULD BOAST.” (KJV, NKJV)

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-not by works, so that no one can boast.” (NIV)

“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not a result of works, so that no one may boast (glory).” (NASB, ASV)

“Because of his kindness, you have been saved through trusting Christ. And even trusting is not of yourselves; it too is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good we have done, so none of us can take any credit for it.” (TLB)

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God; not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” (ESV)

“Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see...” Saved is a uniquely Christian word used in this context. If you ask most unsaved people if they want to be saved, they might be confused because they don’t even know they are lost.

Many times, it takes a seemingly catastrophic event in a person’s life before they know they are “going down.” There are lots of shows now that feature the theme of being lost. Usually, some sort of catastrophe has occurred which has led them to see there is no hope, on their own, to be saved.

When I was in the Boy Scouts, one of the required merit badges to make Eagle was the Life Saving merit badge. The first lesson taught in lifesaving is to “reach, throw, row or go.” Notice that all of the action in saving a person comes from the person attempting the rescue...none from the drowning individual. As a matter of fact, “GO” was always the last resort, primarily because there was a huge risk that the drowning person might drag you down and drown you as well in their desperation. The goal was still to save the drowning/lost person at any cost.

That is a great picture of grace. Jesus saw us drowning in our sin from the beginning of time. Even before we cried out for help, Jesus did everything necessary to save us. Romans 5:8 tells us that “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” It is like He is standing in just the right place, waiting for us to cry out for help, to throw us the life line and reach down and pull us to safety.

Notice that Paul emphasizes that our salvation comes by grace, “the free gift of God,” already paid for and given to save us. He has done it all. Our part—FAITH. Remember, Hebrews 11:6 tells us, “without faith, it is impossible to please God.” Even though Jesus paid the ultimate price for us to be saved, He will never knock us down and force us to receive it. On the contrary,

the picture we have of Him is One “standing at the door” of our heart, knocking, pleading us to receive His gift of Salvation. (Rev 3:20)

This grace is “the gift of God.” It is not of our own works...otherwise, we might think we have reason to boast. Hmph. Our works do nothing to save us. Honestly, in the sense of thinking we can work enough to earn what Jesus did is laughable. But it is amazing to see how many still believe that if they live a good enough life and do enough good works, that will earn them heaven.

Every person needs to recognize their own need for someone to save them, recognize that Jesus gave His life so that could happen and then receive that gift by faith to be saved. That’s why they define grace as “unmerited favor.” It is something given to us that we could never earn or deserve. That’s pretty amazing! Jesus paid for my sins. All I have to do is receive that gift of grace by faith in Him to be saved. It is that simple.

You either need to do that today if you have not or you need to tell someone about how Jesus did that for you. The next verse, verse 10, tells us that we are created to do good works...works that were already prepared for us in advance. But notice, the works comes after the grace. Oh, sinner, come to Jesus and be saved today! Oh Christian, don’t forget that wonderful fact that we were and are, saved by Grace.

Questions to Ponder: Within the church the term “saved by grace” is very well known. Are there groups or denominations in the Christian church that still emphasize salvation by works? Do we sometimes stress...whether in ourselves or others...the importance of measuring up to standards that we might impose, actually stressing a works salvation? We need to not diminish the

importance of works. James tells us faith without works is dead. We were called to works “prepared for us in advance.” What are those works? Is memorizing 100 verses of the Bible a work?

Other Scriptures to Consider: Ephesians 2:10. We are created to do good works. Hebrews 11:1...the substance of things hoped for, evidence of things not seen. Hebrews 11:6. Romans 3:23-24, “...justified freely by his grace” Romans 11:5-6. 2 Corinthians 8:9. 2 Corinthians 9:8.

Ephesians 2:8-9

FOR BY GRACE ARE YE SAVED
THROUGH FAITH:
AND THAT NOT OF YOURSELVES:
IT IS A GIFT OF GOD, NOT OF WORKS,
LEST ANY MAN SHOULD BOAST.

CHAPTER THIRTY ONE

WORKS



EPHESIANS 2:9 “NOT OF WORKS, LEST ANY MAN SHOULD BOAST.” (KJV, NKJV)

“Not by works, so that no one can boast.” (NIV)

“Not a result of works, so that no one may boast (glory).” (NASB, ASV, ESV)

“Salvation is not a reward for the good we have done, so none of us can take any credit for it.” (TLB)

We have to follow up a chapter on Grace with one on Works. We memorized Ephesians 2:9 with Ephesians 2:8 in the previous chapter because they must go together. Now, we’ll give you credit toward our 100 verses memorized by counting verse 9 as well.

I read this recently: “A hard worker is someone who is consistently and regularly engaged in earnest and energetic work. Hard workers are known for being reliable, consistent, and able to be trusted with a variety of tasks. They are also willing to make sacrifices to reach their goals, and often have a strong work ethic.”

Americans value hard workers, primarily because we value success and believe it usually comes only from hard work. I don't disagree with that thought. However, I want my thinking aligned with what Scripture is saying, not what our culture thinks. And Scripture tells us that our salvation comes by faith and not by works.

We have to be careful that we don't start believing more what the Scripture is NOT saying than what it is. Here are three things I think Paul was not saying about works that we need to be careful also not to think.

First, this Scripture does not tell us to NOT WORK. As a matter of fact, the opposite is true. Proverbs 14:23 says, "In all labor there is profit." Ephesians 4:28 tells us that we should "labor, working with our hands the thing which is good that we may have to give to him that needeth."

Second, the Bible does not tell us to not work hard. Ecclesiastes 9:10 tells us "Whatsoever thy hand finds to do, do it with thy might..." The Bible commends us to work with all our might. We should do all our work as if it is unto the Lord. I'm not sure what was going on with the Thessalonians, but in 2 Thess 3:10 Paul said, "if anyone will not work, neither shall he eat." Work is encouraged as the profitable thing for all Christians to do.

Third, we must really be careful not to think that the Bible is telling us that working hard enough will always bring success. Our culture tells us that this is true. Many other cultures around the world demand the same thing. The Bible speaks in many places about the profit of hard work and how it produces good results. But it warns strongly against making our work the end rather than the means.

No, the Word tells us we need to be "laborers in the field" (Matt 9:37), we need to "do good" (Ps 37:3, Luke 6:35, Hebrews

13:6), we need to work hard to bring in the harvest of souls into the kingdom (Matt 9:37). And don't forget, James tells us that faith without works is dead!

What Ephesians 2:9 is reminding us is that our salvation is not of those works. It is so easy when we are working hard, especially in kingdom work, to start thinking that we have something to boast of. Yes, we should work hard in the work the Lord has given each of us to do. And yes, we will receive just rewards for our hard work. But we really need to be careful when we start thinking that because we have worked so hard for Jesus, we deserve special grace from Him, that we might even be gaining a greater salvation because of our works.

Ask any unsaved person what he thinks he needs to do to get into heaven and, if he even believes there is a heaven, he will tell you that he thinks that if his good works are more than his bad, he will probably make it in. Read Galatians 2:16. "...for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." Titus 3:5 reminds us that our salvation comes, "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us."

Yes Christian, work hard. Yes brother, give it all you have. There are those who might never hear the Word if you don't do the work to bring it to them. But let us never forget that Jesus' mercy and grace are gifts given to us, not because we ever deserved them or could ever work hard enough to achieve them.

No, Jesus did the work of our salvation. It is the only work acceptable to the Father. We have nothing to boast of but the completed work of Jesus on the cross. None of that is of our works, lest you think you have grounds to ever boast. It is the pure, loving gift of God. Don't you ever forget that.

Questions to ponder: Have you ever considered the delicate balance between the importance the Word places on works in our lives with the fact that Jesus provides our salvation completely apart from those works? Should there be any such thing as a lazy Christian? Define what works are. Should there be a difference between the works we do to support ourselves and our family and the works of righteousness? Does the latter category include such things as prayer, daily Bible reading, memorizing Scripture, feeding the poor, visiting widows, preaching, and teaching?

Other Scriptures to Consider: Proverbs 14:23. Ephesians 4:28 “labor, working with our hands the thing which is good that we may have to give to him that needs.” Ecclesiastes 9:10 “Whatsoever thy hand finds to do, do it with thy might...” James 2:14-25. Titus 3:1-8 “Works of righteousness.”

**Ephesians
2:9**

**NOT OF WORKS,
LEST ANY MAN
SHOULD BOAST.**

CHAPTER THIRTY TWO

LIVING SACRIFICE



ROMANS 12:1-2 “I BESEECH YOU THEREFORE, BRETHREN, BY THE MERCIES OF GOD, THAT YOU PRESENT YOUR BODIES A LIVING SACRIFICE, HOLY, ACCEPTABLE UNTO GOD, WHICH IS YOUR REASONABLE SERVICE. AND BE NOT CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD; BUT BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND, THAT YOU MAY PROVE WHAT IS THAT GOOD, AND ACCEPTABLE, AND PERFECT WILL OF GOD.” (KJV, NKJV)

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” (NIV)

“I urge you therefore, 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, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” (NASB, ASV, ESV)

“And so dear brothers, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living sacrifice, holy-the kind he can accept. When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask? Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but be a new and different person with a fresh newness in all you do and think. Then you will learn from your own experience how his ways will really satisfy you.” (TLB)

It worked so well in the last chapter. Let’s try it again now. For the next two weeks, let’s try to memorize Romans 12, 1 and 2. We will count this as two verses memorized over two weeks.

You may also recognize that we aren’t in the land of easy-to-memorize, short Bible verses for this session. This is one of the first Scriptures I memorized because it meant so much to me. But, it took me a lot of times repeating the words, building the phrases up in my memory and going over it time after time for me to be able to memorize it. But I found that when I had these two verses firmly hidden in my heart, I was glad I did. I have returned to this passage many times to remind me of how the Lord wants me to live. You will too!

I can’t consider the term “living sacrifice” without being reminded of the story of Abraham and Isaac. You know it well. God commanded Abraham to give his promised son to Him as a sacrifice. As they climbed the mountain, Abraham was taking his dearest, living offering to an altar to be sacrificed to God. Every lamb, goat and dove that was sacrificed before this and for centuries after this was living until it was killed so it could be offered to God.

When Isaac asked his father where the sacrifice was that they were to offer God, Abraham responded that “God would provide Himself a sacrifice.” (See Genesis 22:8) Through millions of sacrificial offerings that Israel would offer in the centuries to follow, God did provide living sacrifices that would be acceptable to Him as the remission of the sins of His people. They were always living until they were killed and burned on the altar so they could be offered to God.

I am sure that the words Abraham used were prophetically referring to Jesus as our living sacrifice, offered thousands of years in the future for the sins of all mankind. But I also know that in the flesh, Abraham was absolutely sure that God would present some alternative to him as an acceptable sacrifice, far better than his son ever would be.

The test, of course, was one of absolute obedience by Abraham to the command of God. He passed the test. Only when God was assured that Abram would hold nothing back from Him...even his son...did God provide the ram, caught in the thicket, to take Isaac’s place.

God provided a living animal that day to take Isaac’s place. The ram was killed, put on an altar and then burned as the sacrifice to God. In the future, God would provide an acceptable sacrifice that substituted itself for Isaac and all mankind, so that we would not have to pay the price for our own sins.

Jesus was that perfect sacrifice. There was no substitute for Him. In fact, God Himself, became flesh and blood for just that purpose...so that He could provide Himself as the only, perfect, pure sacrifice that would be acceptable to Him as a substitute for the sins of all men. Jesus, who was perfect in every way, accepted the shame and torment men gave Him, so He could be the perfect sacrifice for us!

Now, Paul is telling us, we need to do the same. We do not have to sacrifice ourselves on an altar for our salvation...Jesus did that for us. No, what Paul is referring to is our own identification with Jesus which covers every Christian for whom that blood was shed.

Now, we are LIVING, hopefully unconditionally obeying the Lord as we walk with Him and for Him. But, just as we all discover, that old sinful nature wants to hang on tenaciously and drag us away from our new-found desire to live without sin for Him.

Jesus wants us to be HOLY and ACCEPTABLE to Him. But every time we turn back to our old, sinful ways, they do their best to draw us away from our Savior. Paul talks about that a lot back in Romans 7. He calls himself a “wretched man.” He acknowledges that he...and every one of us...enter into a daily battle where we choose to follow the precepts of this new life or return to our wicked ways.

Paul says those things he knows he should do, he cannot. He also acknowledges that those things he should not do, those are the things he does. He tells us in Romans 8:1 that we do not have that old condemnation on us if we are in Jesus Christ and we walk in the Spirit.

Now, in Chapter 12, Paul gives us the secret to overcoming that old sinful nature that “so easily besets us.” The answer is a sacrifice. Not another sacrifice for the remission of our sins. Jesus already paid that. We receive that if we come to Him for our salvation. It isn’t baptism. That is an identification that we express with Jesus, who also died and arose to “newness of life.”

No, Paul acknowledges here...as we all must eventually acknowledge...that if we are to please the Lord, we have to present a living sacrifice. Admit it. The truth is that almost every

sin demonstrates itself in an act of the flesh. Yes, our minds should shame us when we even think about chasing after one of the lusts of the flesh. But when the ultimate result of those thoughts and desires turns itself into action, it is our flesh, our bodies that let us down. It says in another Scripture that in the flesh there is no good thing. Oh, how we prove that so many times after our new birth. That ought not to be. But there is a solution.

Paul says “present your bodies as a sacrifice”....a LIVING sacrifice! Literally, give up that sinful desire to look at another man’s wife! Give up that urge to make your body defiled by something unholy. Give up that temptation to lie to make yourself look better in the eyes of others. Give up those things by killing them....DAILY!

The sacrifice is symbolic in our actions...we are not required to burn ourselves on an altar to cover our sins. No, this sacrifice is not one that comes from the death of the offering. He beseeches us to bring our bodies to the altar and reckon them as LIVING SACRIFICES. We do not just agree with the Lord that what He calls wicked in us needs to be done away with. It isn’t even good enough to say, “I will never let that sin reign in my life again.” No, we need to take action.

When confronted with our desires toward our sinful nature that try to drag us away from the cross, the only thing that works is presenting our own sinful bodies as a living sacrifice. In crude language, “You gotta kill that thing!”

Jesus knows our every weakness. He knows those things which we think or do that are unholy and unacceptable to Him. The right thing to do when we are tempted to lust is to “kill that thing!” Come to Him daily...maybe at the beginning of every day...and present the body that now belongs to Him as a living

sacrifice that you will no longer allow to be ruled by the sinful nature He rescued you from in the first place.

Oh, and by the way, that is your “reasonable service.” It is what He expects us to do. Kill lustful thoughts by being a living sacrifice. In the Old Testament, living sacrifices were killed before they were presented on an altar to God. We need to kill those sinful acts BEFORE we commit them. And, the only way to do that is to present your body as a living sacrifice.

The body doesn’t die but our bent toward defiling it by the acts of the flesh have to. And that is our reasonable thing to do. Other translations coin that phrase as our “spiritual act of worship.”

