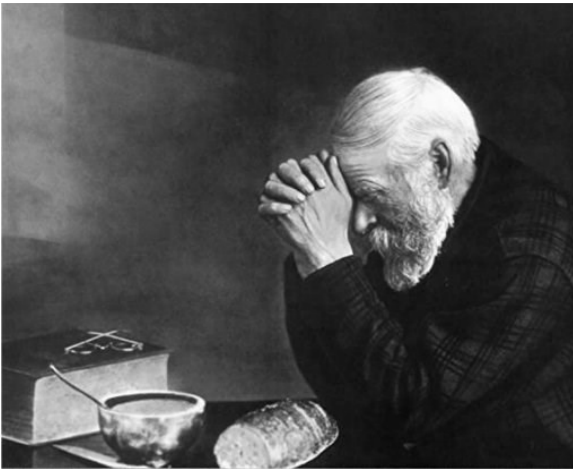


HIDE THE WORD

III



**“THY WORD HAVE I HID IN MY
HEART”**

Dave Matthews

HIDE THE WORD III

Copyright © 2026 by Rev Dave Matthews

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without written permission from the author.

ISBN: 979-8-89852-656-6

Printed in the USA by 48 Hour Books (www.48HrBooks.com)

DEDICATION



I dedicate this book to my brother, Dan Matthews. Born just one year after me, Dan and I grew up together in a pastor's home with the unconditional love of a devoted mother and father. We fought like brothers fought, but also learned to love the Lord, our family, our church and the world around us. How five brothers could fight like cats and dogs but still learn to love and defend each other and the family is a great example of God's grace.

Dan was one of my biggest fans in life, and I was one of his! He supported me in sports, he campaigned for me for Band Captain, he prayed and supported me at the Air Force Academy and throughout my adult life. We only grew closer as we got older. There was never anything Dan wouldn't do for me if I asked.

As we grew older, most often living in places far apart, we always stayed close as we loved our wives, raised our kids and always held the Lord and family at the top of our priorities.

Dan demonstrates exemplary Christian qualities throughout his life, caring for widows, visiting the needy, many times taking care of everyone else's needs before his own. He has certainly demonstrated a Christ-like spirit to me and everyone around him...a great example of "Jesus in the flesh." Thanks Dan!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	7
Chapter Fifty One – John 12:32 – Lift Him Up	11
Chapter Fifty Two – Genesis 1:3 – Let There Be Light	15
Chapter Fifty Three – Matthew 11:28 - Rest	21
Chapter Fifty Four – Matthew 11:29 – Yokes on You.....	25
Chapter Fifty Five – Matthew 11:30 – Easy Yoke, Light Burdens	29
Chapter Fifty Six – Deuteronomy 6:4 – One God.....	33
Chapter Fifty Seven – Isaiah 53:5 – God Man.....	39
Chapter Fifty Eight – John 3:30 – Increase Decrease.....	45
Chapter Fifty Nine – 2 Chronicles 7:14 – My People.....	51
Chapter Sixty – 1 Corinthians 10:13 – No Temptation.....	57
Chapter Sixty One – Psalm 1:1 – Blessed is the Man.....	63
Chapter Sixty Two – Psalm 1:2 – His Delight.....	71
Chapter Sixty Three – Psalm 1:3 – Shall Prosper.....	77
Chapter Sixty Four – Matthew 6:10 – Thy Kingdom Come.....	83
Chapter Sixty Five – Matthew 6:12 – Forgive Our Debts.....	89
Chapter Sixty Six – Matthew 6:13 – Deliver Us From Evil.....	95
Chapter Sixty Seven – James 3:17 – Wisdom From Above.....	103
Chapter Sixty Eight – 2 Corinthians 5:7 – Faith.....	109
Chapter Sixty Nine – Romans 10:17 – Faith By Hearing.....	115
Chapter Seventy – Psalm 51:10 – A Clean Heart.....	121
Chapter Seventy One – Psalm 51:11 – Cast Me Not Away.....	128
Chapter Seventy Two – Psalm 51:12 – Restore My Joy.....	133
Chapter Seventy Three – Psalm 51:13 – Teach Transgressors.....	139
Chapter Seventy Four – Ecclesiastes 12:1 – Remember Thy Creator..	145
Chapter Seventy Five – Psalm 42:1 – As the Deer Panteth.....	151
Conclusion.....	157
Bibliography	160
About the Author.....	163

INTRODUCTION

Book 3! As a runner, I always remembered the third lap. I started my freshman year of high school as a mile runner. I am proud to say I set the Freshman mile record at Manual High School in 1969 at the Indianapolis City Track Meet.

I was inspired by Jim Ryun, a young American from Kansas who set a lot of running world records at very young ages. I read his book in which he described how hard he worked out to achieve such success.

The mile run was completed on a standard quarter mile track in four laps. The third lap was always the hardest. In the first lap, a runner is fresh, not overly exhausted and trying to set a fast pace before his body naturally slows down. The second lap is all about pace. This is when one concentrates on setting a pace that will ultimately achieve the desired time at the finish. The last lap, of course, is setting up for the final sprint to the finish line, the “kick.” You hopefully will have enough left at the end that it looks more like a sprint than just dragging it to the end.

The third portion of any race was always the real “meat and potatoes” of the race. If you had a competitive third lap, you were probably going to end well. Problem was, on the third quarter of any race, you were really getting tired, the oxygen debt was building and you just wanted the race to be over.

This lap was always hard work. The end isn’t quite in sight yet. You don’t have the wind and strength you did at the beginning. And this lap always seemed to present the real challenge of the competition. The prepared runner could psych out his opponent on the third lap...you could convince him that your supply of energy was endless while he was sure his was almost gone. Third laps were always murder.

Well, welcome to your third lap! If you are using these books as good Bible Study aids or teaching help, I still hope you are finding them extremely useful. If, however, you have memorized 50 verses already, you know full well how much work this has already become. Are you ready for twenty five more?

If you have memorized 50 verses, you most likely have a well-established routine for memorizing verses. Keep it up! Like a runner, at 50 you have paced yourself well and developed spiritual discipline and strength you probably thought you never had. Well done! Keep pushing through this third quarter.

Of course, it never hurts to remind ourselves of seven great reasons to memorize the Word:

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

Within these next twenty five chapters we have included several Scriptures in sequence four times. These verses are ones that I memorized in the past because of choruses that we sang in Bible Studies and, in one case, The Lord's Prayer. As we mentioned in Book 1, it is good to incorporate verses in our list that we are already familiar with or have already been quoting for a long time. This also helps us more easily achieve our goal of 100 Bible verses memorized.

Of course, knowing the Bible reference for memorized verses is pretty important too. You never know when you might need to use those parts of your “Sword of the Spirit” to help someone or teach a class.

That also reminds us that the “Sword Drill” and other tools are available to help you memorize Scriptures in our on-line resource at [**www.hidetheword.us**](http://www.hidetheword.us). You can also find this reference and many others at my ministry website at [**www.daveweb1.com**](http://www.daveweb1.com)

Please feel free to drop me an email any time with your comments, suggestions and even criticisms. That link is also available on the website or just email me at [**Daveweb1@aol.com**](mailto:Daveweb1@aol.com).

I certainly hope and pray that what we have provided through these books of “Hide the Word” has been helpful and inspirational to you. This isn’t intended to be a process of rote memory of a bunch of Bible verses and “score keeping.” This is a discipline which our Lord certainly modeled and wants to have us each incorporate into our spiritual lives. I pray that the rich blessings of our exercise here are becoming yours more and more each day.

God bless you on this third lap!

Dave

CHAPTER FIFTY ONE

LIFT HIM UP



JOHN 12:32 “AND, I, IF I BE LIFTED UP FROM THE EARTH, WILL DRAW ALL MEN UNTO ME.” (KJV)

“And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.” (NKJV)

“And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.” (NASB)

“But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.” (NIV)

Jesus said, “If I am lifted up, I will draw all men unto Me.” I always took that to mean that it is my job to lift Him up. He will draw men unto Himself. However, if you look at the next verse, you can see that He was describing the kind of death He was going to die. Literally, Jesus knew the cross was going to lift Him above the earth to His death and, by doing so, He was going to draw all men unto Himself. Jesus knew the cross was ahead of Him and He went there anyway...for you and me.

This was one of only a few examples when God spoke in an audible voice from heaven. In verse 23, Jesus said it was time for the Son of Man to be glorified. In verse 28, He says, “Father, glorify your name!” and God’s voice came from heaven in answer: “I have glorified it, I will glorify it again.”

Now, if it was me, I think after that I would have believed in Him implicitly. However, after all the miracles, after all the voices from heaven, after all of His teaching, verse 37 tells us, “they still would not believe in Him.” What a testimony to the frailty of our understanding and faith in God! Apparently, if it was me there, I would not have believed in Him any more than His disciples did.