How many times do we come to church and enjoy what we think is worship through songs of praise and worship, or giving, or agreeing with the exposed Word of God presented by the pastor while still holding onto those things we know are displeasing to the Lord? Here, Paul tells us that the reasonable, spiritual act of worship is to present our very bodies as living, holy sacrifices.

Overcoming the evil which so easily besets us is what Paul says is pleasing and acceptable to God. We can only do that by agreeing with God about our sins, confessing them and stopping that kind of behavior, and then actually doing what we agree to do to stop them, by presenting them as a holy, acceptable sacrifice to God.

We need to stop those despicable acts of our flesh which violate our bodies that are now devoted to the Lord. They must be defeated by the only thing that works: presenting our bodies as if they were a living sacrifice. Stopping sins of our flesh requires more tools, however. That is what Paul addresses in the next verse.

Questions to ponder: As we read through this lesson and work harder than we have before to memorize the words of Romans 12:1, are you struck by some sin in your life that is still there that applies to this lesson? In what tangible ways can you make the symbolic nature of “presenting your body as a living sacrifice” the true example of killing that part of the flesh the Lord calls us to? Why does sin still tend to show itself in our lives after we receive salvation? Will we ever achieve complete freedom from our sinful natures this side of the grave? Is it possible to NOT sin, especially in the areas that seem to “so easily beset us?”

Other Scriptures to Consider: Hebrews 12:1, laying aside “the sin which so easily besets us.” What does laying aside mean? Phil 3:3, “no confidence in the flesh.” Romans 8:8-13, if we are in the flesh we “cannot please God.” Also, “if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.” Galatians 2:20, “I am crucified with Christ.” 1 Peter 4:2, “we should no longer live the rest our time in the flesh, but to the will of God.”

ROMANS 12:1

I BESEECH YOU THEREFORE, BRETHREN,
BY THE MERCIES OF GOD,
THAT YE PRESENT YOUR BODIES A LIVING SACRIFICE,
HOLY, ACCEPTABLE UNTO GOD,
WHICH IS YOUR REASONABLE SERVICE.

CHAPTER THIRTY THREE

TRANSFORMED



ROMANS 12:2 “AND BE NOT CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD; BUT BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND, THAT YOU MAY PROVE WHAT IS THAT GOOD, AND ACCEPTABLE, AND PERFECT WILL OF GOD.” (KJV, NKJV)

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is-his good, pleasing and perfect will.” (NIV)

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” (NASB, ASV, ESV)

“Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but be a new and different person with a fresh newness in all you do and think. Then you will learn from your own experience how his ways will really satisfy you.” (TLB)

Americans love a good transformation story! You can't say the word "transformers" without everyone below the age of forty knowing that you are talking about a bunch of alien robots that transform themselves at will from a really great looking motor vehicle into a super-powerful, living robot.

As far as I can tell though, there is nothing new to our fascination with stories like this. In my childhood days, we all knew of Clark Kent and how he could run into a nearby phone booth and emerge in seconds as a transformed super hero, "Superman!" He was "faster than a speeding bullet, able to leap tall buildings in a single bound." We all wanted to be Superman.

Notice the implications in the fantasies we all grew up with. Heroes transformed themselves, they all seemingly had super powers and the really great ones were always on the side of "truth, justice, and the American way." We wanted to be like them. I can remember running around with my own cape, pretending to fly and righting wrongs with my super powers.

I find it funny that we choose not to put on these super powers when it comes to living a life that demonstrates what Paul (and the Holy Spirit) call us to from Romans 12:1.

"Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God!" Right! Give me my super-Christian cape right now. Unfortunately, that goal might seem so high that we might not even try to live it but merely see it as an unattainable goal. Most of the time, we aren't even motivated by many of the great heroes of the faith because we see their demonstrated sacrifices and victories as so great we could never achieve them ourselves. Does that speak to you?

Paul says to every Christian in this verse, "you can achieve that 'good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God!'" But to do so, you need to run into the phone booth, emerge with those super

powers and go forth to “run through a troop” and “leap over a wall.” (Read 2 Samuel 22:30 and Psalm 18:29) And, whether we think we can do it or not, Paul tells us to just do three things: Don’t conform, be transformed and renew your mind!

“Be not conformed to this world!” Seems easy to say, maybe even to conceive. But so few actually demonstrate it and bring it to power.

From early age we are taught it is best to “fit in.” Although it is true that as a culture we are better when we learn to get along and sometimes accept compromises in what we personally want for the sake of others, that can quickly turn into an attitude that I must always conform to the ways of the world or the world will not accept me. Paul, and the Holy Scriptures of the Bible quickly tell us that we can know when the world is wrong. And, we should choose the narrower pathway of disagreeing with the world and refusing to conform to their directions and dictates.

While attending the Air Force Academy, I was strongly taught during four years of discipline that I should always obey the commands of my commanders. So, you can see why it surprised us, that during a Saturday morning training session, shortly toward the end of the Vietnam War, we were all forced to attend a class to discuss times when we might have to choose not to obey commands.

An over-zealous Army lieutenant had led his troops into a small town in Vietnam and commanded that those under his command destroy the village and kill all of its 22 unarmed inhabitants. He was sentenced to life in prison for those commands and his actions but spent merely three years on house arrest for those murders. But we suddenly realized that age old truth that a little power can cause some to take immoral actions that should be resisted and even disobeyed.

This was not a new truth. Just look at Adolph Hitler just thirty years earlier and more leaders than can be counted who were absolutely sure of their truth and demanded unconditional obedience by those they led. Satan has worked through the lives of many men and women who ultimately demanded that those following them conform to their world view. Paul says, “Be NOT conformed to this world.”

We were instructed during those classes shortly after this incident that there might be times when someone might give an “immoral” order, and it was very possible that the only right action might be to not obey that command. How’s that for putting a lot of pressure on young twenty year olds!

As Christians, we MUST learn how to NOT conform to the world, because the world is often WRONG. Our current environment of “counter culture” is a perfect example. We are told that someone who knows far more than we do has the right to determine what is right and what is wrong, what is acceptable behavior and what is unacceptable, even which words we are allowed to use and demand that we conform to those ideas and principles or be rejected by society as bigoted, intolerant and unacceptable.

Does this sound like Satan to you? It does to me. And Paul warns us, Do NOT conform to the world! Just the opposite, he tells us BE TRANSFORMED! That means change. Change from what is wrong to what is right. Go into the phone booth a weakling and emerge a transformed, powerful agent of God. But what must happen in the phone booth? A change of clothes won’t do the trick. Putting on a costume and pretending to be greater isn’t the answer. How does Paul tell us to be transformed?

We must be transformed “by the RENEWING of our mind!” There is no pill that when taken gives us super powers. It isn’t the

change of clothes, even if we try to wear a cape. (The cape didn't stop me from breaking a leg when I jumped off the roof to 'fly.')

There is no magic word or phrase like "SHAZAAM" that causes me to have a renewed mind. There is only the Word of God and His power through the Holy Spirit that can transform me and make me live like He wants me to live.

In case you doubt the power of the Word to help us renew our mind, read the rest of Paul's words in Romans 12. We need to think soberly. We need to function in the body of Christ. Use the gifts that have been given to you! Love without hypocrisy, abhor evil, cling to what is good, express brotherly love. The list from Paul goes on and on. And each expression is another tool for us to use to renew our minds, allow us to not conform to the world and help us to transform!

There is a whole lot of power Paul packed into Romans 12. Read it today. Start to apply those truths to your life. By memorizing Romans 12:1-2 and quoting it to yourself frequently you will remind yourself that we are called to be transforming agents in the world...not only of ourselves but of our families, our church groups and in the end, the entire world.

We should admire the many heroes of our faith. They did great things. But we should never think that the Lord does not want us to do the same. The Lord has given us not only the command but also the ability to present our bodies as living sacrifices, to not conform to the world, to be transformed every day, and to do so, through the Holy Spirit by renewing our minds. Every day! In the end, just like Paul says in Romans 12:21, we will be "not overcome by evil, but will overcome evil with good." Sounds like a transformed life to me Super Man. What is stopping you?

Questions to ponder: What is your spiritual kryptonite that causes you to be conformed instead of transformed? What internally causes us all to admire those whom history records as having done great things for God but yet makes us think we could never be the same? Read about the lives of Bonhoffer, Livingstone and Wesley. Read about the Heroes of the Faith in Hebrews 11. Why is conforming to the world so easy and transforming so hard? Does it seem impossible to please God? Look at the solution in Hebrews 11: 6. How does being transformed by the renewing of our minds help us prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God? What is that perfect will in your life?

Other Scriptures to Consider: 2 Samuel 22:30 and Psalm 18:29 “For by thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have leaped over a wall.” What are your troops that you need to run through? What walls does God have for you to leap? Hebrews 11:1-40 “God has planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.” Hebrews 12:1-3 Run YOUR race! Throw off what hinders you. Fix your eyes on Jesus!

ROMANS 12:2

AND BE NOT CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD;
BUT BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND,
THAT YOU MAY PROVE WHAT IS THAT GOOD,
AND ACCEPTABLE, AND PERFECT WILL OF GOD.

CHAPTER THIRTY FOUR

DELIGHT



PSALM 37:4 “DELIGHT THYSELF ALSO IN THE LORD AND HE SHALL GIVE THEE THE DESIRES OF THINE HEART.” (KJV)

“Delight yourself also in the Lord and He shall give you the desires of your heart.” (NKJV)

“Delight yourself in the Lord and He shall give you the desires of your heart.” (NASB, NIV)

“Take delight in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.” (RSV)

“Be delighted with the Lord. Then he will give you all your heart’s desires.” (TLB)

I’ll take a dog over a cat any day. I apologize to all you cat lovers. But, you pet a cat and he or she looks at you and kinda asks, “what else you got?” Only a loving, friend-for-life puppy/dog can give you all the love you need, no matter what the time of day.

It wasn't hard for me to pick a photo that brings out delight. Any kid who has ever experienced the new, unconditional love of a puppy can easily demonstrate delight. That puppy comes running at you as if to say, "I love you, whatever you want!"

I love that! I see great delight in that from any kid. And then, you know what? From a new puppy to a life-long devoted companion, he turns right around and gives that kid exactly what his heart desires. It may be in the form of a slobbery, licked face or an anxious anticipated look of "what do you want to do next?" But give me a devoted dog any day to guarantee love, joy and peace that kind of fills the desires of that kid's heart.

Psalm 37:4 was my wife, Cheryl's "life verse." I watched her for nearly fifty years demonstrate in many circumstances how easy it was for her to "delight in the Lord." Whenever I was disgruntled or disappointed, Cheryl could always find a way to show me how Jesus was at work in our lives and bringing His will to pass. That brought her great joy.

Amazingly enough, when I started seeing life from her perspective, more times than not, I saw she was right. Jesus was there, every time, no matter what the current crisis or disappointing circumstance seemed to be. And if I looked hard enough, sought His will in the event and looked for how I might delight in Him instead of depressing into my observation of the circumstances, I usually found Him waiting to give me what the desires of my heart really were.

I'm a "Type A" individual. The Air Force loves "Type A's." We always figure we have the approved solution for any task in life, no matter how hard or complicated. As well as having a lot of successes that I prefer to point to in my past, I have also had lots of failures. I loved it when the Colonel came to me and said he was looking for some "shakers and movers" to get a particular

job done. “Sign me up for that!” I loved solving problems, fixing things and above all, getting lots of praise for being successful in what was asked of me.

Those Colonels didn’t tell you what to do when you try something in all that enthusiasm and you fail, or maybe even worse, tear something up or destroy progress because your “brilliant plan” wasn’t so brilliant. Plus, as I came to expect, they easily moved on to another “Type A” who would surely have better success than me without much comfort to me for my “nice try.”

I knew there was a reason I married that beautiful, Christian woman the day after I graduated from the Air Force Academy. Most times, when I didn’t see a future ahead after a particular failure, Cheryl was delighting herself in the Lord and encouraging me to do the same. Of course, she couldn’t begin to understand the complexity of what I had done and how monumental my failure must have been. But she saw my grief, went to the Lord with it, and sometimes even succeeded in managing to help me see Him too.

With that example, it became obvious that in the scheme of things, the Lord’s working in our lives was far more important than that little failure. More likely than not, He was using that example to teach me a few things I needed to learn: like a little humility, like I wasn’t nearly as important as I thought I was and that only what I did for Him would really last anyway. Wow.

Years later, we have finished two careers, raised four great children, have two of the best grandchildren in the world and honestly, would have a very hard time finding anyone who remembers any of those failures that I had thought were so monumental.

I didn't expect the love of my life to turn 65 and then three weeks later have a pretty major stroke. How do you expect me to delight in that Lord? Well, the answer is, He doesn't. He didn't say, "delight in everything that comes along." He did say, "Delight in Me."

He did say, "In everything give thanks." He did say, "rejoice evermore." He did say, "My grace is sufficient for thee." But I have to admit, I found it hard to get my heart to delight in the Lord who allowed my sweetheart to struggle with that when I didn't want her to.

The Lord surprised me from time to time. Cheryl reached for things that weren't there. I figured that when she raised her hand during praise and worship that she was reaching for something. It didn't immediately occur to me that she might still have been able to raise her hand in praise like she did so many times before because she was "delighting in the Lord."

Cheryl lost her verbal abilities and wasn't even able to understand what I was asking her most times. But she surprised me when we were singing an old familiar hymn at church and I could gently hear her singing that years-old familiar tune, just "delighting in the Lord." That brought me joy in my heart.

The joy in my heart that I wanted was for Cheryl to be healed. We prayed for it every day. That didn't happen but we still did our best to delight in the Lord.

I found in many crisis events in my life that if I delighted in the Lord...or at least "acknowledge Him in all my ways" (remember MY life verse?) He would often bring about a joyful event that proved to be far more joyful than what I thought I had wanted in the first place.

The last thing I want to do when I get to heaven and meet Jesus face to face is to have Him need to introduce Himself. I want

to know Him so intimately during this brief seventy, eighty or ninety years so that when I see Him, I will know Him better than any of the best friends I had in this life.

I know that reading the Word every day can reveal Him in new ways. I know that being purposeful and consistent in daily prayer can draw me closer to Him and reveal His will for my life. But I have learned that if I can delight myself in Him, treat Him like a friend as well as a father and look for His leading in everything I do, He will always stand true to His word and give me the real desires of my heart, not only in this life but in the life to come.

Questions to Ponder: Try to list all the things other than the Lord that you may have tried to find delight in during your life. Did they bring real joy to your heart? Can you describe some aspect of your life that you might describe as your “passion in life?” Did the Lord give that to you? What do you try hardest to delight in/to find the most joy from? Our spouse, children and grandchildren can bring us great delight. How can their love pale in comparison to the delight Jesus wants us to have in Him? Have you ever found that the joy of your heart that Jesus brought was different from what joy you thought the delights of your life were? What things can we do to increase how we find delight in Jesus?

Other Scriptures to Consider: Psalm 38:9 My desire for the Lord and my groaning. Psalm 73:25, “...none on earth that I desire more than thee.” Isaiah 26:9, “I desired thee in the night, I seek thee early.” Psalm 42:2, “...my soul thirsteth for the living God.”

PSALM
37:4

DELIGHT THYSELF ALSO IN THE LORD
AND HE SHALL GIVE THEE
THE DESIRES OF THINE HEART.

CHAPTER THIRTY FIVE

FAITH



HEBREWS 11:1 “NOW FAITH IS THE SUBSTANCE OF THINGS HOPED FOR, THE EVIDENCE OF THINGS NOT SEEN.” (KJV, NKJV)

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” (NASB, RSV)

“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” (NIV)

“Now faith is the confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.” (ESV)

“What is faith? It is the confident assurance that something we want is going to happen. It is the certainty that what we hope for is waiting for us, even though we cannot see it up ahead.” (TLB)

I believe Paul wrote these words. Hebrews doesn't prove that to us, I just believe it. That fact is something I can't readily see, but there is a lot of evidence in the writing to make me believe it.

Like other writings of Paul, the sentence sounds a little mysterious, maybe ethereal in its meaning. After he makes this statement, he spends a lot of the following verses illustrating what faith is by the testimony of men and women mentioned throughout the Bible.

The importance of this concept of the Bible is really stressed. “By it, others obtained a good testimony,” they “gained approval.”

(Heb 11:2) Only by faith can we grasp the truth that God created the worlds “out of things that were not visible.” (Heb 11:3)

Hebrews 11:6 really puts the hammer to the nail by telling us that “without faith, it is impossible to please God,” because anyone who comes to Him must first “believe that He is” and then believe that He is a “rewarder to those who seek Him.” When we come to that drawing force, that invisible Person that we cannot see, we cannot have faith without first believing that He IS, whether we can see Him or not. Only later do we learn about His rewarding us because we seek Him. It is unmistakable, however, that without faith, we cannot please God.

This concept really shouldn't seem so foreign to us! We put our faith in things we cannot see every day. We cannot see the hearts of those who drive around us on the roads. But we trust, or at least have hope, that they will all obey the rules and laws of the road so we can coexist together without constant threat. When that proves to be successful, our assurance of what we hoped for is rewarded with staying alive.

When we meet someone that we fall in love with, we can't see their love for us. But we take the risk every day when we express our love to them that they will return that unseen feeling, emotion or invisible substance of their love to us too.

Nearly fifty years after I first confessed to my wife that I loved her, she proved to me over and over that my love for her was returned. Bearing four of my children was a visible proof of the existence of that love...but even though I can't touch it or see it, I know it was there.

There is that age old example is our demonstrated faith every time we sit down in a chair. Without consciously thinking about it every time we do it, we still admit that it is a fact that we hope for it to support us. More times than not, the substance of that hope is

demonstrated by the chair not collapsing under me. I have a couple of examples in my life when that faith was mistakenly founded in a chair that did not earn that trust. Yet, I continue to hope for the strength of chairs that I sit in and it is rewarded by the substance of fact.

In every culture, we readily believe in the unseen. We love to read novels like “The Invisible Man” and imagine fiction to be possible. The Hollywood movie “Ghost” was easily accepted as almost fact, even though we know we cannot see Patrick Swazey, or any other person after he or she dies.

We love to believe in the unseen. We watch the love and trust a child puts in its parents as daily, an affection is expressed to them that builds their trust in a bond they cannot see. Why then would we consciously choose not to believe in a God we have never touched? Despite historical evidence to His existence, why would we not immediately choose to trust a Savior who came and died for us, even though we weren’t alive to see it?

Ask the disciple Thomas that question when you see him. Don’t be too hard on his lack of faith though. Some of us might have had the same reluctance to believe. He said, “I won’t believe unless I put my hands in his wounds that came from His crucifixion.”

Jesus accommodated Thomas. Jesus let Thomas believe by seeing and touching. But He also quickly made the point that blessed were those who would never see yet still believe. For the last 2,000 years, that has been folks like us. See John 20:24-29.

As I am getting older, like many others before me, I am going through lots of serious physical trials that seem like they shouldn’t be. I am constantly reminded that this growing old thing isn’t for sissies! Sometimes, I feel like I need an explanation for why I

should hurt, why I should lose my love ones or why my life shouldn't just pleasantly slide right into heaven.

Read the what Peter wrote near the end of his life, amidst a lot of suffering. He reminded us in 1 Peter 1:3-12 that each Christian might have to suffer and “be grieved by various trials.” We might even find that the “genuineness of our faith might be tested by fire,” for one purpose: “that we might give praise, honor and glory to Jesus Christ” whom, Peter reminds us, “having not seen, we love.” In the end, as a reward for that faith in Him whom we have never seen, we receive “the salvation of our souls.”

The Lord designed the nature of our faith. It pleases Him when He looks at us and sees our faith and trust in One we cannot see, but trust anyway. There is a reward for us in that when we get to heaven. We have a “blessed hope” when, like Abraham, we look for a city we have not seen “whose builder and maker is God.”

That is true faith: putting trust in the substance of what we hope for, what the Word of God has told us is true. Although we cannot see it, touch it, measure it, we know by the testimony of those who have gone before us that the evidence is there that it is true. That's faith. Without it we cannot see God. Without it we cannot please God. Without it, we will remain forever lost. Have faith in God!

Questions to Ponder: In a world increasingly influenced by scientific “proof” how can we stand firm in a faith that demands we believe in things not seen? Isn't it interesting that science which proposes theory and proof insists that we believe in the existence of things like molecules, atoms, sub-atomic particles that even they have never seen yet they “know” must be true. Meanwhile, theories like Darwin's evolution of the species are treated as fact even though there has never existed those

established links between species that it proposed. Which is easier to believe? That we descended from primates or that an intelligent designer made the intricately balanced environment that our earth and the universe is, that is fit just for our needs? Hebrews 11:7 tells us that at the direction of God, Noah had enough faith in God that he built the ark although he had never seen a flood before. Is your faith in God enough to do whatever task He has given you to do in this life?

Other Scriptures to Consider: Read the entire chapter of Hebrews 11. Study the testimonies of so many before us who demonstrated what faith is supposed to be to us. Read 1 Peter 1:3-12. It is interesting that Peter, like Paul, used the same terminology of never having seen Jesus, “we yet love and believe.” Read John 14:1-11 where Jesus speaks to the disciples about their futures and asks them to believe in what they could not yet see. Read John 17, Jesus’ “priestly prayer,” especially verse 20 where He prays for us, in the future, who would “believe in Him through their word.” He prayed for our faith as much as He did for that of His disciples. Mark 11:22, “Jesus said to them, ‘Have faith in God.’”

**HEBREWS
11:1**

**NOW FAITH IS THE SUBSTANCE
OF THINGS HOPED FOR,
THE EVIDENCE OF THINGS NOT SEEN.**

CHAPTER THIRTY SIX

ALL HAVE SINNED



ROMANS 3:23 “FOR ALL HAVE SINNED, AND FALL (COME) SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD.” (KJV, NKJV, NIV, NET, NASB, RSV)

“Yes, all have sinned; all fall short of God’s glorious ideal.” (TLB)

There is a universal condition to us all...we have all sinned. I honestly believe most of us know this. We can do a lot to disclaim it, even ignore it. But deep down, even if we aren’t familiar with the doctrinal basis for this belief, something inside us tells us we are all lost.

Modern, cultural determinism has decided that since all we can know and see must be proven and found in our natural state, a condition of sinfulness, even good and bad, must now all be relative. If God cannot be seen, He must surely not exist. If He does not exist, then our old model of good and evil is unreal. At best, we hope that if we are “good enough,” whether we believe in our lost state or not, an unseen judge, if there is one, will weigh our good to be more than our bad.

I found it interesting that when the actor Kirk Cameron interviewed as many millennials as he could find on the streets and began asking them if they really thought they deserved to go to heaven, most acted as if they believe in a heaven and God, even

though most admitted they didn't know Him. When asked if they ever sinned, most found it difficult to identify specific sins in their lives yet generally acknowledged that they were sinners.

When we became a fallen race at the initial fall of Adam and Eve, God put in us an innate sense that we all need Him, whether we want to admit it or not. The knowledge of good and evil now means our bent is toward evil, not good. The very evidence we all must admit if we are honest is that our attempts to live "good" lives come up very short all the time.

When Paul stated outright in Romans 3 that we have all sinned, I think he knew from experience that it is a fact...we all know we have sinned. The trick isn't knowing it. The true objective is knowing we are sinners and caring enough that we will do something about it.

A lot of us as Christians have gone through evangelism courses in our church or Bible Study group with the intention of telling others about Jesus and maybe, helping them to give their lives to Him. A common, well-known method of doing this is the usage of what has become known as "the Roman Road." Romans 3:23 is the beginning Scripture on that road.

Quoting this verse reminds those we speak to that we have ALL sinned. Even those of us who have already been saved remember that we too were sinners and now, are trying to do our best to let the Holy Spirit live in us to help us to learn to NOT sin. But, the message is that we all know we have sinned, there is a cost or consequence for those sins ("The wages of sin is death.") and the good news is that Jesus paid the price for our sins on the cross. If we acknowledge that, accept it and believe it in faith...if we repent of our sins, He promises to forgive us for our sins and literally give us eternal life (we already memorized John 3:16). That is the Gospel!

The temptation of course...especially in our overly self-gratifying culture...is for us to think we are already good enough on our own. Some might think that God grades on a curve, and that if we try hard enough, if we can be good enough, or if we can at least be good more often than we are bad, He will understand and give us that free eternal life, even if we don't ask for it. Big mistake.

I love the image I included above of "falling short." Not only do we all sin, but we all fall short...at least fall short of the glory of God. We think we can go fast enough, hard enough, sincerely enough that we will charge across the finish line, if at least by sheer momentum.

I don't intend to find out or prove this. But I imagine that hell will be filled with people who weren't necessarily evil or "bad people." They thought they knew the finish line would be coming some day, but in their carelessness decided to do it on their own and, much to their surprise, found out that just short of the finish line, they fell on their faces having waited too long and just ended up falling into hell.

There is no passage that scares me more than the text where Jesus said some in hell would claim, "didn't we preach in your name, prophesied in your name, even cast out demons and did many wonders?" He said that He would declare to them in that day, "I never knew you." Talk about falling short!

We all fall short of God's glory. Imagine, though, playing church your whole life to only find out in the end that even that fell short! Jesus said that He will tell them in that day, "Depart from me!" Does Jesus know you?

All have sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God! That will naturally bring us to our next verse on the Romans Road...Romans 6:23. We will memorize that verse next. The

wages of our sin is death. But guess what? The gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ!

We do not have to suffer eternal damnation in hell. Jesus has paid the price for that. The condition of every man and woman born to Adam's race is condemnation because we have all sinned! The price for those sins must be paid. Jesus did that for us if we will believe and accept His sacrifice for our sins.

I strongly encourage you to memorize this verse! Use it to lead others to Jesus. Rescue the perishing. Care for the dying. Jesus is merciful, Jesus will save. And, once we are SAVED, Jesus promises to live within us, to help us to become more and more like Him, to learn where we have fallen short of His glory, and help us to have the strength to live for Him from now on.

The bad news was that we all have sinned. The good news is that Jesus has paid the price and we don't have to sin any more or fall short of His glory in us! Live it! Teach it! Tell it to anyone who will listen.

Questions to Ponder: Why would anyone resist the free gift of salvation? Do you feel the urge of evangelism? Is reaching the lost a burden that you feel as a born again believer? As a former unbeliever, can you more easily understand why those around you might resist the call of salvation from Jesus? Who is closest to you that needs to hear this truth? Will you tell them and lead them to Jesus soon? What did Jesus mean when He promised He would tell some that He never knew them?

Other Scriptures to study: Hebrews 2:3, "how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" Romans 6:23, coming up in the next chapter. Matthew 7:21-23. Revelation 3:20, Jesus

standing at the door of every man who has ever sinned and fallen short of His glory.

**Romans
3:23**

**FOR ALL HAVE SINNED,
AND FALL SHORT
OF THE GLORY OF GOD.**

CHAPTER THIRTY SEVEN

WAGES AND GIFTS



ROMANS 6:23 “FOR THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH, BUT THE GIFT OF GOD IS ETERNAL LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD.” (KJV, NKJV, NIV)

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (NASB, ASV, RSV, TLB)

We mentioned the “Roman Road to Salvation,” which is typically agreed to be a series of Bible verses from the New Testament book of Romans that explain how to receive salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. These include: Romans 3:23 (previous chapter), now Romans 6:23, and also Romans 5:8 (“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”), Romans 10:9-10 (“If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”) and Romans 10:13 (“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”)

Other verses that are sometimes included are Romans 5:1, 8:1, and 5:12. You might have taken a class in learning to lead someone to the Lord using these verses. They are all certainly worth memorizing and I would encourage all Christians to learn them and practice using them to help us evangelize the world. That is our call, by the way.

In Romans 6:23, I notice a distinction between wages and gifts. Quite literally, because we all have sinned, we must receive the wages for those sins...death. The Lord told Adam and Eve, on the day that they disobeyed and ate of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, they would die. They did not die a physical death at that point. That would come later. They did however, experience the spiritual death that is the consequence (or wages) of that disobedience, just like we do because we are born of Adam's race.

Remember, we all have sinned (Romans 3:23). If anyone wants to argue that point with you, just examine the life lived. It doesn't take too much soul searching and honesty with how we live to demonstrate that we all have sinned. A holy and righteous God demands penalty for that sin. Without Jesus, some day we will receive the payment for our sins which will be death and eternal separation from God in an endless hell.

In contrast to that wage we all receive for a life of sin, the good news is that Jesus came to pay that price for us. The contrast and alternative to our wages or death is a GIFT! Without Jesus, we get what we deserve, we get what we earn.

Jesus lived a perfect life and was the only man who ever lived who could say He did not deserve that penalty. Instead, as a sacrifice for our own sins, He hung on a cross and paid the price Himself. As a consequence, He offers us the gift of eternal life in place of our justified wages...we pass from certain death to promised life, thanks to Jesus sacrifice. Now, that's a gift!

Later in Romans, Paul reminds us that it is a free gift, nothing we could ever earn, nothing coming from our own good works, just in case we might want to boast. The truth is none of us have anything, apart from Jesus, we can honestly boast of. That's why it is called a GIFT. WOW!

We should all have that “WOW” moment. I can forego getting what I deserve (death) and receive a gift instead, if I will just trust in what Jesus did for me and ask Him to forgive me for those sins. That gift is eternal LIFE. And, as the verse says, it is only through Jesus Christ.

It baffles me why any person who hears that message would reject it. If you are seriously taking on this challenge of memorizing 100 Bible Verses, I can only think that you have received that gift already. If not, do it now! If you have, memorize this verse so you can share it with others who have not yet.