Jesus did “lift Himself” up by submitting to crucifixion on a cross just a short time later. His death, burial, resurrection and ascension all followed, documented not only in the Bible but in recorded history as well. For the next two thousand years, He has been lifted up and has drawn all men unto Him as He said He would. Most still choose to not believe. But all have been drawn unto Him. No man or woman will stand before Him with excuse of not being drawn.

Despite the literal interpretation of what He said in verse 32, which we memorize today, I believe Jesus was prophesying of our role in lifting Him up too. It is not a bad thing to lift up pictures of what can be assumed to be a facsimile of Jesus, like the photo above. I don’t criticize those who choose to wear a cross. That can lift up Jesus to others. Thousands of disciples and missionaries over the last two millennia have given their lives lifting Jesus up to those around the world. They lifted Jesus up. He drew men and women unto Himself.

I take John 12:32 to be a challenge to my life as a follower of Jesus. Yes, He spoke of it as a fact of His sacrifice for me and you.

Now, it is my job to lift Him up any way I can, so by the Spirit He will continue to draw all men unto Himself.

Despite the pictures, despite the cross/jewelry, despite all the preaching and teaching I can do, I think the most important “lifting” I can do is to look so much like Jesus to everyone around me that all they see is Jesus.

In this world, we tend to do everything we can to lift ourselves up. We compete, we promote ourselves, we do everything we can to make ourselves look better. What Jesus is calling us to do is show less and less of ourselves and more and more of Jesus...in ourselves.

Back in John 3:30, John the Baptist made a very short statement that will be a memory verse of ours very soon. He said, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” Can you say that? I have spent a lot of time in my adult life trying to make that truth true in me.

The world looks for those who promote themselves. We call people leaders who naturally draw people to follow them. What Jesus calls us to do is lift Him up. If you do that, you might just have to stop lifting yourself up. You might need to be more humble, more serving, more like Jesus.

He lifted Himself up by going to the cross. He draws all men unto Him. Now, He tells us to lift Him up. If we do, He always draws men unto Himself. And that is our goal as disciples...lift Him up, watch Him draw all men unto Himself. Are you doing that?

Questions to ponder: Who do you promote more? You or Jesus? What traits best model Jesus in us? What traits in you do not show Jesus is alive in you? How easy is it to serve others before yourself? If you could eliminate one specific non-

Christlike aspect of yourself, what would it be? Who are some examples of the most Christ-like persons you know? How have you seen the Lord show you what traits in you most need to be decreased to become more like Him?

Other Scriptures to Consider: John 3:30, James 4:10 “Humble yourself before the Lord, and he will lift you up.” He will lift me up? 1 Peter 5: 5-6 “Humble yourselves under God’s mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time.” James 4:6 “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” Ephesians 4:2. Mark 9:35, “If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all.”

**JOHN
12:32**

**AND, I, IF I BE LIFTED UP
FROM THE EARTH,
WILL DRAW ALL MEN UNTO ME.**

(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 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/hidden/drill.html)

CHAPTER FIFTY TWO

LET THERE BE LIGHT!



GENESIS 1:3 “AND GOD SAID, ‘LET THERE BE LIGHT,’ AND THERE WAS LIGHT.” (NKJV, KJV, NIV, NASB)

“Then God said, ‘Let there be light.’ And light appeared.” (TLB)

Please watch:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q7JsK50NGaA>

I am not a big fan of concert/entertainment worship. I'm not talking about going to a concert and enjoying a worshipful song with thousands of other fellow Christians. I have done that several times in my adult life. There is a place for that. I'm talking about trying to bring the entertainment environment into the local church, a place that should be reserved for corporate worship and praise to the Lord in everyone's hearts among the body.

Having said that, if you watched the video above, you will no doubt have been awed by the special effects presented by Hillsong Worship in their rendition of “Let There Be Light.” I was especially “wowed” by that moment they took a totally dark auditorium and exposed it to as bright a light as they could turn

on. The message of that song, “Let There Be Light” was as closely demonstrated as possible by the sudden flash of extremely high intensity light generated at the right moment. It moved me.

One of my very favorite verses describing the creation of everything by our God is this verse in Genesis 1:3. I wish I could have been there to see it. No man was there to witness it. God was alone. He spoke, “Let there be light” and there was light. Wow! One moment, light did not exist. The next, in response to His words, there was light.

Some have tried to explain this very first miracle of God's creation. I'm not sure I can. God's magnificence is beyond our understanding. I find it totally awesome though, that He has given us the ability and the desire to try to understand it. I would dare to try to understand Him, even though He is so far beyond my ability to grasp. That magnificence only serves to help me worship Him even more. I love it.

To the best of my poor ability to describe it, this is the only time I can think of when it appears that, apart from Him alone, the light was without a source. When He said, “Let there be light,” it was not coming from the sun, moon or stars. All of the lights in the universe were created on Day 4. No, He said, “Let there be light,” and there was light!

Our only understanding and experience of light is one which comes from a source. If we had been there, I'm not sure we could have identified a source from which the light came. He said “Let there be light,” and the light that did not exist the previous moment, now existed. This is certainly God taking that which only He can comprehend and placing it into terms we can try to understand in our limited flesh.

Light was created at that moment. Some might say that He was that source of light. But, remember, He created light...by His word. He did not create Himself. He created light!

If you study further into the creation, you will see in the following verses that He created the division between light and darkness. He called the light day and the darkness He called night. That was Day 1.

God used the division of light and “less light” or darkness to describe what we have forever since known as a day, giving us a reference for us to understand TIME. Perhaps our best understanding of what had happened was, He indeed created time itself.

God is, was and always will be “outside of time.” When we return to our heavenly home, we also will, only then, be able to comprehend what we cannot understand here...what it means to be outside of time. In that reference, we are told we shall forever be in the light.

This concept of time, He created at the beginning. It was our intended plane of reference in which we would be able to understand our concept of flesh and life on this planet.

Before the fall of Adam and Eve, time was not intended to have an end. When the Lord told them that on the day they would disobey and eat of the forbidden fruit they would die, He surely was describing the event under which not only would we experience days and nights He had created, but we would also have a limit to those days. After the number of days that only God knows, we each come to the end of our time and return to the timelessness of eternity.

Less than a century ago, scientists believed that the movement they observed in the universe showed that that universe was expanding. In their logical understanding, they also believed that

if the evidence seems to show that all of the universe is expanding, it surely must have expanded FROM a smaller universe in the past. If this was taken to its logical conclusion, given enough time for this expansion, everything must have originally come from what they now call, “The Big Bang.”

I'm not so sure that we are so well capable of understanding something so magnificent as the creation of the universe that we can rightly claim we know what happened at the beginning. Science wants us to think they know. But I am skeptical...not of the fact that there was a beginning, but of their expressed understanding of how it all happened.

Astronomers were absolutely sure that when we sent the James Webb telescope into space and looked back farther than we have ever been able to look, they would surely find evidence of stars and galaxies not yet formed in the early universe...close to the time of the Big Bang. Surprisingly, what they have found defies their explanations.

We are actually seeing, in what they believe to be those early days of the universe, fully formed, very large, fully developed galaxies already in existence. I'm sure science will try to give us a plausible explanation for what seems to be a mystery that doesn't fit their theories of the formation of the universe soon.

The real problem here is that science does not use the framework to explain the possibility of God creating something fully developed when He said, “let it exist.” Let's give them a little bit of slack though. Remember, we cannot explain how God said, “Let there be light” and there just was light either. But that's OK. He is God! We are not.

Isn't it great that we serve a God who goes so far beyond our understanding? In our “human-ness,” we want to put God into a box that lets us perfectly describe Him so He makes perfect sense

to us. He is by nature beyond our understanding. But, isn't it even greater that He so wanted us to understand and worship Him that He took the time to tell us He created it all and presented it in terms He knew we might be able to understand?

God said, "Let there be light," and there was light! Let the magnificence of that creation try to sink in. Let the mystery and majesty of that event drive you to your knees to worship so great a God! Sing with me, "How great is our God!"

Questions to consider: Is it possible for one to believe the claims of science when it seems to contradict what the Bible says? How do we harmonize the Genesis account of creation with the apparent age of the universe? When God created Adam and Eve, what did they see in the night sky? How long did it take God to create the stars in the universe? Watch the series, "The Heavens Declare" by Kyle Justice on YouTube to see some Biblical answers to many of the questions of science. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_7iQzm4n07U

Other Scriptures to study: Isaiah 40:22 "It is He who sits above the circle of the earth...who stretches out the heavens like a curtain and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in." Psalm 147:4 "He counts the number of the stars; He calls them by name." Job 9:9; Job 22; Job 25 Psalm 8:3 "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained." Jeremiah 31:35, Isaiah 40:26, Amos 5:8. It is so interesting that, in Genesis 1:16, the writer describes the magnitude of God's creation of the universe in such a casual phrase as, "He also made the stars."

Another song to remember: “How Great is Our God” by Chris Tomlin

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KBD18rsVJHk>

GENESIS

1:3

AND GOD SAID,
'LET THERE BE LIGHT,'
AND THERE WAS LIGHT.

CHAPTER FIFTY THREE

REST



MATTHEW 11:28 “COME UNTO ME, ALL YE THAT LABOUR AND ARE HEAVY LADEN, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST.” (KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB, RSV)

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” (NIV)

“Come to me and I will give you rest-all of you who work so hard beneath a heavy yoke.” (TLB)

The Lord knew. He knew work was going to be hard. It wasn't originally meant to be that way. But, after the fall of Adam and Eve, God told them that life was going to be tough.

Look at Genesis 3:17-19. “In toil you shall eat of it (the cursed ground) all the days of your life.” “In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground.”

It seems true, especially in our American culture, that most of us do not like hard work. I don't know anyone that looks forward to going back to work after a really nice vacation and “hitting it hard” again. Given the choice of working really hard and having rest, I kind of prefer rest. But I also like to eat.

For so much of man's history, he has had to work very hard just to exist. Hard work was needed to till the fields, plant the seed, remove weeds and eventually harvest the crops just to feed ourselves. Hunting for food was no easier.

With improvements in technology, we have been able to replace a lot of that hard work with automation and machines, freeing us to do many other things. Yet, to be able to provide for ourselves and our families, we still find that we have to work hard. In another place in the Bible the writer says, "If a man doesn't work, he shouldn't eat."

Hard work is encouraged. We should be industrious. Laziness is discouraged. We grow up being told that we should work hard to provide. Added to that, we do not all have the same opportunities to have easier or harder lives...sometimes, we just have to work as hard as we can to "make ends meet."

There have been many times when I totally understood those words "all who are weary and heavy laden/burdened." Work is meant to be hard...that's why we call it work. It isn't normally "play." After lots of weeks of what seems like endless labor, I get very tired and need rest. It is easy to identify with weariness and feeling a heavy burden.

Jesus knew we would feel this way. His recommendation to us in Matthew 11 was that when we feel this way, we should come to Him. What he literally said He would give us was rest.

I'm pretty sure He did not mean that if we would come to Him we would never have to work again. Those who have tried that lifestyle found that work still needed to be done to eat. No, what I believe He meant was, at the very least, He can give our hearts rest, maybe even in the midst of our hard work.

Because of the fall of sin, we each were born into an existence that cannot continue without work. Sometimes, that work will be

hard...maybe all of the time. Hard, industrious work is encouraged. But it can also become a huge burden, sometimes harder than we can bear. Jesus says to us, “Come to me. I will give you rest.” That may tell us that real rest might only come through Him.

We will next learn the following verses of Matthew 11, verses 29 and 30. They are fairly simple verses to memorize. We have several songs that can help us memorize these verses too. But more importantly, the following verses tell us HOW the Lord takes us from a state of weariness, burdened and carrying a heavy load to rest in Him. For now though, accept the truth Jesus tells us here: If we feel in this state (heavy laden), and if we will come to Him, He will give us rest.

Questions to ponder: Why must work be so hard? Is there such a thing as an “easy” job? Have you ever experienced that shock of suddenly being out of work? At that point, does anyone think that work, as hard as it can be, might be better given up or forgotten about? How easy is it to work so hard (work-a-holics) that we find it impossible to ever find rest? Is it possible to work too hard and never give yourself a rest? How about working on Sundays?

Other Scriptures to study: Proverbs 10:4, slack hands and diligent work. Prov 13:4, the sluggard versus the diligent. Prov 22:29, 2 Peter 3:14, Prov 6:6, the example of the ant. Prov 13:11, “he that gathers by labor shall increase.” Ecclesiastes 10:18 Slothfulness and idleness. 2 Thess 3:11 Some working not at all but are busybodies. Prov 14:23 “In all labor there is profit.” Ecc 9:10 “Whatsoever thy hand finds to do, do it with all of thy might.”

Songs to remember: I searched for an old hymn that comes straight from this verse. I was disappointed that I didn't find the one I learned that helped me memorize this verse. But I found many others that you might be able to enjoy and use to help memorize this Scripture just as well. Have a listen:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pRzRrc7XEjs>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=twLO6NEILOA>

Matthew

11:28

**Come unto me
all ye that labour
and are heavy laden
and I will give you rest.**

Reminder: If you use the website at www.hidetheword.us, and go to any table of contents for any of the books, there is a section titled, "SONGS TO REMEMBER." That section lists all the songs we recommend in these chapters with easy-to-click links you can use instead of typing the website addresses in by yourself.

CHAPTER FIFTY FOUR

YOKES ON YOU



MATTHEW 11:29 “TAKE MY YOKE UPON YOU AND LEARN OF ME, FOR I AM MEEK AND LOWLY IN HEART, AND YOU SHALL FIND REST UNTO YOUR SOULS.” (KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB, RSV)

“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” (NIV, NASB)

“Wear my yoke-for it fits perfectly-and let me teach you; for I am gentle and humble, and you shall find rest for your souls; for I give you only light burdens.” (TLB)

I retired in 2017. By now, I would have thought I would have found rest. You may identify with me when I say, I have been busier since I retired than before.

Growing older isn't easy at all. I have had two major surgeries, nursed my wife for four years before she passed away and tried to keep a home repaired and maintained that was way more than I bargained for. I identify with the description in verse 28 that describes me as “labored and heavy laden.”

I will admit that I come to Jesus regularly and seek rest. I have found, however, that the load doesn't appear to be lightening up

any time soon. If I define the rest I think He is talking about, it isn't coming in any particular hurry. Maybe He means something else.

I hope my writings help you to find some answers to problems like these in your life too. A lot of times when He is leading me to write about them, I find He is also trying to teach me what He means by what He said.

As He spoke to me in the middle of last night, He told me that the rest He is referring to is not a removal of what He has given me. In other words, if I am coming to Him, expecting Him to remove my labor and burdens, I might be waiting a while.

As I mentioned in the last chapter, the “rest” He is referring to is a rest in our hearts, but maybe not a rest from all labor. Sometimes it seems as if immediately after one burden ceases, another one takes its place. No, I think what He meant by rest was a rest “IN” the labor or burden, not necessarily a rest “from” the burden. Look what He says here in verse 29.

Jesus told us in verse 28 to come to Him and He would give us rest. Immediately following, in the next verse, He tells us to take His yoke on us. What? Tell me to rest in one verse and then tell me to take a yoke on me in the next? Yep.

Notice the image of a yoke above. It has a place for two bearers. There are bridles that hold just one beast available. But the yoke has two places available. I think that the yoke Jesus expects us to take is a yoke WITH Him!

He is in that yoke beside us. We are not alone. His rest comes from the fact that He who created the universe is next to us when we struggle and have burdens. He carries those burdens with us. Notice the three things He tells us about putting that yoke on.

First, He says we need to learn from Him. We need to learn how Jesus bears the load and expects us to bear it as well. He is with us and promised to never leave us nor forsake us.

Learning from Him means seeing how He would help us bear the load of life...not do it alone. Maybe, instead of working hard until I drop, it might be smart to remember He is in the yoke with me, work WITH Him, not against Him or by ourselves and learn how He would do whatever needs to be done.

Do you ever come to Him after it all falls apart and ask Him to fix it? How much easier would the load be if we came to Him before and during the situation to see how He might think we should handle it.

Second, He says, “I am meek and lowly of heart”... “gentle and humble.” I might need to meet the challenges of life with the same gentleness and humility. That kind of goes against our normal human nature. My tendency is to charge right in, examine the situation and wipe out anything that doesn’t contribute to the solution to the problem. How many others have I hurt with that kind of bull-headedness?

Third, He says, “you will find rest for your souls.” It is kind of like, if you will get in this yoke with Me, if you will learn of Me instead of trying to do it your way all by yourself, and if you will be gentle and humble in this work we will do together...then, you will find rest! And the rest you will find, though it might not immediately provide physical rest for your body, will provide rest for your soul. Soul rest often provides physical relief as well.

Knowing that I need the kind of “soul rest” that only comes this way, I think I will try to take on His yoke, follow His three instructions above in bearing it and see how differently that might help me bear the labor and burdens of this life than how I am doing it now. Does that seem like a smart thing to do? Give it a try.