It really is that simple. Jesus did not make it hard. All we have to do is accept His sacrifice, acknowledge that He paid the price for me, truly repent of all the sins that promise to bring me death and He keeps His word to give us eternal life. That’s the good news. Spread it to everyone you know...the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ!

Questions to Consider: Have you ever heard someone say, “surely, just believing isn’t enough. Doesn’t it take some kind of work?” Yes, we must repent of our sins...that is doing something. But, can we work hard enough, be good enough to be saved? See Romans 10:9, “confess with thy mouth.” Jesus said even the demons believe in Jesus. Is believing enough? What kind of confession is acceptable? Is this something that, after I have believed in it, I can choose to not believe it any more? Faith is believing in what we cannot see. We did not see Jesus crucified. For 2,000 years now, Christians have become followers because they received this promise by faith. Is there any other way?

Other Scriptures to Study: Review again the Roman Road: Romans 3:23, 6:23, 5:8, 10:9-10, 10:13. 1 John 4: 15 “Whosoever

shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in him and he in God.” John 10:32 “Whoever confesses me before men, him will I also confess before my Father in heaven.” Acts 20:21 “...they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.” Romans 10:9 “if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

Romans 6:23

**For the wages of sin
is death, but
the gift of God is
eternal life in
Jesus Christ our Lord.**

CHAPTER THIRTY EIGHT

KNOCKING AT THE DOOR



REVELATIONS 3:20 “BEHOLD I STAND AT THE DOOR AND KNOCK. IF ANY MAN HEAR MY VOICE, AND OPEN THE DOOR, I WILL COME IN TO HIM, AND WILL SUP WITH HIM, AND HE WITH ME.” (KJV)

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.” (NKJV, NASB)

“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.” (NIV)

“Look! I have been standing at the door, and I am constantly knocking. If anyone hears me calling him and opens the door, I will come in and fellowship with him and he with me.” (TLB)

The Light of the World (1851–1854) is an allegorical painting by the English Pre-Raphaelite artist William Holman Hunt (1827–1910) representing the figure of Jesus preparing to knock on an overgrown and long-unopened door. It is probably the most famous painting of Jesus at the door. Of course, He is knocking at the door of my heart. But as a child, looking at a copy of this

painting week after week, I had to wonder, how long would Jesus stand and knock on that door?

I didn't notice it until someone pointed it out years later. There is no door handle on the outside of the door. We suppose this meant that Jesus was ever knocking, but it was up to us to open the door. Hence, the reference in our memory verse this week...if any man hear my voice and open the door.

Later in life, I had a well meaning Christian try to tell me that Jesus has already determined whose door He would knock on and that that, and several other facts were already pre-determined. He believed that only the chosen ones would have salvation open to them. Of course, I had to remind him of Rev 3:20 in which Jesus tells us that if ANY MAN would open the door, He would come into him and have supper with him too! I have given my life to and serve an "any man" Savior!

I couldn't resist also including above a photo of (anonymously) your hand or mine knocking on a door too. Of course, through the Holy Spirit, Jesus knocks on the door of every man's heart, just begging to come in and give him eternal life. I don't believe He ever stops knocking (although Scripture tells us that the longer we resist, the weaker that knock can become on our heart). But I also believe, that the door-knocking on people's lives to accept Jesus needs to be our knuckles too!

Almost gone seem to be the days of door-to-door evangelism. We even go so far as to deride the group that goes from door to door, seeking to spread their "truth" about Jesus in their own way. They may not have all of the truth, or may have even avoided some serious Scriptural truths in what they are attempting to spread...but give them credit, they are out there! When was the last time you knocked on your lost neighbor's door and tried to tell them about Jesus. We are very much the physical knuckles

that are supposed to be knocking on peoples' doors to tell them about the spiritual knocking Jesus is doing in their hearts. Oh my! Convicting?

Here again, we are reminded that the road to salvation is not paved with good works. How well you open the door will not save you. How quickly doesn't either. When we are faithful to tell them, to live a life that reflects Jesus and pray for the lost over and over again, I believe it is possible to see the Holy Spirit working in their lives. Through our spiritual ears, might we even hear that gentle knocking of Jesus on their door?

Surely, it can't be as easy as just opening up the door? Yes it can! Paul tells us in Romans 10:13, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." We don't have to be the judge of how effective that call is. We just need to tell them. Then we need to let the Lord keep knocking until they open the door.

What a patient Lord we serve. He doesn't barge the door down, although He could. He doesn't just open the door, walk in like an unwelcome guest and overrun us with the logic of His sacrifice for us. He just stands there knocking. Every man's spirit will hear that knocking at one time in his life. We can resist. We can ignore the knocking. We can choose to not hear it like a child with his fingers in his ears. But Jesus just keeps on knocking.

Apparently, when we open the door to Him, this Scripture tells us He does the rest...He comes in to me, sits down and eats with me and tells me the way to eternal life. And what a way! Nothing I could do would ever earn me eternal life. He did that all for me. I just have to open the door.

We need to remember that. We need to tell others that. What better way to help us do that than to memorize Revelation 3:20 and say it over and over. I hope you will.

Questions to ponder: What did Jesus' knocking at the door of your heart sound like to you? Do you remember the urge, sensation or feeling you had when you knew you were hearing Jesus call to you and you answered? In what ways can we "drown out" the gentle knocking of Jesus asking to come in? Does Jesus knock on the door of our heart for other reasons too, or just for salvation? Does the reality of our prayer life reflect our ability or inability to continue to hear Jesus as He speaks to us daily?

Other Scriptures to consider: Roman 10:14-15, "...how shall they hear without a preacher." Paul described his experience to resisting Jesus' call upon him in Jesus' own words, "it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." (Acts 9:5) Does that bear application to the tendency for some to resist the call of the Lord? 1 Samuel 3:10, the third time the Lord called, he answered, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

A song to remember: By now you get it. A lot of memory verses I want us to learn have been incorporated into songs that have been sung for years. You may remember I said that I sang a lot of these since my childhood. Here is another example. There are actually several recordings of Revelation 3:20 on YouTube. But I purposely chose this one sung by kids because it reminded me so much of those memories. And a child shall lead them. Enjoy:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6rtv1SXY9c8>

Revelation 3:20

"BEHOLD I STAND AT THE DOOR AND KNOCK.
IF ANY MAN HEAR MY VOICE, AND OPEN THE DOOR,
I WILL COME IN TO HIM, AND WILL SUP WITH HIM,
AND HE WITH ME."

CHAPTER THIRTY NINE

OUR DAILY BREAD



MATTHEW 6:11 “GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD.” (KJV, NKJV, NASB, ASV, RSV)

“Give us today our daily bread.” (NIV)

LUKE 11:3 “Give us day by day our daily bread.” (KJV, NKJV, ASV, RSV)

“Give us each day our daily bread.” (NIV, NASB)

We started our first book, *Hide the Word*, in chapter seven with the model prayer, or The Lord’s Prayer. We memorized Matthew 6:9 with the beginning of that prayer, both because it is important for us to learn to pray as Jesus taught us to pray but also because those words are so familiar to us and, hence, easy to memorize. This passage in verse eleven is the same. Just six words in the NIV, seven in many other translations. We know the words, “Give us this day our daily bread.” Now, just memorize that this verse is in Matthew 6:11. An easy verse for this week!

As I mentioned in chapter seven, most of us might already have the Lord’s Prayer memorized from years of saying it with others in church. If you have never memorized it, I strongly encourage you to do so. As I said before, saying the prayer gives us five verses memorized toward our 100. That is a good thing.

Plus, if Jesus thought it was important enough for the disciples to learn and repeat, it probably is equally important for us.

This model prayer is also written in Luke 11:1-4. In this narrative, the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray...as John taught his disciples. In just a short prayer, Jesus taught them to pray in a manner that Christians have repeated millions of times in the past 2,000 years.

It is remarkable that Jesus teaches us that it is ok to ask the Father to feed us. This part of the prayer is the only part that tells us it is fine to ask God to provide nourishment for us, to provide our daily need. This is an undeniable reminder of the bread that God provided to the children of Israel as they walked through the desert. We will look at that in more detail in another chapter.

A million people wandering through a desert would require some supernatural help just surviving with food and water. God provided that. He sent manna from heaven, enough for every day, for every person alive for forty years. He sent water every time it was needed...in a desert! When they complained about the lack of diversity in their diets, He even provided birds from the sky.

It is not only important to note that He provides the daily nourishment we need, but He also delights in our understanding that we need Him to provide it. Go to other parts of the world where people do not live in the abundance that we do and you will see how desperate anyone can become when no food is available. God provides. We take the ready availability of food and our relatively easy ability to acquire it for granted so much. Yet see how we react the moment we perceive that food might not be available much longer.

Jesus told us to pray, “give us today our daily bread.” That means it is not wrong to pray for the Lord’s provision for what we eat and drink. That should certainly lead us to give thanks for it

every time we prepare to eat...hence, prayer before eating and thanking Him for it and acknowledging that He has provided it for us.

I am quickly reminded of a passage in Psalms written by David where he acknowledges that provision for the righteous: “I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread.” (Psalm 37:25)

In a careless manner, one would almost think that, knowing that He is going to provide for us, why should we even have to pray for it? The answer certainly is because He taught us that we should. When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, He instructed them to say, “Give us this day, our daily bread.”

Don’t take that for granted. Don’t think that we can provide it for ourselves without His help. Don’t forget that in answer to that prayer, He will give us each day the sustenance that we need. It comes from Him. And don’t forget to thank Him for it. Lord, give us this day our daily bread.

Questions to ponder: How does God’s provision for daily bread seem inconsistent when He sometimes allows famine in the land? Do we occasionally need reminders that He is our provision? How easy is it for us to take for granted the food we eat every day in our abundant culture? There is more than just provision suggested in Psalm 37:25. Does the Lord bless His chosen, the righteous more than He does others? If we suddenly experience lack, as many in the world frequently do, does that mean that the Lord is withholding the answer to our request for our daily bread? Have you ever done without/gone hungry? How does that experience differ from starving?

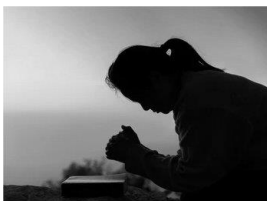
Other Scriptures to Consider: John 6:48, Jesus, the bread of life. How does that differ from “our daily bread?” Matthew 25:34-46 “I was hungry and you gave me food.” How does our provision of food from God affect our decisions to help feed others? Romans 12:20, “If your enemy is hungry, feed him.” Phil 4:12, “I have learned both to be full and to be hungry.”

**Matthew
6:11**

GIVE US THIS DAY
OUR DAILY BREAD.

CHAPTER FORTY

WAIT UPON THE LORD



ISAIAH 40:31 “BUT THEY THAT WAIT UPON THE LORD SHALL RENEW THEIR STRENGTH, THEY SHALL MOUNT UP WITH WINGS AS EAGLES; THEY SHALL RUN, AND NOT BE WEARY; AND THEY SHALL WALK AND NOT FAINT.” (KJV)

“But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles. They shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.” (NKJV, TLB)

“Yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.” (NASB)

“But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not faint.” (NIV)

Yes, this is a long verse to memorize. But, oh, what a message! I’m pushing 71 years old now and I know what it feels like to wish I still flew like an eagle. Oh, how I long to walk and not faint.

I was on the Southport High School Cross Country team that won two State championships in a row in 1970/71. We had ten runners who had run under ten minutes or faster in the two mile run. How I wish I could still run and not be weary. Whether you

are talking about the pains of life and sorrows of growing older or just the weariness of struggling with all of life's trials and troubles, it is so common to admit that we are just tired all the time.

Lest we think of this as just physical tiredness, look at those in the ministry. Those labors turn young men into old ones rapidly. In the business world or the educational world or the world of parenting and family troubles, we all get tired. And sometimes, it seems like we will never get rest.

As much as we like to convince ourselves that just working harder and running faster helps us to get more done, isn't it interesting that Isaiah tells us that the secret is to wait on the Lord. Sometimes, you just need to stop. Stop the constant race for success. Stop the feeling that doing more always produces better results. Stop the striving to always make yourself better by harder work and more effort. Surely the secret can't be to stop and wait on the Lord?

Some have suggested that the writer was meaning something more like what a waiter or waitress does for us as they wait on our order at a restaurant. Certainly, service and sacrifice to our Lord is important to our spiritual growth. But here, I get the sense that what Jesus would teach us is the need to WAIT.

How many times during His ministry did Jesus get away from everyone to be alone and pray to the Father? While He was sweating like great drops of blood in Gethsemane, alone and waiting for the answer He was really hoping for, did He not stop and wait? Would we expect Him to suggest we do any different?

Wait! I purposely used two photos above of what we usually do when we think we wait. Have you ever checked your watch while you were "waiting" on the Lord? We are so oriented toward maximizing our time that we can't separate ourselves from our cell phones...from our connection to the world for two minutes.

The times I have actually found this verse and its instructions to be truest in my life were those times I bowed my head, knelt on my knees and waited on the Lord to hear my prayers and answer my cries. During those times when it felt like the world was falling apart, the only relief and rescue I could find would come from stopping everything else, pouring my heart out to Him and waiting for Him to tell me what to do.

There have been times, rare as they have been, when I discovered that if I waited on Him long enough and oriented myself to His timescale, that the result would be strength, relief and renewal. We want renewed strength. We want to fly like an eagle again. We want to run again, not aimlessly, but with ease, effectiveness and complete freedom from weariness. And, if I take this verse literally, all I have to do is learn to wait...on the Lord.

This seems like a pretty simple “if-then” solution to the problems of our weary lives. If we wait on the Lord, then He will renew our strength, He will help us to mount up with wings as eagles, we will run and not be weary and we will walk and not faint. Teach me Lord to wait.

A Song to Remember: One of the biggest reasons I memorized this verse so long ago and so easily was because I grew up singing it in a song. There have been several Scriptures like that so far. Go to this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YIVY48x0syQ> Listen to this young man sing the song I have sung hundreds of times in my life. As you listen, focus on what it means to you to wait on the Lord. Listen to the song many, many times...each time planting those words permanently in your heart. Take some time as you memorize this verse and see if you find it possible to learn the secret to waiting on the Lord.

Questions to ponder: Why is stopping so hard? Why does stillness evade us? Is it possible to practice the presence of God while we are running about so hard, trying to do so much? We say we take vacations so we can “get away” and “leave our troubles behind.” Why do we not apply that principle to our daily Christian lives? How often have we done so much and worked so hard to work out all of our problems only to find that Jesus had the answers all along and we missed them because we would not stop long enough for Him to tell us about them?

Other Scriptures to consider: Psalm 37:9 “But those who wait on the Lord, they shall inherit the earth.” Psalm 132:2 “...so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until that he have mercy upon us.” Isaiah 8:17. Isaiah 30:15 “In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength.” Psalm 46:10 “Be still, and know that I am God.”