Questions to ponder: Why do we choose the hard way to do things more often than we choose the Lord's way? How often do you come up with your own plan for solutions to problems only to realize your way was not the Lord's way? How does being gentle and humble help us work better/smarter and be able to bear the loads of life? Temporally, we are stuck in the "now." Jesus sees way ahead of us into the future only He knows. Doesn't it seem smarter to "team up" with Him instead of "plowing ahead" on your own?

Other Scriptures to study: "I am the way" John 14:6 Psalm 37:7 "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." Prov 14:12 and Prov 16:25 "There is a way that seems right to a man..." Hebrews 4:1-11 "Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest..."

Songs to remember:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pRzRrc7XEjs>

Matthew
11:29

Take my yoke upon you
and learn of me
for I am meek and lowly of heart
and you shall find rest unto your souls.

CHAPTER FIFTY FIVE

EASY YOKES, LIGHT BURDENS



MATTHEW 11:30 “FOR MY YOKE IS EASY AND MY BURDEN IS LIGHT.” (KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB, RSV, NIV)

Sure! Promise light burdens and an easy yoke. It sure doesn't feel easy or light!

There are many verses in the Bible that, if taken merely at face value and compared to our daily experiences, might not seem to look like the way it happens to us. We might be tempted to think that since the Bible says one thing and it is obvious that it never works out that way, the Bible must therefore be wrong. I would warn you to avoid thinking that way.

The Word of God will always give us absolute truth. The world will not. Media does everything it can to tell us their “slant” of truth to try to convince us to believe what they say. But many times, what we hear on television, the theaters and on the internet is completely wrong. Do not be deceived.

We may have difficulty discerning or even interpreting what the words as portrayed in the Scriptures are saying to us. There are definitely numerous differences, even in the Christian church,

about what they are saying. Just look at all the different versions of the Bible.

However, if studied, read through many times, even meditated upon after we have memorized it (unashamed plug), the Holy Spirit is always faithful to show us truths from the Word that may not be so easily revealed. This is what Paul was telling Timothy in 2 Tim 2:15, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

Now, one must admit that many times in the history of the church over the last 2,000 years, Christians’ lives were anything but light and easy. Ask the apostles who suffered severe persecution and gave their lives as early martyrs of the church. Ask many Christians who are suffering in persecution in many parts of the world even today.

Chinese Christians are reported to consider each other not worthy of leadership in the underground church if they have not been forced to serve prison time for their faith. So, what did Jesus mean by His yoke being easy?

Of course, as we have already discussed in previous chapters, His yoke is easy (or at least easier) because He promises to be in the yoke with us...He promises that we do not labor alone. The load is easier because He is carrying it too. His PRESENCE makes the load easier and the burden lighter. Let me suggest three other “P’s” that Jesus provides to make the load lighter.

The Lord promises to give us PRESENTS or gifts from above to help us along the way. Psalm 116:7 says, “Return unto thy rest, O my soul: for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.” As we join the labor the Lord has given us in this life, we can stand on the promise that He will provide for us abundantly everything we need to do all that He asks. He is able to “do exceedingly

abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.” Ephesians 3:20

We have the power of the King of the Universe working with us in our labors and He has all resources available and provides them to us to do the job. That certainly makes our yoke easier and our burdens lighter.

As we recognize that all our labor is directed and guided by Jesus, we can be assured of His PROVISION too. He prepares the way before us. Most times, it is after the Lord has provided every need for us that we realize He was preparing the way all along.

Seldom though do we get that glimpse of His preparation for us well ahead of time, seeing how He worked all things together for our good. See Romans 8:28. Knowing that His working all things for our good certainly makes the yoke easier, even if we don’t realize it.

Last, we probably need to remember His eternal PROMISE. We have the promise of Heaven that puts all our earthly struggles and trials into proper perspective. Read that section from Hebrews 4 again. “For anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his.”

Through all my struggles and trials of the past five years or so I have been reminded that these struggles pale in comparison to the glory that awaits us in heaven. I am reminded that this short 70 or 80 years will be seen as nothing in comparison with eternity in heaven.

That made it easier to sing at my sweet wife’s funeral, “It will be worth it all when we see Jesus. Life’s trials will seem so small when we see Christ. One glimpse of His dear face, all sorrows will erase. So bravely run the race ‘til we see Christ.”

Brother and sister, remember the words in this verse. Memorize it and quote it every time it seems like life has just

gotten too heavy to bear. It may seem like the yoke is anything but easy and the burdens are not light. But look to Him and see with spiritual eyes that He is there with you and providing everything you need to make it through. He is definitely good to us all the time.

Questions to ponder: What kind of distractions does the devil put in your way that prevent you from seeing the Lord's presence and provision for you? How often does it seem like the burdens of life are too heavy to bear? Sometimes, just stopping all the insanity that seems to make life so unbearable and seeing with spiritual eyes His presence beside you can make the burden lighter. Is claiming many of the promises of the Lord and Scripture a great way to make the burden lighter?

Other Scriptures to study: 2 Corinthians 4:17 "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." 2 Cor 4:1 "...though our outward man perishes, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." 1 Peter 4:12. James 1:2

Matthew
11:30

**For my yoke is easy
and my burden is light.**

CHAPTER FIFTY SIX

ONE GOD



DEUTERONOMY 6:4 "HEAR, O ISRAEL; THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD." (KJV, RSV)

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one." (NKJV, NIV, NASB)

"Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah." (ASV)

"O Israel, listen: Jehovah is our God, Jehovah alone." (TLB)

"Hear, O Israel" is the beginning of the Shema, a Jewish prayer and declaration of faith. It is a central part of Jewish liturgy and a foundational statement of monotheism. The prayer emphasizes loving God with all one's heart, soul, and might. Most importantly, it stresses the point God has made through the ages...He is God alone! We serve ONE GOD.

Throughout the Old Testament, God recognized the presence of many "gods" even among the Israelites. But He always stressed the message, both directly and through His prophets, that He alone is God and there are no others. He expected Israel (and us) to worship Him alone.

In 1 Samuel 7:3, Samuel spoke to the house of Israel saying, “If you return to the Lord with all your hearts, put away the strange gods from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord and serve Him only, He will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.” Later, in both Matthew 4:10 and Luke 4:8, when Jesus was tempted in the wilderness by Satan, He reminded him that the Word was written that “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him ONLY shalt thou serve.”

We serve a “Him Only” God! He proved many times throughout history that He is a jealous God. We learned that men constantly choose other gods to serve, other idols that they always want to put before God. Through that disobedience, Israel repeatedly fell into disaster and destruction, only to be rescued by returning to the Only God for repentance and restoration.

We must be careful as Christians as well to never attempt to put multiple gods in His place. This was the problem the Pharisees encountered in confronting Jesus. They still have not recognized Jesus, the Messiah, God in flesh coming to us for our salvation two thousand years later.

They crucified Him, primarily for claiming equality with God as His Son. To them, this was blasphemy which denied their understanding of One God and no other. They could not accept God becoming flesh and living as a man, our only sacrifice for sins, as anything other than an attempt by Jesus to declare Himself God.

In John 8:58, Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.” They tried to stone him for that claim.

Even in the early days of the church, by attempting to explain the oneness of the Godhead under the title of “trinity” Christianity treaded dangerously close to explaining our One God as three

separate persons. In fact, everything in Scripture clearly explains, as Jesus did to his disciples, that God became flesh, lived as a man, died as the only acceptable Lamb/sacrifice for us and rose from the dead so that we might also experience that resurrection some day.

When Jesus came, the angels declared the coming of Emmanuel, “God with us.” Matthew 1:23 says “Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, ‘GOD WITH US.’” This was prophesied over a thousand years earlier by Isaiah: Isa 7:14 “Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.”

Jesus declared in John 10:30, “I and my Father are ONE.” In His priestly prayer in John 17:22, Jesus prayed, “the glory which You gave me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are ONE.”

Read Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1. Both descriptions of the creation can only be true if Jesus and God are ONE. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” (Genesis) “All things were made through Him (the Word), and without Him nothing was made that was made.” (John 1:3) “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory...” (verse 14)

Did God create the heavens and the earth? Did Jesus? Who is “the Word?” Yes, HE created all things that were made, not THEY.

When Philip asked Jesus to show them the Father, Jesus declared to them all, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father,” John 14:9. Both Martha and Thomas, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, declared Jesus, “my Lord and my God.” See John 20:28. They were not replacing God with Jesus...they were recognizing Jesus as God in the flesh.

Jesus did not send another God to the disciples after He was gone. He came in the manifestation of the Holy Spirit to be with them. Otherwise, how could he declare to the disciples (and us), “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” (Hebrews 13:5-6) Jesus was with them throughout the rest of their lives. He is with us as well, and never leaves us, just as He promised.

Colossians 2:9 declares to us, “For in Him (Jesus) dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” Jesus is the bodily manifestation of God, sent to us to live with us, be like us and die for us.

Jesus is FULLY God, not a part of God. 1 Timothy 3:16 tries to explain this mystery when it says, “Great is the mystery of godliness: GOD was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” Each of these events was the testimony of the life of Jesus, yet Paul describes them as God manifest in the flesh.

We need to be gracious in our attempt to understand God as faulty human beings. The fault of trinity thinking is that we attempt to explain God as three persons...He is ONE.

I have thoroughly studied trinitarian theology and acknowledge that it honestly teaches that Jesus was and is fully GOD. I also acknowledge that we try to put the concept of the Creator of the universe coming in human flesh, miraculously born of a virgin, in terms we can understand.

As hard as us humans describing God must be, however, I never want to discourage the life-long goal of trying to understand Him. I think He encourages us, through the Word and through the testimony of our lives, to try to know Him better and better every day.

God has been working for almost 6,000 years now to restore fallen man from his desperate lot. He manifested Himself in many

ways through those years. He chose to manifest Himself in flesh for thirty three years and became the only acceptable sacrifice for my sins. For the last 2,000 years, He has manifested Himself as the Holy Spirit, in many mighty and wondrous ways.

At the end of this life, we each get to meet Him face to face. Paul says, then we shall be like Him and see Him as He is. Wow!

He is ONE. In Christ, we are one with Him. Some day soon, He will declare Himself again, in the flesh, to rule and reign forever. We don't have to completely understand it all. We just need to keep being faithful to the work He has given each of us to do. Be faithful!

Questions to ponder: Can we really think that, in this life, we will ever come to the point when we can say we fully understand God? Is the contrast between Trinitarian thinking and Oneness so different that they are worth arguing over? What does the phrase "the mystery of godliness mean?" Is it easy to have agreed with a concept that we have been taught all our lives so thoroughly that it is impossible for us to consider a different way of thinking about it? Is the goal of spending a lifetime trying to understand God a worthy goal? Or, is He so hard to comprehend that it really isn't worth trying to?

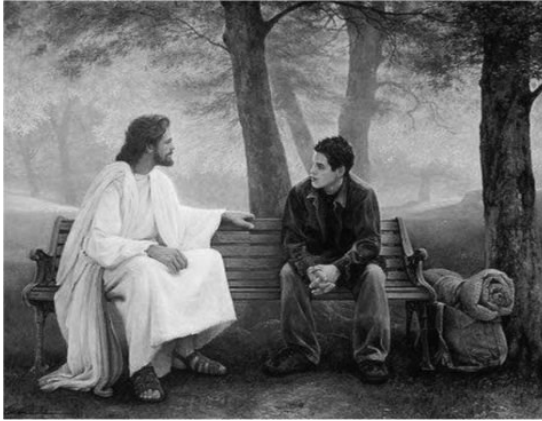
Other Scriptures to Study: Did I not list enough Scriptures above to study to give one enough to consider? To give grace to those who consider the Father and the Son separate, are there many verses in the New Testament where it appears that Jesus describes Himself in terms that could be interpreted as being separate? What are they?

DEUTERONOMY
6:4

**HEAR, O ISRAEL;
THE LORD OUR GOD
IS ONE LORD.**

CHAPTER FIFTY SEVEN

THE GOD MAN



ISAIAH 53:5 “BUT HE WAS WOUNDED FOR OUR TRANSGRESSIONS, HE WAS BRUISED FOR OUR INIQUITIES; THE CHASTISEMENT OF OUR PEACE WAS UPON HIM, AND BY HIS STRIPES WE ARE HEALED.” (NKJV, KJV, ASV, RSV)

“But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him and by His scourging we are healed.” (NASB)

“But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.” (NIV)

“But He was wounded and bruised for our sins. He was beaten that we might have peace; He was lashed and we were healed!” (TLB)

It was His plan from the beginning of time. He knew that we would fall in sin, but He created us anyway. He desired to be with us, to have us to be like Him and to have us love Him with all of our hearts. He knew that one day, a price would have to be paid for our sins and that we could not possibly pay that price. Only He could do that. And the only way He could was to become flesh.

Our faith, our religion is the only one in which God actually became man. All other attempts at defining faith in God rely on us working our way back to Him. Only Christianity follows the claim that God became man so that He could take our place on a cross.

Our last chapter focused on the very real fact that we worship One God. That God planned from the beginning to become man, just like us, so He could die for us. Jesus is the only example throughout eternity who was both Man and God...He was the God-Man. Having focused on Jesus' absolute divinity, we must quickly run to the truth that He was also very much flesh and blood.

We believe that Jesus was born in the flesh, miraculously of a virgin, but certainly in the flesh. In Isaiah, the prophet foretold of Him: "The Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel." (God with us!) (Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23). Luke 1:26-27 tells us of the fulfilment of that prophecy: "...the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary."

In the desert, in the beginning of His ministry, Jesus was tempted by Satan as a man. Luke 4:1-13 tells us that, in the flesh like us, Jesus was tempted through hunger, the offers of power and the fulfilment of all desires. He overcame those temptations instead of submitting to them, like we most likely would have.

Hebrews 4:15 tell us that He sympathizes with our weaknesses, “but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.” That tells me that when I am tempted to lie, Jesus was tempted to lie too. Even in my most secret, darkest temptations, I can be assured that Jesus, the Man, was tempted just like I am.

Yet unlike me and my failures, Jesus did not submit to those temptations. He was perfect throughout His life, not only so He might be my perfect sacrifice but also, as it says in Heb 2:18 that, “In that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.”

Jesus as God never sinned. Jesus as Man, however, most assuredly suffered every temptation that we suffer too. As a result, He is exceedingly able to help us in our temptations.

Jesus was truly and fully man and felt everything we felt. Luke 2:40 tells us that like all children, He “grew and became strong.” If we had seen Him as a child, we most likely would have considered Him just like any other child.

Luke 4:2 tells us He was hungry, just like any one of us would be hungry after a long time without food. Luke 8:23 tells us He needed sleep, just like we do. Like us, Jesus experienced sorrow and trouble, Matthew 26:37-38. We think we get overwhelmed. Here Jesus said He was “overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.” Have you ever felt that overwhelmed?

Jesus experienced poverty like none of us have ever known. He testified in Luke 9:58 that He literally had “no place to lay his head.” He experienced exhaustion and tiredness. In John 4:6 we see Him “tired as he was from the journey” so he sat down by the well and waited for a drink of water.

Jesus was very much flesh and blood, like any other man. Even after His resurrection, Jesus told His disciples to look at His

hands and his feet. “It is I myself,” He said. “Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.”

John wrote in John 1:14, “the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory...” He was here, right here on earth with us. We saw Him, we touched Him, heard His voice and walked with Him. Philippians 2:7 tells us He “took on the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.”

1 Timothy 3:16 attempts to explain this miracle of the God-Man to us: “Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”

Jesus’ ultimate demonstration of his “Man-ness” would best be demonstrated, of course, by His death. Hebrews 2:14-15 says, “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

If we had been there two thousand years ago, we could have seen Jesus bleed like any other man would after such physical abuse. We might have heard Him cry out in pain from the beatings. We would have felt the sorrow of His mother watching her son die. Ultimately, at the foot of the cross, we could have even watched Him take His last breath. Jesus died as a man, but also God in flesh. He did that for me!

I love to study, learn and be enlightened by the amazing miracle that Jesus was, is and always will be God. I love to marvel in the wisdom of the plan that God would care so much for me that He would become flesh, so He could identify with me and I

with Him, suffer like I do, feel my pain and ultimately sacrifice Himself for me.

Jesus truly is God. But we lose much if we see Him only as God and forget He became Man. He bled and died a physical death for all mankind. It was the only death/sacrifice that would suffice.

As a man, He thirsted at the well. As God, He saved the woman's soul from Hell. As a man, He slept in a boat. As God, the waves ceased when He spoke. As a man, He cried when Lazarus died. As God, Lazarus came forth when He cried. (Thank you Rodney Griffin.) Oh, what a Savior! Worship Him today!

Questions to consider: What other approaches have men invented to try to explain God? Why? Why could our own payment for our sins never be enough to redeem us? What weight did the prophecy of Jesus coming over a thousand years before it happen (Isaiah 7:14) give to the actual event? Is it easier to believe Jesus was a man than it is that He was God? Why?

Other Scriptures to read: Closely compare Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:23 and Luke 1:26-27. 1 John 4:2 sets the standard for what beliefs are from God and which ones are not. That standard is confession that Jesus came in the flesh. Big Question: How was the "Word made flesh?"