ISAIAH 40:31

BUT THEY THAT WAIT UPON THE LORD
SHALL RENEW THEIR STRENGTH,
THEY SHALL MOUNT UP WITH WINGS AS EAGLES;
THEY SHALL RUN, AND NOT BE WEARY;
AND THEY SHALL WALK AND NOT FAINT.

CHAPTER FORTY ONE

WORDS OF MY MOUTH



PSALMS 19:14 “LET THE WORDS OF MY MOUTH, AND THE MEDITATION OF MY HEART, BE ACCEPTABLE IN THY SIGHT, O LORD, MY STRENGTH, AND MY REDEEMER.” (KJV, NKJV, NAS)

“May my spoken words and unspoken thoughts be pleasing even to you, O Lord my Rock and my Redeemer.” (TLB)

“May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.” (NIV)

Great prayer. Easy to preach. Hard to live. Wow! Of course, one of the greatest reasons to memorize all of these verses of the Bible is so it will help me remember to do them. Sigh.

I’m sure I am not the only man alive that has a problem in this area. I don’t want to admit it, but sometimes the words of my mouth are anything but acceptable in the Lord’s sight. James talks a lot about this in his epistle in chapter 3:

“...the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire...no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God’s likeness.” (James 3:1-9)

We have to include Proverbs in here: “Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing...The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouth of the fool gushes folly...a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit...The tongue has the power of life and death.” (Prov 10 to 18)

The Bible talks a lot about the tongue...how it can bless, but also curse. It is so common among our species that it goes without saying that it is unruly, unholy and can often go out of control. We love one another with it, but listen carefully and patiently and you will find that all of us slip out of control sometimes. Some never gain any control. And this isn’t a weakness found only in the world but is also pretty prevalent in the church too.

I find it easier to self-criticize my impatient driving because it is a weakness in my life that others have already seen. (See photo above) Thankfully, most of them have never heard me when I really get upset at the other driver and verbally “let them have it.” If we talk about my driving, we don’t have to talk about other weaknesses and sins that I don’t want to talk about.

This verse also says, “and the meditations of my heart.” I want them to be acceptable in the Lord’s sight too. Let’s not discuss that part. However, sometimes we think that what we think about can’t be seen by the Lord or demonstrate a poor testimony to those around me. I’m probably wrong on both of those points.

We give women the credit for gossip like the middle photo, but I have it on good authority that we men aren’t any better. As a matter of fact, we tend to not even pretend to whisper opinions in secret...we think there is a bold honesty in coming out and just saying what we think. But oh, what damage we can do!

The third photo is one I don’t even want to look at. As a hot-tempered red-head, I have known fits of rage at some injustice or having “someone do me wrong” and quickly told them what I

thought, only to have to apologize later for my unholy behavior. As with other areas of weakness in our lives, the only solution tends to be following the Holy Spirit's leading to help me crucify that part of my flesh...again, and again, and again. I can't control my own flesh in my own willfulness. Only by the Spirit do I ever have the power to "kill that thing!" It is a part of me that I HAVE to control. But, will I ever?

I am over 70 now. I have found that this many years on, I am starting to gain more control, with the help of the Holy Spirit, over my unruly tongue. As a speaker, teacher and preacher, it is one of my gifts to talk, teach and preach. But how quickly, can that still turn on me to reveal that this weakness isn't dead yet? As a matter of fact, I wouldn't be surprised if, after decades of the Holy Spirit helping me grow more Christ-like, I don't find that the tongue will be the very last instrument of my flesh that I gain any control over...right before I die.

Maybe the Psalmist finally gained control over the words of his mouth at the last too. Maybe his suggestion was that, memorizing and repeating the words from this verse over and over was a vital tool in helping him remember before he went too far and said something he regretted. Or maybe, the prayer in Psalm 19:14 is a hope, a prayer, an earnest desire that we know we might never fully see.

Knowing that I have seen so many times before that this tongue expresses words not acceptable in the Lord's sight I would pray, "Lord, take my tongue, remind me to not let it loose, help me to keep some of my opinions to myself, help me to bring what my heart meditates on under Your control so that what comes out of my mouth would be pleasing to you." I am not there yet, but I understand what he meant when he pleaded, Lord, let the words

of my mouth and the meditation of my heart...somehow, sometime soon, come to always be acceptable in your sight.

Questions to Ponder: Is it possible to keep one's mouth shut? Is that what this Scripture is suggesting? Will we ever gain complete control over our tongue in this life? Is it true that it is better to be thought a fool than to open one's mouth and prove it? This verse seems to suggest, not that we never speak, but that any words we say and any thoughts we think would be acceptable to the Lord? How do we get there? Does the old suggestion that we "count to ten before we respond or answer a question or speak" seem like a good idea? What does a Holy Spirit-controlled tongue sound like?

Other Scriptures to Consider: James 1:19, "Slow to speak" James 1:26, "If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless." 1 Peter 3:10 "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech." 1 John 3:18, "love not with words or tongue but with actions and in truth."

A Song to Remember: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2599750200343429>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4gYh8umnTZ4>

**Psalm
19:14**

LET THE WORDS OF MY MOUTH,
AND THE MEDITATION OF MY HEART,
BE ACCEPTABLE IN THY SIGHT, O LORD,
MY STRENGTH, AND MY REDEEMER.

CHAPTER FORTY TWO

CONTROL



1 CORINTHIANS 9:27 “BUT I KEEP UNDER MY BODY AND BRING IT INTO SUBJECTION; LEST THAT BY ANY MEANS, WHEN I HAVE PREACHED TO OTHERS, I MYSELF SHOULD BE A CASTAWAY.” (KJV)

“But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.” (NKJV)

“But I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage: lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected.” (ASV)

“But I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.” (NASB)

“But I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.” (RSV)

“Like an athlete I punish my body, treating it roughly, training it to do what it should, not what it wants to. Otherwise I fear that after enlisting others for the race, I myself might be declared unfit and ordered to stand aside.” (TLB)

“No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.” (NIV)

I have to admit. The first time I read this passage of Scripture, I was a little confused by Paul's use of language...probably more so by the English interpretation of the words being said. The meaning of the words, however, hit me with great understanding. "Keeping under my body" made me think of being under something...a heavy vehicle that I occasionally work on or, as the image above suggests, a weightlifter under a huge weight preparing to do a "bench press."

Although, I tried to be an athlete my whole life, I have to say, the number of bench presses I have done has been few. My body wasn't built for that kind of exercise. I could run a mile in less than five minutes and do a full-twisting layout back flip, but I don't think I ever bench pressed more than 150 pounds.

Having been on the Cross Country team in the fall, Gymnastics team in the winter and the Track team in the spring, I could easily identify with the concept of "keeping under my body." This easily meant that the harder I trained and disciplined my body toward growing stronger and running faster, the better would be my success at competition. It also meant that when pain occurred as the result of competitive exertion, I could withstand it and keep on running. I could bring my body into subjection to keep me from quitting when it started to hurt.

Some of the time, this type of training simply meant saying "no" to things that were harmful to my efforts to make my body do what I wanted it to do. You won't run very fast if you enjoy a greasy hamburger right before you run two miles. However, I did find that most of the time, success at athletic events occurred because I had practiced, repeatedly, for many days before I competed in the actual race.

I clearly remember a very hot, humid, Indiana August afternoon when Coach Hathaway told us we were going to run

four sets of four quarter mile runs, all under 70 seconds for that day's practice. All of us 16 to 18-year-olds complained to the coach that it was too hot for us to do that kind of workout that day.

As you might have guessed, we ran every one of those practice runs, jogging back to start the next one, only to be "encouraged" by Coach Hathaway each time, loudly asking us if it was "too hot yet?" We got the message. If we wanted to win the race later, we had to "bring our bodies into subjection" now and make them do what we didn't want to do. Our cross country team went two straight years undefeated in all competitions which included two State Championships. We had ten teenage runners who could all run two miles in under ten minutes and we were untouchable by any competitors.

Do you see the spiritual application of this example to 1 Corinthians 9:27? We are talking about discipline. Not asceticism, discipline. Apparently, proper spiritual discipline involves some sense of bringing our bodies into subjection too. Hmmm.

In our previous chapter, we discussed bringing our tongues into subjection. I haven't completely achieved that yet. But that seems to require some physical discipline on my part to keep my mouth shut when I want to say things I know I shouldn't say.

The sexual drive, especially for men, tends to make us seek every way we can find to satisfy that drive, sometimes by means that are harmful to us. "Keeping under my body" in this context means saying no to some of those urges, not looking at things or persons in ways I should not and maybe, even running away from them when I it doesn't seem like there is any other way to avoid that temptation. This brings us better understanding of what 1 Thessalonians 5:22 means when it tells us to "abstain from all appearance of evil."

We could probably give at least another dozen examples of what “bringing our body into subjection” means to us in our daily Christian walk, but I think we get the idea. Let’s not forget the rest of the verse, however. Look at the results if we do not follow these directions: “when I have preached to others, I might become a castaway.” At best, this sounds like it implies the image of hypocrisy on our part. At worst, sin, as it always does when we allow it to have dominion in our lives, can result in our spiritual death! We can be cast away!

Look at the other versions: “I myself should be disqualified.” I should be rejected, “be declared unfit and ordered to stand aside.” Pretty severe, huh?

You do not have to look very hard to find lots of examples of those who have been involved in very productive ministries who destroyed them by just one moment of indiscretion. More often, however, that one moment they “got caught” usually reflects many years of habitual “giving in” to what the body wants. Even though we know it is bad for us, it is not what the Lord expects of us and is a terrible testimony to everyone who knows.

I don’t know what Paul had going on in his life to testify that we all need to “get under our bodies” and “bring them into subjection.” I doubt he ever trained enough nor sacrificed enough to run a competitive 100 yard dash. But he certainly understood, identified with and warned us against the very common, human condition of giving in to what the body wants. We identify with that concept too.

Oh, Christian soldier, saved and sanctified athlete, daily devoted worker in the Kingdom, save yourself from the pain that comes from an undisciplined life! Bring all your weaknesses, failures and indulgences in this area of your life to the cross. Crucify them every day! Pray for the power of the Holy Spirit to

help you keep them dead. Discover the Lord's way to get under your body and bring it into subjection so you won't end up being a castaway yourself!

Questions to ponder: This is advanced stuff. We aren't talking to the lost who are slaves to this kind of lifestyle. They are lost. We can only expect them to act like they are lost. This is Paul talking to Christians, both Corinthians and Americans, who are born again but, in some cases, allowing sin to still rein in parts of their bodies. In what areas of your life is this teaching true? This might not be something we want to confess to everyone. But Satan knows...that is why he so often tempts you in the areas of your weakness. He is not omniscient. He is very observant. He knows where to tempt you. More importantly, even though no one else might know, the Lord knows.

What are some ways you have found successful to overcome some of the temptations Satan has sent your way. "Just say no" is often considered a trite way to deal with this. But, does any victory over temptation come without first saying "NO" to the temptation? Can we grow spiritually while we continue to give in to carnal desires and temptations? I know we must distinguish between God's grace which covers all our sins and the burden of still-unconquered areas of our lives. But, how easy is it for us to stand on God's grace for forgiveness while still allowing these areas to have dominion in our lives? What does being a "castaway" mean?

Other Scriptures to study: 1 Thessalonians 5:22, James 4:1-8 "lusts that war in you," "friend of the world means enemy of God." "Submit to God" "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." 1 Peter 5:8-9 1 Corinthians 6:18-20 "Flee fornication." 1

Timothy 6:9-11 “The love of money.” 2 Timothy 2:19-22 “Flee youthful lusts.” Wow! There sure are a lot of Scriptures in the Bible addressing this area. This must be something that is very common to us, even after we are saved.

1 Corinthians
9:27

BUT I KEEP UNDER MY BODY
AND BRING IT INTO SUBJECTION;
LEST THAT BY ANY MEANS,
WHEN I HAVE PREACHED TO OTHERS,
I MYSELF SHOULD BE A CASTAWAY.

CHAPTER FORTY THREE

CAST YOUR CARES



1 PETER 5:7 “CASTING ALL YOUR CARE UPON HIM, FOR HE CARES FOR YOU.” (KJV, NKJV)

“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.” (NIV, NASB, ASV)

“Let him have all your worries and cares, for he is always thinking about you and watching everything that concerns you.” (TLB)

In Chapter 12, I had us memorize my life verse, Proverbs 3:5-6 (my mom’s life verse also.) In Chapter 34, we learned my wife, Cheryl’s life verse, Psalm 37:4. In this lesson, I would like to introduce my father’s life verse, 1 Peter 5:7. Has this trend of memorizing a life verse caught on with you yet?

I never met my grandfather, Curtis Matthews. When my father, Donnie Gene Matthews was just four years old, his father Curtis developed appendicitis, a disease which, today, is very identifiable and even easier to treat. Your appendix can be removed and you return home the same day with barely a noticeable incision now. Back in 1937, however, it was anything but simple.

Grandpa Curtis developed an infected appendix. By the time he was taken to the hospital to treat it, it was already too far deteriorated and it burst, resulting in his death. My Grandma Bert

(Alberta Matthews) was left alone to raise a son, who later became a rambunctious teenager and even later a devoted servant and pastor for the Lord who served Him for over fifty years.

Dad told us that Grandma Bert did her best to work to feed and house them while Dad spent a lot of his time with uncles, aunts and cousins, without a father. No doubt, this was a troubled time filled with many fears, cares and anxieties that were often overwhelming.

Dad was also very much raised in the church. Grandma was devoted to the Lord and to the church and took Dad there every Sunday. Dad gave his heart to the Lord at an early age. But that alone did not relieve the worries and cares of growing up without a father. Only Jesus did that for him. Is it any wonder that 1 Peter 5:7 became his life verse?

Peter was a fisherman by trade long before he met Jesus. He knew what it meant to cast a net. You threw it out of the boat in hopes of catching a large number of fish. He learned under the tutelage of Jesus what it meant to become a “fisher of men.” Many years after Jesus ascended to heaven and left Peter and the others to continue building the church, Peter would reflect on many of the cares he had experienced during a very adventurous, but dangerous and troubling ministry and life. So do we.

Whether or not our lives are devoted to full time ministry, as so many among us have done, every person’s life is filled with cares and anxieties that come along with just living life. It didn’t start that way with Adam and Eve. But because of the original fall of sin that plagues us all, we live in a world where survival only comes by much work, successes and failures, struggles with all the problems of the world and anxiety over what tomorrow can bring.

In the middle of a bunch of instructions to a bunch of elders in the church regarding submission, humility, self control and resisting temptation, Peter tells us to cast all our cares on Jesus. By this time, Peter knew this little “nugget of truth” to be true because he had proved it by experience.

Shortly after Jesus left them and the anxiety of being left alone with so big a responsibility as leading the new church, Peter found that casting that anxiety on Jesus brought him relief. When Peter was challenged by others who put him in prison, who tried to stone him and who even resisted him in the church, he found that the only meaningful way to deal with such anxiety was to cast it on Jesus.

Even as he approached the end of his life and, as we would, experienced the fear of probably being crucified like Jesus was, only casting that care upon Jesus gave him the courage to proclaim that he was unworthy to be crucified in the same manner as Jesus. He would tell us, “Cast all your cares on Jesus, because He cares for you.”

Christian brother, there will be those who want nothing but for you to fail. That is a major concern, but cast that concern to Jesus and just keep being faithful to Him. Sister, others will abandon you...they will turn their backs on you after telling you how much they love you. But cast those cares on Jesus, if for no other reason than He wants to carry them for you so you don't have to carry them alone.

Husband or wife, you may have never experienced the pain and suffering like you do now, having lost the love of your life, either through death or separation. It may not seem like something you can handle and carry alone. Jesus doesn't expect you to. Cast those hurts, pain and cares toward Him. He cares for you, loves

you and does not expect you to carry them alone. He will carry them with you and for you.

Jesus spoke to His disciples, as quoted to us in Matthew 11:28-29, about this subject. He interestingly told us, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Sometimes, all the troubles I experience in my life bring me to the point where His rest is all I want and definitely all I need.

It almost seems like an oxymoron, however, when He then says, “Take my yoke upon you.” The last thing I want is another yoke! Of course, the secret here is that the Lord’s yoke isn’t like the yokes of the world. “His yoke is easy. His burden is light.” That is far different from the yoke, troubles and cares of this world. He even promises that we will find “rest unto our souls.”

Peter gives us an interesting conclusion after all of his instructions in 1 Peter 5. In verse ten, he tells us that, “after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.” What a promise! All of that and I can cast every care upon Him!

It really is your choice. You can handle all the worries of life on your own if you want to. Life is full of examples of people who have worked themselves to death to achieve the small measures of success that we think are so great. Our culture is full of people with ulcers, sicknesses and growing old before their time while bearing all the cares of life on their own shoulders.

Honestly, I have gotten to the point so many times when life got so hard, I experienced so many failures and defeats and the weight of it all could only be relieved by giving it all to Jesus. And I always found that He was right there waiting on me to bring them all to Him. Go ahead and handle it all on your own. I think I’ll cast all those cares on Jesus. He cares for me. And letting Him handle

them is always more meaningful and successful than handling them alone.

Questions to ponder: Why do we think handling our problems on our own is better than giving them to Jesus? What evidence can we see that Jesus is taking those burdens from us when we cast them on Him? Is there any problem He can't handle? Does it ever seem after giving our problems to Jesus that we are still bearing them all alone? Does Jesus leave us with problems He will not take away? Paul's thorn in the flesh?

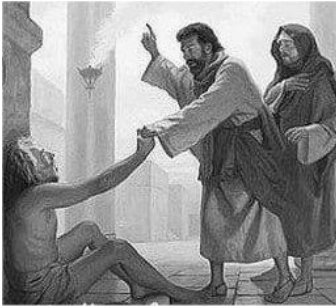
Other Scriptures to consider: Matt 11:28-30, Psalm 68:19 "...Savior, who daily bears our burdens." Galatians 6:2 "Carry each other's burdens..." Psalm 55:22 "Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you." Nahum 1:7 "He cares for those who trust in him."

**1 Peter
5:7**

**CASTING ALL YOUR CARE
UPON HIM,
FOR HE CARES FOR YOU.**

CHAPTER FORTY FOUR

SILVER AND GOLD



ACTS 3:6 “BUT PETER SAID, SILVER AND GOLD HAVE I NONE; BUT SUCH AS I HAVE GIVE I THEE: IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST OF NAZARETH RISE UP AND WALK.” (KJV)

“Then Peter said, ‘Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.’” (NKJV, NIV)

“But Peter said, ‘I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!’” (NASB)

“But Peter said, ‘We don’t have any money for you! But I’ll give you something else! I command you in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk!’” (TLB)

A Song to Remember:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZO9BPkqyCU>

I have to start with “A song to remember” today. Please listen to it and let it capture your thoughts. Cheryl and I taught children’s church at the Nazarene church we attended in Enid, OK. This was one of the songs we taught the kids to sing every Sunday. After singing, “Silver and gold have I none,” you clap three times. The

kids loved the song. If you listen to it enough times (maybe even teach it to your kids), you will have it memorized very quickly. What a great way to hide the Word in our lives!

I used this Scripture in sermons several times too. Peter's first sermon ended up seeing 3,000 people added to the church (see Acts 2:14-41). It was a long sermon too! After Peter helped the beggar to rise up and walk, he preached another sermon that resulted in that number climbing to 5,000 (Acts 3:11-4:4).

Now, these were some kind of sermons. Of course, the second sermon resulted in him being thrown into jail too. What preacher wouldn't want that many converts after his preaching? Of course, no one wants to end up in jail either, huh?

The sermon I liked the best, however, was this one he preached to the beggar. Look again at Acts 3:6-10. Again, results! He went walking, and leaping and praising God. Listen to that song again.

Peter's very effective, Spirit-inspired sermon had three main points...most great sermons do:

1. You gotta know what you don't have.
2. You gotta know what you do have.
3. You gotta know how to give what you have away.

We definitely need to know what we do not have. The beggar wanted money. He had been begging for it for years. There is no indication that any of the disciples/apostles were ever wealthy. No doubt, Peter did not have silver and gold to give this beggar, nor anyone else. He also knew that money had never done it for this man and never would. It is interesting that knowing his greatest need...to not be a crippled man any more...that the man had become satisfied begging for money to support the life he had instead of asking to be healed.

We need to know what we do *not* have also. We often seem to be ready to give away that which we really do not possess. There is nothing wrong with giving of our blessings and wealth to those in need. Jesus preached that we should. But, most of us don't have that much anyway. And, giving money to a problem instead of really giving what is actually needed is rarely the solution. Money alone rarely meets the needs of others.

It is very important to actually know what we do have. As far as we know, this was Peter's first act of being the vessel for healing someone. How did he know that the Lord would use him to heal this man? How did he know that he had that faith...that gift of healing for this man...inside him? He did know, though. He knew that healing was "such as I have." Wow!

Do you have the gift of faith to reach out and, through the Holy Spirit, heal someone who is in great need? Can the Holy Spirit speak through you to heal emotional, physical and psychological needs that many of those around you need?

There has been lots of teaching in recent days about us using the gifts the Holy Spirit has given us. We sometimes mistakenly assume we can take a survey or somehow come up with what "our gift" is. That often disregards the part of 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 which describes the gifts as "the manifestation of the Spirit" and "the Spirit gives them to each one, just as he determines."

We can mistakenly think we can pick which gift is ours. The dead giveaway in this thinking is how many "prophets" we have yet absolutely no one demonstrates that they have the gift of healing. Where is the wisdom? Where is the discernment that seems to be lacking a lot of the time?

We need to know what we have. But we need to also exercise and demonstrate it by faith as the Holy Spirit leads us to. Peter knew, in that moment, that the Holy Spirit would exercise that

wonderful gift of healing though him for that crippled man. Are you ready to do the same when the Spirit tells you that is exactly what He wants through you now?

We need to know how to give it away. Peter said, I know what I don't have...the silver and gold you are asking for. He then said, "but such as I have"...I know what I have and I know that you need it. I have it for this exact time when you need it. I have it because the Holy Spirit has put it inside of me. "Now, what I have, I give to you." "In the Name of Jesus Christ, rise up and walk."

As much as we brag about being great givers as Christians, we aren't always that great at giving it away. Money, yes. Healing, not so much so. Taking real time to listen to someone, maybe. Really supporting those who can go around the world, where we might not be able to go, so they can give it away on our behalf, pretty rare.

Isn't it interesting that Peter probably exercised the gift of knowledge or discernment from the Holy Spirit to know exactly what He wanted in that situation before he exercised the gift of healing? We need to do the same.

Don't try to solve the problems Jesus puts in front of you with what you do not have. Through the leading of the Holy Spirit, know what you actually do have at your disposal to meet the specific need that He brings across your path. Then, through faith in Him who gives the gifts to share in the first place, give it away to meet those needs. Try that out today. Do it while you are singing that children's song: "Silver and gold have I none (clap, clap)..."

Questions to consider: In addition to discernment to know what is needed in life's situations, does giving away the gift also sometimes require some real patience on our part to wait for it to be revealed? How quickly have you stepped in to help take care

of a problem only to find out you really didn't know what the problem was, or even knew what was really needed? Is it true that the gifts and tools the Lord gives us to meet the needs of the world are far greater than we even realize? How often have the gifts God gives us been "left on the shelf?"

Other Scriptures to study: Acts 4:5-13, the next sermon Peter preached, this time to the leaders of Jerusalem. Acts 6:7-10, great power and wisdom of Stephen. Acts 7:54-60, the results of Stephen's great sermon. Are you ready to be stoned for preaching the truth?

Acts 3:6

**BUT PETER SAID,
SILVER AND GOLD HAVE I NONE;
BUT SUCH AS I HAVE GIVE I THEE:
IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST
OF NAZARETH RISE UP AND WALK.**

CHAPTER FORTY FIVE

BREAD OF LIFE



JOHN 6:48 “I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE.” (KJV, NKJV, NIV, NASB, ASV, RSV)

I am sure you are detecting a theme here. Bread. I want us to memorize three Scriptures teaching us about bread and see how the Lord teaches us some very important aspects about it.

Our first passage we referred to was in chapter 39, from Matthew 6:11. Jesus taught His disciples to pray for daily sustenance, for their “daily bread.” I still very much believe that the Lord was sharing the importance of asking, even for something seemingly simple as the food we needed to eat every day. This would certainly remind every reader of the way He provided for the Israelites for forty years in the desert.

How do you feed a million people, all traveling on foot, through the desert? The Lord literally dropped bread, or manna, from the sky. He provided and He provided enough. He gave them a full day’s worth every day and even provided two day’s worth on the sixth day of the week so they would not have to work/gather bread on the seventh, the day of rest.

When Jesus walked through His ministry, He often provided food for His disciples, such as when they gathered grain from the field. More miraculously, of course, he took two fish and five

loaves of bread, multiplied them and fed over 5,000 people. He is obviously intimately interested in being the source of our existence. Here though, He is calling Himself “the bread of life.”

For context and a great Bible study, read the entire passage, John 6:22-69. He had just fed the thousands with food He miraculously supplied. Next, in the middle of the night, Jesus miraculously walked on water, in a thunderstorm, and joined His disciples in the boat.

The crowd met Jesus and the disciples on the other side of the lake looking for more miraculous food. Jesus very wisely told them in verse 27 to not work for food that spoils but for food that endures to eternal life. In verse 29, He clearly told them this meant to “believe in the one God has sent...Him.”

As with so many other occasions during His ministry, they focused on the miracle not the miracle giver. Verse 30 sees them looking for yet another sign from Him. They even refer to the miracle of the manna from heaven provided for them in the wilderness under Moses.

Jesus told them, as He tells us, that far more important than any earthly bread that would fill our stomachs and then leave them empty again, we need Jesus as our “bread of life.”

Isn't it interesting that Jesus tells them in verse 35 as well as verse 48 that He is the bread of life? Although largely symbolic of the bread we eat every day, Jesus was making it very clear that spiritual life would be impossible without the heavenly bread that God had provided through Him. Looking toward His sacrifice on the cross and the bread and wine we regularly use to symbolize that sacrifice as His followers, Jesus revealed the spiritual truth that His “flesh is real food and my blood is real drink” (verses 52-58) that we absolutely must have if we wish to have eternal life.

Jesus told them that the manna their forefathers ate in the wilderness, although it physically supplied nourishment without which they all would have died, was in a larger sense the prophetic foreshadowing of what He was there to do...give His flesh and blood as the ultimate and only sacrifice for our sins. It is easy to understand why many found this a hard teaching, and some would not believe (verses 60-66).

The twelve didn't really understand yet what He was teaching either. This was the first time Jesus revealed what He knew to be true in Judas' heart. Many decided to turn away and not follow Him any more. Jesus asked the disciples if they would leave Him too and I love Peter's response when Jesus asked them that question. He said, "to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." (verse 68)

Peter got it. Even though He probably also did not completely understand what Jesus meant by His declaration that He was the bread of life, Peter knew he wanted and needed that bread. He knew that Jesus was "the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Although Jesus' illustration here is steeped in huge imagery, we absolutely must grasp the truth that without Jesus as our bread of life, we will spiritually starve as much as any man will starve physically if he stops eating. Does that truth grasp you every time you partake of the Lord's Supper?

We must quite literally be so starved for the "bread of life" that we realize that nothing else takes its place, nothing else will keep us alive and bring us eternal life. Jesus never suggested cannibalism. He did not literally, physically mean that we needed to eat His flesh and drink His blood...although those are the words He used. He did mean that, without His death on the cross, giving His flesh and bleeding His blood, followed by our unflinching

acceptance and allegiance to its truth in our lives, we would all spiritually die!

Jesus is the Bread of Life. We will not live forever without partaking of it. Don't just memorize this short little verse and move on to the next one. Let the profound truth of it sink in, maybe for the first time for you. Realize how important it is for us to daily partake of Him, just like we eat bread to stay alive. Thank Him for being our bread of life, just like we thank Him for the bread we prayed for in the Lord's prayer. Be prepared to share this truth to everyone you meet, because they need this Bread of Life too!

Questions for discussion: We really need to understand how hard this truth would have been for Jesus' listeners to take in. Would you have had just as hard a time understanding what Jesus was saying without having the advantage of looking back on it with the aid and revelation of history and the Holy Spirit? Just like we will become very hungry very quickly if we do not eat food daily, do you ever feel any sense of hunger when you don't daily partake of Jesus' presence and leading through study of the Word and speaking to Him through prayer?

Other Scriptures to study: Matthew 4:3 Satan tempting Jesus by telling Him to turn stones into bread so He could eat. Matthew 16:5-12, Yeast of the Pharisees. Matthew 26:26-29 (Luke 22:1-35), The Lord's supper. John 6:35-68, Parallel verses. Acts 2:42-47. 1 Cor 10:16-17. 1 Cor 11:23-26.

**John
6:48**

**I AM THE
BREAD OF LIFE.**

CHAPTER FORTY SIX

NO OTHER GODS



EXODUS 20:3 “THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME.” (KJV)

“You shall have no other gods before me.” (NKJV, NASB, RSV, NIV)

“You may worship no other god than me.” (TLB)

Obviously, we cannot write about memorizing Scripture without, at some point, referring to the Ten Commandments. I have discovered that the number of Christians who actually know, yet alone have memorized, the Ten Commandments are few. Yes, I know they are Old Testament and we are the “new covenant.” That makes us “free from the law of sin and death.” (Romans 8:2) But that certainly does not make us free from the law, as some of us are prone to think.