Songs to sing: "He Was Wounded for Our Transgressions,"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5WXBnNgvh4>

"So Much God," Rodney Griffin

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kGTXDf2Begw>

ISAIAH
53:5

BUT HE WAS WOUNDED FOR OUR TRANSGRESSIONS,
HE WAS BRUISED FOR OUR INIQUITIES;
THE CHASTISEMENT OF OUR PEACE WAS UPON HIM,
AND BY HIS STRIPES WE ARE HEALED.

CHAPTER FIFTY EIGHT

INCREASE/DECREASE



JOHN 3:30 “HE MUST INCREASE, BUT I MUST DECREASE.” (KJV, NKJV, NASB, ASV, RSV)

“He must become greater; I must become less.” (NIV)

John must have been a very interesting person. Some thought him to be a prophet. I’m sure some thought he was great entertainment. He was certainly an exceptional man.

The church has seen all types of leaders, teachers, prophets and preachers. I’m not exactly sure by what scale a preacher’s success must be measured, but John definitely could claim some of those merits.

Many followed him. Many came to him to be baptized. Lots just came to see what all the fuss was about.

We know that John was Jesus’ cousin. We know he “leaped” in Elizabeth’s womb when Mary visited her. They must have known each other as they were growing up...maybe even played together.

When do you reckon John started to know about his calling in life? When did the Spirit tell him to start preaching, baptizing and

calling men into repentance in preparation for the coming of Jesus?

Jesus knew how popular John had become. Everyone could certainly tell that his message was well received by how many people came to him to be baptized. No doubt John could have started the first “mega church” in Israel...The First Church of the Jordan River!

In the verses leading up to our memory verse, John’s disciples pointed out that Jesus was now drawing a crowd. They said, “He is baptizing and all are coming to Him!” In a later verse, we actually find out that Jesus didn’t baptize anyone, or at least none but His own disciples.

It almost sounds like those who followed John were a little bit concerned that Jesus’ success might mean that John’s would be diminished. Even a couple of John’s disciples had left him to follow Jesus! Oh no!

I find John’s response to them very instructive. First, John knew exactly where his ministry came from and exactly what he had. In verse 27, John told them, “A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven.”

How many well-meaning ministers start out amazed that the Lord would even use them in ministry and then very quickly become impressed by their apparent success? Pride is a funny thing that way.

Next, notice that John has to remind his disciples (and maybe himself) that he always knew who he was and what he had been sent to do. Verse 28 tells us that he said, “Remember what I have always told you. I am not the Christ. I was sent before Him to prepare His way.”

It is often very hard to be the “supporting cast.” One of the hardest but most rewarding jobs I had in the Air Force was being

an executive officer for the Wing Commander at Cannon Air Force Base. That essentially meant I worked twelve (or longer) hour days coordinating and doing all the hard work to get everything the commander wanted done accomplished so he could run the base.

When governors, senators and four star generals came to the base, my job was to prepare everything for their visits so they could see how well our F-111 wing was able to do the job the Air Force gave us to do. I rarely got credit when things went very well. I did get a lot of heat from the boss if things did not.

Having so much responsibility for all those details might cause some to want to take credit for all the hard work. I learned quickly that my job was to see that others accomplished the mission. I didn't get many accolades for telling officers higher in rank what the commander wanted them to do. But, when things were properly prepared for him, the commander could step up, run the show and get all the credit for all of us doing a great job for him. We prepared the way for him to succeed.

“John, you have done so well in your ministry. You should get some of the credit!” “John, you prepared the way and along comes Jesus and takes your followers away! Do something!” “John, if you aren't careful, soon they will all be following Jesus and no one will be following you!” John knew better.

Look at John's response in verse 29. He saw what they did not. He knew that he was the “friend of the groom” (Jesus), he rejoiced because of the groom's voice (think about that some), and those results made him very happy. “This joy of mine is fulfilled,” John said.

Wow! Not many in life can find real joy and contentment in lifting others up to success. At the very least, Jesus' success was a direct result of John's preparation for Him...Mission success!

I have no doubt, knowing who Jesus was (the Messiah), John loved Jesus deeply and was thrilled to see Him succeed. But John knew the secret was in his attitude expressed in verse 30: “He must increase, but I must decrease.”

This is not the way of the world. We learn at a very early age that to succeed in life, WE must increase. An entertainer does not succeed by lifting another up...he must succeed by drawing attention to his own talents, skills and expertise.

Great preachers do not increase their following by having lots of guest speakers come in and speak for them. They succeed by becoming great preachers, those that many want to listen to. Successful politicians do not get elected by convincing voters that others can do the job better. Only by becoming greater, by increasing one's importance and influence does one move into opportunities to do great things.

John knew that Jesus came to save the world. “Behold, the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world.” Yeah, John knew who Jesus was. In the shadow of God coming in the flesh, how could he even think of being concerned that others were following Jesus instead of him?

We need to be the same. Our job, as followers of Jesus, is not to build up a greater following for ourselves. He must increase, and I must decrease. The world might not even see Jesus increase if we insist on “not decreasing.”

Jesus said of Himself, “If I am lifted up, I will draw all men unto Myself.” We don't help draw men to Jesus by lifting ourselves up. It is just the opposite. He must increase! To make that happen, Lord, help me to humble myself, decrease in importance, priority and fame that I might want, and become nothing in comparison to You if that is what it takes to lift you up. How is that working for you?

Questions to consider: As unnatural as it is to lift others up instead of ourselves, how do we start a lifestyle of lifting Jesus up? Is denying ourselves a lost art of discipleship? What might the Lord call you to give up so that you could better follow Him? How can we overcome the insistence of the world that says that our success in life is everything? Can you measure success by your following? Is it possible to make yourself decrease (in popularity, influence and success) so that Jesus can increase? Give some examples of how we might do that.

Scriptures to study: John 12:32 “And I, if I be lifted up will draw all men unto myself.” (There’s a reason we memorized that one.) Mark 9:35, Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.” John 13:5 “...and began to wash his disciples’ feet...” Luke 9:23 “...deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me.”

**John
3:30**

HE MUST INCREASE,
BUT I MUST DECREASE.

CHAPTER FIFTY NINE

IF MY PEOPLE



2 CHRONICLES 7:14 “IF MY PEOPLE, WHICH ARE CALLED BY MY NAME, SHALL HUMBLE THEMSELVES, AND PRAY, AND SEEK MY FACE, AND TURN FROM THEIR WICKED WAYS; THEN WILL I HEAR FROM HEAVEN, AND WILL FORGIVE THEIR SIN, AND WILL HEAL THEIR LAND.” (KJV)

All versions of this Scripture essentially say the same thing. God comes to Solomon by night (verse 12) and writes a prescription for the nation of Israel. If they will do four things, God will do the three they desperately need most. God even makes an “If/Then” personal statement to Solomon himself (verses 17-18).

“If/Then” statements seem pretty straight forward to me. IF you will do this, THEN I will do this. He expressed many of them through Moses to the nation of Israel multiple times as they wandered through the desert. He made more of them through the prophets leading up to the kings.

Even in Genesis, His conditions couldn’t have been more simple to Adam and Eve. “Just do not do this one thing and I will

give you everything you need.” We are still paying the price for that disobedience. It kind of seems like humanity has a really hard time following the instructions. Just like men!

We men always get accused of refusing to follow instructions. Of course, those instructions for assembling a very simple child’s toy couldn’t be more confusing...probably written in “Chinese” English, way longer than they need to be and honestly, too much to bother with when it is obvious we can figure it out on our own. Who needs instructions? Does that sound familiar?

Now, I will admit that these instructions were sent from God directly to Solomon for the nation of Israel. Some have tried to suggest that, since so many directions and instructions in the Bible were for the nation of Israel, that means they are not for us.

Some, on the other hand, suggest that when God is referring to “My people who are called by My name,” He is talking about the United States of America as well. We have to agree that when we call ourselves Christians, we are, by definition, people who are called by His Name...Jesus Christ.

Honestly, the argument is moot...the truth is universal...it is for all of us. Some commands and instructions were given to a specific audience and should hence be obeyed by that audience. However, no one would argue that because God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses and the nation of Israel, they obviously do not also apply to us.

As Christians, we believe that all of Scripture is inspired, or God-breathed. Look at 2 Timothy 3:16-17...maybe memorize those verses too. Plus, the nature of each of the commandments as well as these instructions to Solomon are so universal in their truth, it can only be considered as a clear prescription by God about what He expects.

If you are like me, you are very concerned about our country. Hopefully, you are also praying for the Lord to heal our land of many of the sins we seem to habitually commit. Despite our earnest prayers though, it sometimes seems like God just doesn't hear us. We might even go so far as to "righteously" stand before Him and say that if all the wicked among us would just repent and change their ways, everything would be right again. Hmmm.

Notice the instructions to Solomon in 2 Chronicles though. The instructions in this very specific prescription for the nation are addressed to God's people called by God's name. That is us!