Jesus came “to fulfill” the law, not destroy it. (Matthew 5:17) I cringe when a well-meaning brother or sister says, “we are under New Testament grace now. We are no longer under the law.” This tends to make us assume that the law no longer applies to us. My honest reply is, “try murdering someone and see if you are no longer under the law.”

I’m not being judgmental. Instead, I would insist that what Jesus meant by fulfilling the law was that although grace may

provide forgiveness and restoration from our sins, it does not remove us from obeying God's commands for His people.

This is probably a very good example of how we need to "harmonize" Scriptures and not take any single one in exclusion of what other Bible verses say on the subject. I would say this is also very good support for why we need to memorize Scriptures in the Bible. With these words hidden in our heart, we can balance our understanding of truth as it is applied from the Word.

Having said all this, look at the truth given here from the Old Testament Ten Commandments. God says, we are to have no other gods before Him. New Testament or Old, that truth will always be true.

God recognizes that our natural tendency is to create "other gods" that would take priority or first place over Him in our lives. Look at the photo above. How many of us can be found guilty of "worshipping" the TV, sports or other forms of entertainment? I especially like how the photo almost suggests the raised hands of exuberant praise for some great event that probably just happened.

Our Lord is a jealous God. He wants first place in our lives. Do you put Him first? In every aspect of your life? If we are being honest, in our busy and over-stimulated lives the Lord probably rarely comes first. Compare the percentage of your day you read your Bible or pray to how much time you spend texting. Does He come first? Does He even merit an hour out of the twenty four He has given us every day?

2 Corinthians 5:9 says, "We make it our goal to please Him..." In order to make Him first, have no other gods before me and please Him, I find it important to involve Him in every aspect of my life.

Charles Sheldon wrote a book, "In His Steps," where he proposed that before we do anything in life we would first ask,

“What would Jesus do?” When we make a decision, I need to ask, what would Jesus do? Before I give an opinion, maybe I should think, what would Jesus say? Before I go where I would like most to go, maybe think, would Jesus go there?

This verse in the Bible uses the word “gods” in small letters. The people of the world have always searched for other gods, who were not gods at all. The Greeks were famous for coming up with great names for mythical characters to whom they gave godly credits and attributes. The Israelites were always coming upon civilizations that glorified created gods, some even to whom they sacrificed their own children. The Romans were famous for worshiping more gods than anyone could count. When God commanded that we have no other gods before Him, the Israelites didn’t have good understanding of what He meant.

So, do we have other gods before our Lord? You need to answer that from your own heart. It is not hard, however, to find icons and symbols that we might easily substitute for the Lord. Our culture seems hasty to pursue the mystical, witchcraft and even satan worship...that certainly would violate the first commandment and close the door to eternal life.

More mildly, however, we don’t have to look very far to see even the seemingly harmless ideas and beliefs that attempt to easily dethrone God and put logic in His place. Evolution, cosmology and archaeology can easily mislead those who might search for our creator to follow their logic instead.

We each must examine our own hearts. As we memorize this fairly short Scripture verse, don’t let it be lost on you that we all need to pray regularly that the Holy Spirit would reveal to us any gods...activities, habits, amusements...that we might be guilty of putting before Him. It may not seem like we worship those things.

But, let us also not put them first instead of elevating Him to His proper place in our lives and remembering every day, He is God.

Questions to ponder: Do you remember things in your life before you were born again that you could have easily characterized as gods that you put before Jesus? How aggressively should we confront those things in our culture that obviously point toward false-god worship? Can even we, as Christ followers, be guilty of allowing some things to become so important that the Lord might point them out to us as gods that we put before Him? Can the pursuit of wealth and prosperity become a god in our lives?

Scriptures to study: 2 Corinthians 5:9, Psalm 51:10-13, “Create in me a clean heart, O God.” 2 Chronicles 33:1-9, Exodus 20:21-26, Exodus 32:1-10, The Golden Calf.

**EXODUS
20:3**

**THOU SHALT HAVE
NO OTHER GODS
BEFORE ME.**

CHAPTER FORTY SEVEN

NOT ASHAMED



ROMANS 1:16 “FOR I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST; FOR IT IS THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION TO EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH, TO THE JEW FIRST AND ALSO TO THE GREEK.” (KJV, NKJV)

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.” (NIV, NASU, ASV, NASB)

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” (RSV)

“For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is God’s powerful method of bringing all who believe it to heaven. This message was preached first the Jews alone, but now everyone is invited to come to God in this same way.” (TLB)

Ashamed. I reckon this is a word every person alive becomes familiar with in their life. It is one of the earliest motivations we learn.

Think of the new parent who desperately searches for some method to mold the behavior of their first child. Without any experience in parenting, shame is a motivator we all rely on to, hopefully, change our child’s behavior when they act out or make that inevitable mistake and make a mess.

Like the photo above, we use shame to motivate the errant pet who just shredded something or made a mess in the house. How many times do we have to repeat this motivator to achieve success? Some pets never learn. Sometimes, we think we can

mold others' attitudes and behaviors if we can just discover the right motivation to make them think the way we want them to think. How often is shame used to get the results we want?

Of course, society and its moral rules are strong motivators when we act in a way that "everyone" disapproves of. Just look at our recent experiences with DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) initiatives. To be "woke" politically means that someone is "informed, educated and conscious of social injustice and racial inequality." Many of these issues resulted in no less than shame being placed upon any individual who disagreed with the chosen belief or behavior that some groups deemed inappropriate. After all, who gets to be the educator?

"Social motivation theory posits that individuals are intrinsically driven to engage with others, seeking acceptance, connection, and belonging, and that this drive influences their behavior and overall well-being. It suggests that social factors, like social support and recognition, significantly impact motivation alongside internal factors like needs and desires." Is it any wonder, then, why a Christian might be driven to shame by sharing a faith that most people reject?

Paul understood this motivation better than anyone. He was moving into a world that had largely turned its back on God, let alone any belief in Jesus as their Redeemer, with a Gospel that most people would most assuredly reject. How easy it would be for each of the sent Apostles to respond with shame when they proposed a way of life that the world so soundly rejected. Yet without exception, even at the cost of torture, punishment and their own lives, every one of them echoed Paul's testimony, "we are NOT ASHAMED of this Gospel of Jesus Christ."

My wife and I had just arrived in England and were, with a group of Christians from our new family of mostly-British believers, on a corner near London preparing to have a meeting proclaiming Jesus to the public. This was pretty unusual in that culture. Brits in those days were not outspoken about their faith, especially in public. But this group was.

I was comfortable as long as I was in the group. But out of the clear blue, without any warning or preparation, the pastor asked

me if I would step out and give a short message/sermon about my faith to the people gathered on that corner.

It has been said that “confession is good for the soul (but bad for the reputation).” I have to confess, being caught off guard like that, I reluctantly declined what I perceived would be a very difficult task for me. I’m not sure I have to confess “shame” of the Gospel in that instant. But all too late for me, the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart and said, “David, Romans 1:16 would have been a good text for you to speak from.” I had previously memorized Romans 1:16.

Whether I was ashamed of the Gospel or not, I certainly felt shame at not demonstrating the courage to publicly speak out in a foreign land, even on short notice, for the Gospel that I so strongly believe and base my life on. I was quickly reminded of the verse in 1 Peter 3:15. “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.”

Are you ashamed of the Gospel? Maybe, like I was, you might not be ashamed, but rather timid in your approach toward proclaiming the Good News to a dying world for fear of being ridiculed or rejected. I am convinced that “Holy boldness” looks different in every one of us. Find out what that looks like in you. Take a chance. Step out in faith and proclaim the wonderful news that Jesus saves all who call on Him every chance you get.

Questions to ponder: What are some reasons you have for not sharing your faith? Have you had a similar experience as the one described above, where you had opportunity to share but rejected or resisted the opportunity? How does fear prevent us from sharing our faith? Have there been other opportunities where you successfully shared your faith? Is it important to know that we have successfully led others to Jesus? Is it possible to share our faith without gentleness and respect? How do you develop the “Holy Boldness” necessary to share?

Other Scriptures to study: Eph 6:19 “...that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel.” Col 4:3-6 “...that God may open a door for our message...Pray that I may proclaim it clearly...Make the most of every opportunity...that you may know how to answer everyone.” Mark 8:38 “If any man is

ashamed of me and my words...the Son of Man will be ashamed of him.” 2 Timothy 4:2 “Preach the Word; be instant in season and out of season.”

ROMANS
1:16

FOR I AM NOT ASHAMED
OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST;
FOR IT IS THE POWER OF GOD
UNTO SALVATION TO EVERY
ONE THAT BELIEVETH,
TO THE JEW FIRST
AND ALSO TO THE GREEK.

CHAPTER FORTY EIGHT

THE LORD WILL FIGHT FOR YOU



EXODUS 14:14 “THE LORD WILL FIGHT FOR YOU; YOU NEED ONLY BE STILL.” (NIV, RSV)

“The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.” (KJV, NKJV)

“The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent.” (NASB)

“The Lord will fight for you, and you won’t need to lift a finger!” (TLB)

Psalms 46:10 “Be still and know that I am God...”

It might sound a little weird. But, please take a few minutes and go to this link and do nothing but listen to this song:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jvfo1r2ClwoAyDr9-Mpc_s

I am not one for following most “relaxing techniques,” but take a couple of minutes, take a couple of deep breaths and wait on the Lord to speak to your heart. Be still...for just a minute... and concentrate on the knowledge that you know God. Wait for it... You really can take a few minutes to do NOTHING but wait for the Lord.

If you are like me, the fights you identify with are the ones you have fought in your own life. “So much to do, so little time to

do it all.” “The kids are driving me nuts!” “I have so many tasks on my list, I will never get them done.” “Everything in life is attacking me right now.”

I really am not trying to stir you up right now. I’m trying to quiet you down. Right before I started writing this chapter, I literally wrote down fourteen things I needed to do next. That exercise did absolutely nothing to quiet my heart.

The children of Israel had just followed Moses out of Egypt with the promise of a deliverance to the Promised Land. Now, a million of them stood at the Pi Hahiroth (look it up on Google), next to the sea. You know the story. Re-read Exodus 14. The sea before them, Pharaoh behind them, and their response to Moses was that it would have been better to die in Egypt than to die here.

In the midst of what looked like certain death, it was Moses who told them, “the Lord will fight for you, you need only to be still.” I bet they were anything but still, even while God opened up the sea for them and dried the land while they escaped Pharaoh. I can’t imagine being still while a million of us crossed the sea with standing water, literally held back by God’s hand, on both sides of us. Maybe not still, but I bet they were awestruck beyond words when the sea walls collapsed on the Egyptians after their crossing, eliminating the fight forever.

The first part of this verse we are memorizing today: “The Lord will fight for you...” He did not say this, Moses did. Moses knew. The Israelites did not. None of this, however, changed the fact that on that day, the Lord would fight for them and defeat the enemy.

Oh my, how many times is the Lord ready to fight our battles for us and we just push Him aside (metaphorically, of course) and say, “Lord, I trust you but let me handle this.” More often than not, we believe in Him, but we fight the battles ourselves because

it is all we know to do. Our faith goes as far as believing on Him, but not to waiting and watching Him to take care of it. (Silence)

Silence comes to me now because of the conviction of that truth. Whether we count on it or not, the Lord will fight for you! Whether we see it or not, whether we stand on its truth, the Lord stands ready to fight for you. What should you do? The rest of our verse answers that.

I need to “hold my peace.” (KJV) I need to be still (NIV). I need to keep silent (NASB). Do you ever notice that sometimes the reason I can’t hear the voice of the Lord is just because I won’t shut up? Is it true that more often than not, when I rush in and fight the fight on my own, it is totally wasted effort because the Lord is waiting to fight that battle for me...if I will just be still?

“Pharaoh is right behind us...RUN!” “The devil is really fighting me right now...hit him back!” “The car is broke, my kids are screaming and my boss hates me...I just give up!” God is telling you, “I will fight for you.” Do you believe Him? What should you do in response? The Scripture is pretty clear. My part? Be still. Maybe try that and see how it comes out.

Questions to consider: Why? Why is it that our first recourse is to always get in there and fix it ourselves? Why do we think we can do a better job fighting our battles than the Lord can? Are “being still” and “being quiet” the same things? Why, in our culture, is being still so remarkably foreign to us? Can you develop a discipline of stillness in your heart/life?

Other texts to study: Psalm 4:4 “Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.” Psalm 46:10 Psalm 84:4 “...they will be still praising thee.” Mark 4:39 “..he arose and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.” Isaiah

30:15 “In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength.” Isaiah 40:31

**Exodus
14:14**

**THE LORD WILL FIGHT
FOR YOU;
YOU NEED ONLY
BE STILL.**

CHAPTER FORTY NINE

WALK IN THE SPIRIT



GALATIANS 5:25 “IF WE LIVE IN THE SPIRIT, LET US ALSO WALK IN THE SPIRIT.” (KJV, NKJV)

“If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.” (NASB, RSV)

“Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” (NIV)

“If we are living now by the Holy Spirit’s power, let us follow the Holy Spirit’s leading in every part of our lives.” (TLB)

The first thing I notice from this verse is that we can both live in the Spirit and walk in the Spirit. Paul tells us that if we do one, we should also do the other. One might honestly ask, what’s the difference? Good question.

Read the whole passage on this topic, Galatians 4:16-26. Without question, a Christian should not live a life that fulfills the lust of the flesh (4:16). They are contrary to one another (verse 17).

If we read other writings by Paul, we can easily determine that before we are converted/born again, we have that bent toward always pleasing the lust of the flesh. Our fallen nature drives us to do those things which are pleasing to us, yet not pleasing to God. So many times, what pleases us the most are those things Paul lists in 4:19-21. He lists seventeen of them. Wow!

If you want to know if you are walking in the flesh instead of the Spirit, check yourself against Paul’s list here. Are you an adulterer or fornicator? Flesh. Does uncleanness or lewdness dominate your behavior? Hatred, jealousy, outbursts of anger? Probably not walking in the Spirit. Do drunkenness and revelries

(PARTY!) demonstrate your goals in life? Paul tells us in verse 21, “those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Now, we know that Jesus calls us out of those types of lifestyles. He even tells us that when we come to Him for salvation, those things all become old and he makes us something new. Our salvation comes only by faith in Him, not by stopping all those things that He describes as flesh.

We always confess that there is nothing I can do to earn my salvation...it is a free gift, given to us when we trust in His work on the cross. But, when we are born again, the Holy Spirit comes into our lives and teaches us that those things listed in the previous verses that we might have given our lives to are now supposed to NOT be a part of our lives.

When my Grandpa Jack gave his life to the Lord, he testified that he removed the pack of cigarettes from his pocket, threw them away and never smoked another cigarette in his life. Cigarettes would not cast him into hell. But the Holy Spirit that, at that moment, lived in his heart convicted him that smoking was “uncleanness,” so he removed it from his life. That was walking in the Spirit.