Yes, I know that as Christians we are supposed to be salt and light to the earth. However, this Scripture seems to be telling us that it might be the fault of the church that our nation is so fervently pursuing homosexuality, abortion, murder and turning away from God.

Yes, church...when the Bible says, "My people who are called by My name," it is referring to us. We want to say that if we can somehow, politically or legally, convince pregnant mothers to change their desires for abortions, we can heal our land. If we can elect a good Christian to be President, we can fix all the sins of those around us. If we can get enough sinners into the church (there's plenty there now), and get them saved, we can turn this mess around. That isn't what this truth is telling us.

If WE will humble ourselves, PRAY and seek the Lord's face...if WE will turn from our own wicked ways (yes, many of us are still walking in wicked ways, even while we might be saved), THEN the Lord promises He will hear from heaven, forgive our sins and heal our land.

Quickly, look then at 2 Chron 7:15. The Lord says to Solomon, as He would say to us, "My eyes are open and my ears are attentive to your prayers, made in this place." Jesus is

watching, listening and waiting to hear the voices of His people doing the “IF” part of this conditional verse so that He can do the “THEN” part of it.

If we want Him to hear from heaven, then we Christians need to humble ourselves and pray. If we want Him to forgive the sins of our nation, we need to turn from our own wicked ways, whatever they might be. If we want Him to heal our land, then we need to do a lot more seeking His face.

I do not know how God uses our own repentance to convince a sinful nation...those who are not seeking His face...to change their ways. But, I have seen Him do it. I have seen those who seem to be so far beyond redemption turn from their evil ways to pursue righteousness.

When the Bible tells us that He works ALL things together, I know there is a lot of His working that we do not see that go into that end result. That kind of confirms the very real possibility that if God’s people will do the pursuing, God will produce a healing result on the nation around us.

How badly do you want to see our nation healed? How much do we want revival? God is sovereign and He can heal any nation anytime He wants to. But this verse leads me to believe that He has already provided everything He needs to heal our land. He’s probably just waiting for us, as Christians, to humble ourselves, pray and seek His face and turn from our own wicked ways. Do we want the healing of our nation that much?

Questions to ponder: Do we want the healing of our nation that much? What reasons do we believe God’s prescriptions for nations would only be limited to the nation of Israel? What other “universal” prescriptions from God are provided to us in the Bible for all our issues? Did Israel do what God told Solomon to tell

them to do? Did Solomon follow the instructions God gave him in Verses 17-18? The great revivals of our nation in the 18th Century were preceded by great repentance and prayer. Could it be that God is just waiting on us to follow His instructions before He provides the answers?

Other Scriptures to consider: Matt 11:20-24, Jesus' rebukes to cities where He did mighty works and the cities refused to repent. Acts 17:30, God now commands all men everywhere to repent. Hosea 5:15 "...then they will seek My face; in their affliction they will earnestly seek Me." Psalm 27:8 "When you said, 'Seek My face,' my heart said to You, 'Your face, Lord, I will seek.'" Job 36:10-12 "He opens their ear to instruction and commands that they turn from iniquity. If they obey and serve Him...."

Song to remember:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1MXbn1yhXwc>

Terry Blackwood and the Imperials, "If My People"

2 CHRONICLES
7:14

IF MY PEOPLE, WHICH ARE CALLED BY MY NAME,
SHALL HUMBLE THEMSELVES, AND PRAY,
AND SEEK MY FACE, AND TURN FROM THEIR WICKED WAYS;
THEN WILL I HEAR FROM HEAVEN, AND WILL FORGIVE THEIR SIN,
AND WILL HEAL THEIR LAND.

CHAPTER SIXTY

TEMPTATION



1 CORINTHIANS 10:13 “THERE HATH NO TEMPTATION TAKEN YOU BUT SUCH AS IS COMMON TO MAN: BUT GOD IS FAITHFUL, WHO WILL NOT SUFFER YOU TO BE TEMPTED ABOVE THAT YEA ARE ABLE; BUT WILL WITH THE TEMPTATION ALSO MAKE A WAY TO ESCAPE, THAT YE MAY BE ABLE TO BEAR IT.” (KJV, NASU, NASB)

“No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.” (NIV)

“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. (RSV)

I kind of thought that after I gave my life to Jesus and was “born again,” I would no longer sin and give in so easily to temptation. Boy, was I wrong! As a matter of fact, way too many

times I found out that the only difference between me and the “lost” in the world was that now, I had to feel the guilt of giving into temptation. Kind of wrong again.

After we are born again, we quickly find that our old ways of living might not have died away. Please don’t be offended by the pictures I selected above. They are not meant to imply specific temptations we are so prone to give in to...especially as represented by specific genders. However, it tends to be true that men are drawn back into lust by what they let in visually. That probably explains why so many Christian men suffer from the temptation of lust while spending way too much time in front of televisions or computer screens viewing things that are pretty far from holy.

Don’t judge me if it seems by those pictures that I am implying that just women are tempted by delicious things to eat that they should probably resist. Men have problems with eating temptations just like women do...take a look at your own weight as well as the weight of others around you. And, although I am not a woman, I am told that women are tempted by sexual temptations just like men.

We tend to think that our own temptations are specific to our own weakness and no one else’s. This Scripture points out right from the beginning, “you are not the ‘Lone Ranger’ sinner doing what no one else is doing.” Our temptations are common to all men (and women). That truth is true, but it doesn’t really give us a lot of comfort. So what?

I sometimes look where I shouldn’t look, but so does everyone else...especially other Christians? The big difference is, that as one who now has the Holy Spirit living inside of me, I can...and usually do...feel a sudden urge from Him to think, maybe I should have said “NO” to that temptation.

That doesn't always inspire me with the strength and gumption to say NO, but hopefully, I try to say no...at least once in a while. Unfortunately, when I go ahead and give in to whatever temptation I am dealing with today, I feel guilty, at least a little bit sorry and hopefully, feel the urge to run to Jesus to ask forgiveness and try to turn from my sinful ways.

Remember, 1 John 1:9 tells us, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." That's just what I need. But I also find that what I need is to somehow arrive at the point where I feel like I can actually get some victory over that particular temptation and maybe put it behind me...never to be seen again.

One Christian friend I knew said he struggled this way after he was saved. After giving in to those temptations that seemed so "common to man," he found it necessary every week to come back to church and be "born again, again." He eventually discovered that it doesn't work that way. But he also discovered that he needed some kind of help from the Lord to overcome those things. That is where the rest of this verse comes in.

The very next words are, "But God is faithful." I am so thankful for that. Our temptations and our proclivity to give in to them kind of prove that in our own flesh, we are really NOT faithful. It is a given truth – you can count on it! – that God will always be faithful! Praise the Lord!

If we are His, He promises us three things: First, He is never going to allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to say "NO" to. Some sins that we allow to become habitual seem to not fit into that category...but they do. NO matter what the temptation is, God has promised us it will never be beyond our ability to resist.

Comedian Flip Wilson used to joke, “The devil made me do it!” to explain his behavior. While that may be humorous, it is certainly not true! The devil can’t MAKE you do anything. We always have the power, especially in Jesus, to say NO to any temptation.

I don’t know what temptations might have come across my path that I could *not* say NO to, and I don’t want to! They didn’t and they won’t come my way. If I am tempted, I can count on the truth that it isn’t so tough that I can’t say NO.

Second, there is a path of escape. Notice, the Scripture does not say the Lord will remove that temptation. He says that, with the temptation, He also provides a way to escape. We ALWAYS have a way to escape the temptation. Interesting that it uses the word “escape.”

My experience tends to be that, when I am being tempted, I’m not usually looking for a way to get away from it...I want the joy or fulfilment that I think giving into that temptation will bring me. THEN, after sin is fully conceived, I want forgiveness. The Lord has to develop in us that sense that we know, when we are tempted, we need to immediately discover the way to escape it.

Jesus told His disciples that their spirits were willing but their flesh was weak. All He was asking them to do in that instance was stay awake. He also wanted them to pray. If they had prayed...maybe together...they would have had more success at staying awake.

The answer may be no more difficult than turning that computer or TV off! The answer, “Just say NO” is so simplistic that it doesn’t seem realistic. But every rejection of temptation has to start with us saying NO to the temptation.

The Bible tells us in several places to RUN from temptation. That seems a little bit cowardly. I tend to think I can stand up

against it, show the devil my super-strength and beat it with my own power. I can't tell you how many times that didn't work! When David saw Bathsheba bathing on the rooftop, he really needed to RUN from that temptation. He didn't. You know the results.