Murderers, murder no more. That seems pretty easy for almost all of us. I never murdered anyone, so I must be walking in the Spirit, right? How about my occasional outbursts of anger though? Have I ever been jealous of the success of others around me? Selfish ambitions? That one sounds pretty common to all of us if we are honest. Look at all seventeen of those Paul lists. Do any of those that he lists seem like they would convict you of them? That is walking in the flesh.

Paul doesn't leave us wondering if we can ever live in the Spirit. He lists nine fruits of the Spirit in verses 22-23. Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control are the fruits. You judge an apple tree by its fruit...apples. Our lives should demonstrate the nine fruits if we would truly walk in the Spirit. We memorized Galatians 5:22 in chapter 19 of the first book. Now, we need to examine every part of our lives against those fruits to see if we are truly living in the Spirit...walking in the Spirit. Does your speech reflect kindness and goodness? Walking in the Spirit. Have you replaced those

outbursts of anger with gentleness and self-control. Walking in the Spirit.

By the way, converting from a life in the flesh to one in the Spirit doesn't just happen. Paul gives us the secret to success in verse 24: "those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." That's right...you gotta kill those things!

Immediately, when you fall back into that fleshly habit of a fit of rage, you need to recognize it, stop it, repent of it (hopefully before it results in some action that can even be worse), crucify/kill that bent toward that previous weakness and replace it with the kind of gentleness and self-control that can only come from the Spirit.

Who knew that being a Christian could be so much work? That's right, there is a whole lot more to being a Christian than saying the "sinner's prayer" and checking into our home in heaven. The rest of our life after salvation needs to be devoted to a daily walk that continuously develops us more and more into the likeness and image of Jesus.

That's the difference between living in the Spirit and walking in the Spirit. The implication is that "living" is a matter of being... "walking" is a matter of doing. Walking is action. Every day...maybe every minute...we need to be on the lookout for those old sinful habits of our pre-salvation past that creep right back into us if we aren't careful. When they show up, they need to be crucified and replaced with actions and behaviors which are evidence of the fruit of the Spirit. We need to both live in the Spirit AND walk in the Spirit.

How? I could give you lots of examples of how we can replace each work of the flesh with a fruit of the Spirit. But, you don't need me to tell you. YOU have the Holy Spirit in you to personally answer that question every moment of every day. Just ask Him.

Repent if you need to because you fell back into that habit...you don't need to be saved again, you just need to turn from your old ways. Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you. He will help you eradicate those old lustful habits and replace them with fruit. He will show you what it means to not only live in the Spirit but also walk in the Spirit.

Questions to ponder: So, what is the old habit you are having a hard time breaking? Maybe only share that with a very trusted brother or sister. Does committing to praying for one another and maybe holding each other accountable help us overcome those weaknesses and crucify them? Are you a walker? Describe the physical difference between walking and watching TV and consider how walking in the Spirit differs from living in the Spirit.

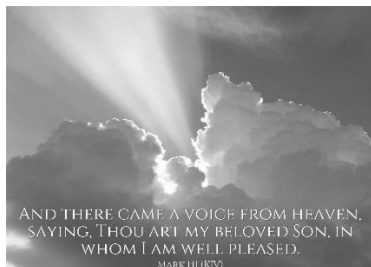
Other Scriptures to study: Romans 12:1-2, “Present your bodies a living sacrifice?” Difference between being conformed to the world and being transformed. What experience have you had with renewing your mind? Galatians 6:1-5, Overtaken and restoring. Bearing each others’ burdens. Examine your work. Bear your own load. James 1:2-6 testing of your faith, perseverance, maturity and wisdom. Ephesians 4:17-32 “Put off your old self...”

**Galatians
5:25**

**IF WE LIVE IN THE SPIRIT,
LET US ALSO WALK IN THE SPIRIT.**

CHAPTER FIFTY

BREAD ALONE ISN'T ENOUGH



LUKE 4:4 “MAN SHALL NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE, BUT BY EVERY WORD OF GOD.” (KJV, NKJV)

“Man shall not live by bread alone.” (ASV, RSV)

“Man shall not live on bread alone.” (NASB, NIV)

“Other things are much more important than bread!” (TLB)

Matthew 4:4 “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” (KJV)

Cool! We get credit for two verses memorized this week. Plus, how could we make it any easier? Luke 4:4 AND Matthew 4:4.

You might also notice that I conclude each of my books with a reminder of what we are trying to do here. The implication of this verse is that we cannot live only on what we eat...bread. We must also have “every word of God” to sustain us! That really stresses the importance of our goal to memorize 100 verses from the Bible. It isn’t just to sharpen our brains. It isn’t just to develop a vital part of our discipleship or discipline. This verse tells us a key ingredient to living life is knowing every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God!

We will miss a lot if we do not notice the context in which this verse comes to us. Jesus is baptized by John. He leaves the Jordan and is led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days. He is tempted by Satan for those forty days and the Gospels tell us nothing about those temptations. It does tell us of three ways Satan tempts Jesus after forty days. After eating nothing for forty days, both Gospels tell us He is hungry. Well, yeah!

Our first look at bread was in Chapter 39, Matthew 6:11 and Luke 11:3, where Jesus taught his disciples to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread.” As we noticed, He is teaching them not only to recognize God’s provision of bread/food in our lives but to remember to thank Him for that provision.

Our second look at bread was in Chapter 45, John 6:48, when Jesus declared that He was the bread of life. He certainly demonstrated that to the disciples in the imagery displayed at the last supper. They didn’t understand it then. But they certainly learned after His death, burial, resurrection and ascension how meaningful and necessary “taking his body which was broken for them” was. We still remember His sacrifice with communion regularly two thousand years later.

Certainly, when Jesus told Satan that He would not give in to the temptation to create bread out of stones, He was teaching us a lesson as well. He was quoting a passage in Deuteronomy 8:3, when Moses summoned all Israel to teach them the decrees of God. The children of Israel were preparing to cross the River Jordan to enter the Promised Land and Moses was reminding them of all God had guided them through for the past forty years.

Moses reminded them how God led them through the desert those forty years, “to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.” Verse 3 is our reference verse. Moses tells them, “He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live by bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.”

Now, in striking parallel to that previous trip through the desert, Jesus, fresh from forty days in the wilderness desert, certainly having fed on manna from heaven that did not feed his stomach but nourished his spirit, reminds Satan of those same words...“man does not live by bread alone.”

Man eats bread. He needs it to survive. God provides it for us but bread alone isn’t enough. We need the words that proceed from the mouth of the Lord.

How does the Lord give us those “every words” that proceed from His mouth? He was there...and is still here for us...to provide us bread to eat AND words from His mouth. Those words

feed us far more than bread ever will. Like the water that Jesus provided for the woman at the well who, when she had drunk it, would never thirst again, Jesus promises us not only bread for our stomachs, but through His words brings everything we need for life.

The Bible gives us so many of these words. We need an “every word from the mouth of God” Bible to spiritually feed us. We need to devour it like we can’t live without it.

We receive and study every word that proceeded from the mouth of Jesus while He ministered for three years. Those words are priceless to us. We cannot be nourished spiritually nor grow in faith without them.

We also need a church in which “every word” proceeds from Jesus through His messenger week after week to teach us and fill us with truth. If you haven’t found one, don’t rest until you do. If you don’t attend one of those churches, you must. We cannot grow, we cannot thrive, we cannot survive without “every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” any more than we can long survive without eating bread.

You will not live by bread alone. You need bread, the food the Lord provides. But you need every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord more. Feed that hunger with his Word every day.

Questions to consider: How does spiritual hunger differ from physical hunger? Do they have some things in common? Jesus fasted for forty days in the desert. Afterwards, He was obviously very hungry. Was Jesus’ reply to Satan’s temptation not only meant to confound that temptation but also teach us a truth about our own existence? How do we live by “every word that proceeds from the mouth of God?” Like Jesus did here, is it possible for us to quote some of those words, perhaps that we memorize here, to confound the temptations of Satan too? Is it possible to be so spiritually hungry for God’s word that we can forget about the physical hunger, especially after a very long fast?

Other Scriptures to study: Matthew 17:21 “This kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.” (Mark 9:29)

1 Corinthians 7:5 “...give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.” Acts 2:42 “They devoted themselves to the teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

A song to remember: Hey! I’ve heard this song before. Remember Chapters 20 and 22 from the first book? This song incorporates today’s memory verse too. Check it out:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k3S1wfXmYPw>

**LUKE 4:4
MATTHEW 4:4**

**MAN SHALL NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE,
BUT BY EVERY WORD OF GOD.**

SUMMARY

CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE MATTER



ECCLESIASTES 12:13 “LET US HEAR THE
CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE MATTER....” (KJV)

FIFTY VERSES! Wow! Have you really memorized 50 verses now? Half way to our goal of memorizing 100 verses from the Bible! You are awesome!

So, how are we doing? I hope you are one who has joined me to memorize all fifty verses we have written about so far. I know the Lord will richly bless you if you do. I also know, as we have discussed, that you are probably seeing the spiritual benefits of this discipline as well.

I know some of our readers will have used this book for other purposes too. Did you find this a good book for Bible Study and devotional time? Did this prove to be a helpful aid to your Sunday School class or Group Study? Pastors, did you get any good sermons from these chapters?

Hey, I firmly believe that the Lord told me to write these books. I am going to be faithful and obedient to do what He has

told me to do. As a result, I am definitely leaving the results up to Him. He can use this resource any way He sees fit.

Obviously, in accordance with our goal, we are now half of the way to memorizing 100 Bible verses. I hope you are one of those who has taken this goal seriously and decided to plunge into the spiritual discipline of Bible verse memorization. I say again to you, keep it up! If you have memorized 50 verses you cannot help but already notice the golden value of what we are doing and already see benefits coming into your life from being faithful to this goal. I encourage you to purchase the next book or forge forward online to memorize the next 25 toward our goal of one hundred.

If you are one of those who has used this book as a devotional or personal Bible Study, I hope you have found it to be as valuable as I have. I know that many of these chapters express my personal opinions and my doctrinal understanding of what the Bible says to us through these treasured Scriptures. Please feel free to study them further, again and again. I have found that we cannot over-study God's Word and often find even more "spiritual nuggets" as we study it another time. Feel free to send me your opinions of the book and tell me how we can make it better for all of us in "the church."

Sunday School classes or Bible Study groups – I hope I have stimulated discussion. It is important to consider different viewpoints on interpretation of the Scripture without sacrificing the value of its truth. Is there sufficient material here to help teach a great lesson? Have we been clear and concise without sacrificing the depth of spiritual application of each verse? Please also share with me how we can make this the most valuable spiritual tool for the Lord to use.

Hopefully, you have already found the online link to “Sword Drill.” You can easily find all of this on our website at www.hidetheword.us If not, please give it a try from the contents section.

I know that we all probably have different approaches to memorize the Word. Hopefully, the index card method might have worked for you. I tried to give you a computer-based approach to help make this easy online as well.

Obviously, this is not the conclusion to our goal, study of the Word or writing of books. If the Lord is willing, I hope to continue writing the third and fourth books, each with 25 memory verses for our use in memorizing one hundred verses of the Bible. So, I encourage you to PRESS ON! Let’s go to Book 3, HIDE THE WORD, Part 3. Join me and watch your spirit grow as you memorize and know more and more of His Word!

God bless you in your faithfulness to Him,

Dave Matthews.

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The **New King James Version (NKJV)** is a translation of the Bible in contemporary English. Published by Thomas Nelson, the complete NKJV was released in 1982. With regard to its textual basis, the NKJV relies on a modern critical edition for the Old Testament, while opting to use the Textus Receptus for the New Testament.

The **New International Version (NIV)** is a translation of the Bible into contemporary English. Published by Biblica, the complete NIV was released on October 27, 1978 with a minor revision in 1984 and a major revision in 2011. The NIV offers a balance between a word-for-word and thought-for-thought translation and is considered by many as a highly accurate and smooth-reading version of the Bible in modern English.

The **Revised Standard Version (RSV)** is an English translation of the Bible published in 1952 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. This translation is a revision of the **American Standard Version (ASV)** of 1901, and was intended to be a readable and literally accurate modern English translation.

The RSV was the first translation of the Bible to make use of the Dead Sea Scroll of Isaiah. The New Testament was first published in 1946, the Old Testament in 1952, and the Apocrypha in 1957. In later years, the RSV served as the basis for two

revisions—the **New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)** of 1989, and the **English Standard Version (ESV)** of 2001.

The **New American Standard Bible (NASB)**, also simply **NAS** for "New American Standard") is a translation of the Bible in contemporary English. Published by the Lockman Foundation, the complete NASB was released in 1971. New revisions were published in 1995 and 2020. The NASB relies on recently published critical editions of the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts. It is known for preferring a literal translation style that generally preserves the structure of the original language when possible (formal equivalence), rather than an idiomatic style that attempts to match natural English usage.

The Living Bible (TLB or LB) is a personal paraphrase, not a translation, of the Bible in English by Kenneth N. Taylor and first published in 1971. Taylor used the American Standard Version of 1901 as his base text.

The **English Standard Version (ESV)** is a translation of the Bible in contemporary English. Published in 2001 by Crossway, the ESV was "created by a team of more than 100 leading evangelical scholars and pastors." The ESV relies on recently published critical editions of the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



David L. Matthews, born in 1954, grew up in the pastor's home of Rev Don G. Matthews, one of five brothers. He graduated from Southport High School in Indianapolis in 1972 and the U.S. Air Force Academy in 1976. He married Cheryl Meurer of Colorado Springs the day after he graduated.

Dave and Cheryl lived through 19 years of a successful Air Force career and raised four wonderful children, Chris, Andrea, Joshua and Nathanael, while traveling around the world. Dave was an instructor pilot, fighter pilot, flight examiner, commander, executive officer and squadron operations officer until he retired from the Air Force in 1995.

The family moved to southern Indiana and Dave began a 22 year career, flying for United Parcel Service until he retired in 2017. During that time he flew the Boeing 727, MD-11 and the Airbus 300.

Dave has been associated with the Bethel Ministerial Association his entire life. He holds ministerial credentials with them and has been both a lay-preacher and pastor for his entire adult life. He credits the majority of his training in the Christian faith, as well as his abilities to preach, teach and speak to the eighteen years of sitting under his father's ministry.

Dave's writing skills started at the Air Force Academy and continued through training in the Air Force, primarily in technical writing and teaching. He has continued that training, now to include this experiment in writing discourses and lessons on memorizing and applying well known Scriptures from the Bible. He believes the Lord has called him to challenge fellow Christians to memorize 100 Bible Verses through this book.

Dave's interests include private flying, exercise, participation in local politics and serving regularly with the BMA and at his home church, Graceland Church of New Albany, Indiana. He sadly lost his wife of nearly 49 years, Cheryl, to complications from a stroke and dearly misses "the love of his life", second only to his love for Jesus. He dedicates this book to her memory and the memories of decades of living lives dedicated together to the Lord, living around the world and raising four great children.