The last thing Jesus promises us in this Scripture is the end result: "That you may be able to bear it!" Jesus wants followers to grow to be able to BEAR temptations. Prayerfully figure out for yourself what that means. "Bear it" may mean running from it...it definitely means resisting it. James 4:7 says, "Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

Bearing a temptation may mean carrying it with you and overcoming it, not necessarily waiting for it to be removed. There is no indication in the Bible that we will ever stop being tempted in this life. Instead, the Lord wants us to learn what it means to be able to "bear it."

Don't be deceived by the devil brothers and sisters. Jesus does want us to be like Him. He definitely wants us to have victory over every temptation. However, I don't expect that I will totally arrive at that goal this side of heaven.

On the other hand, I think every one of us should be seriously concerned if we are never experiencing some victory overcoming temptation. He is going to allow us to be tempted to help us to learn how to daily be conformed to His image...eventually. We should want that as much as He does.

So, while we struggle with these temptations that are common to all of us and seem to so easily "beset us," remember the promises: You will not be tempted beyond your ability to resist, the Lord WILL provide a way to escape, and He will through the temptation show you how to bear it and grow, through your victory over it, into His likeness and image.

Questions to ponder: Confessions of your areas of temptation to others isn't always a wise decision. However, with those you have learned to trust, one can find that sharing them can help us to see we are not alone, that the Lord has provided ways for us to be successful overcoming them and help us use others (again, who have proven they can be trusted) to help hold us accountable. Having said that, what are your areas of strongest temptation? Why does it seem that so many seemingly prominent pastors and preachers publicly fall to temptations that ruin their influence and ministries? When it seems like I am the only one who suffers under a particular temptation, why should I believe that my temptation is common to everyone else? What are ways that you have found to be successful in overcoming temptations?

Scriptures for study: Ephesians 6:11-13 "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." 1 Peter 5:8 "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." 1 John 4:4 "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."

1 CORINTHIANS

10:13

THERE HATH NO TEMPTATION TAKEN YOU
BUT SUCH AS IS COMMON TO MAN;
BUT GOD IS FAITHFUL,
WHO WILL NOT SUFFER YOU
TO BE TEMPTED ABOVE THAT YEA ARE ABLE;
BUT WILL WITH THE TEMPTATION
ALSO MAKE A WAY TO ESCAPE,
THAT YE MAY BE ABLE TO BEAR IT.

CHAPTER SIXTY ONE

THE COUNSEL OF THE UNGODLY



PSALM 1:1 “BLESSED IS THE MAN THAT WALKETH NOT IN THE COUNSEL OF THE UNGODLY, NOR STANDETH IN THE WAY OF SINNERS, NOR SITTETH IN THE SEAT OF THE SCORNFUL.” (KJV, NKJV)

“Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.” (NIV)

“How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers.” (NASU, ASV, NASV, RSV)

“Oh, the joys of those who do not follow evil men’s advice, who do not hang around with sinners, scoffing at the things of God.” (TLB)

Ok, first: Please go to the following song on YouTube and listen to this children’s version of Psalm 1:1-3 about a hundred times.

[Psalms 1:1-3 Blessed is the man | Scripture Songs for Kids](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sZIGHwdYUEw)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sZIGHwdYUEw>

Cheryl and I taught this song to six to eight years old every Sunday back in Oklahoma. I'm sure they are still singing it today...I know I am. I was always amazed at how well those children remembered the words and hid them in their hearts. I did the same.

I know you probably didn't have that experience. But I know doing that now will plant that song and the words to that Scripture in your heart. It is actually easier, for some reason, to memorize a song and have a memory verse stored in your memory than it is to look at both sides of a 3x5 card a hundred times. That brings us to another topic that it is probably time for us to consider.

Remember, I am writing these books on these Scriptures believing the Lord is guiding me to do so. I have no delusions that the majority of my readers will have memorized 60 Scriptures on their way to 100 by now. I heartily commend you if you have!

I have memorized all sixty of them. I don't know if that impresses you that an over-70-year-old man can do that and maybe inspire you to try it too...but who knows? Plus, please remember that I have been working at this discipline all of my life. But, knowing the unmeasurable value I have received from having these verses deep in my heart, I again encourage you to try to do the same.

Undoubtably, some of you might have decided that this discipline of memorizing Bible Verses is just an exercise in "rote memory work." I wouldn't argue against that. Sometimes, it might seem like such "spiritual" things are more routine work habit than spiritually enriching exercise. However, I would ask you to consider that many of our Christian disciplines rely heavily on doing the same thing, over and over again, sometimes seeming to have no value other than establishing good habits. But, that is not always a bad thing.

I encourage fellow Christians to give at least the tithe of their income and more if they can. The Bible tells us that the Lord loves a “cheerful giver.” I have to admit, though, sometimes I continue to give of my resources week after week and month after month because I am committed to the habit/discipline, whether I am cheerful about it or not.

I believe that is a Biblical discipline. The Lord calls that “faithfulness.” It will be rewarded in heaven. I imagine that in heaven the Lord might reward greater the faithfulness we exercise when we really didn’t want to than the times we were more joyful about it.

I am not encouraging you to be a “grouchy giver” or a “monotonous memorizer.” I would encourage you to look for the rewards, even while we remain here this side of heaven, that come from working hard, trudging through the seemingly unrewarding exercise of doing the same, right thing over and over.

Of course, we won’t memorize any Bible Verses without repeating them over and over, many times. That discipline is probably a worthy one for us to explore and incorporate in our Christian, daily walk. Try it and let me know how that works out.

Now, my hope was that while you learn Psalm 1:1 this week it will come easier (it isn’t a short verse) because you may have heard it many times. I have to remember that just because I have heard it and sung it hundreds of times, to many of you it may be a brand new verse. Also, like we have done a couple of times before, I intend to have us memorize consecutive verses in the Bible that intimately go together and give us “multiple credit” toward our 100 verses memorized.

After these three familiar verses, we are going to “memorize” all of the verses of the Lord’s Prayer. I am not trying to take a

short cut to 100 verses...but accept the value of memorizing those verses of the Bible that we might be already very familiar with.

David begins the writings we have recorded in the Psalms with a way for us to be blessed (Psalm 1:1). It is interesting that this verse promises us blessings if we DO NOT do some things. He writes from the poetic vision of sitting, walking and standing...or not doing so.

You will be blessed if you do not walk in ungodly counsel. Boy, how many times in my life have I wished I had followed that guidance after seeking advice and counsel from ungodly sources!

We are wise if we recognize that we don't know everything. And sometimes, good advice can help us make the right decisions and avoid pitfalls from our lack of experience and wisdom. I have learned, however, that you don't get wise counsel from unwise sources.

We desperately need to access the guidance of the Holy Spirit before we start asking for and receiving advice from others. Guard carefully whom you ask for advice. Don't walk in ungodly counsel and the Bible promises us that we will be blessed.

I used to think that "standing in the way of sinners" was what I was supposed to do. We are quite practically supposed to be big, huge warning signs to the lost that the road to hell is wide and well-traveled but not worth following.

What this verse is trying to tell us, though, is that the "way of sinners" is definitely a way in which we should not be found standing! Think of all the places the world would invite us to "come inside," "hang around for a while," and "stay and enjoy yourself." You can use your imagination to come up with lots of places we shouldn't be found standing in. You will be blessed if you do not stand there!

When I was a very young teen, we had a church picnic at Garfield Park. During the activities, Ricky Snider and I wandered off to the park “band stand” where some very lively music was playing and kids were dancing together.

I had been told many times, “Always be careful where you go. Don’t ever be where you wouldn’t want the Lord to find you if He came back right then.” Raised in a pretty strict, holiness background, I couldn’t help but think, and possibly fear, that if the Lord came back while I was in this “dance atmosphere,” He probably wouldn’t be very happy with me.

You would probably agree that I was over-reacting to a solemn warning that might not have necessarily applied to that situation. My heart might have been more innocent than I thought it was at that moment. I can’t help but think, though, that this type of approach would be useful in the future to help me avoid even worse, more temptation-drawing atmospheres that I knew better than to be found in.

Christians might ought not to be found in “dive bars” gambling casinos or “houses of ill repute.” I think that may be what the Psalmist was implying when he said, “Don’t stand in the way of sinners.”

As Christians we should also not “sit in the seat of the scornful.” The dictionary describes scornful as “feeling or expressing contempt or derision.” You know, as Christians, we really should be the most approachable people in our culture.

We have so much to be thankful for, we really should be the happiest people on the planet. Instead, a lot of us show faces that seem to be saying, “whatever you think of me, I really don’t have any time for you at all!” Sitting in that seat should never be the place where we are found. No wonder we seldom feel blessed.

If you are on your way to heaven, try telling your face that wonderful fact. Let the world see that Jesus is inside by glowing His presence on the outside.

Sometimes, our looks alone are the greatest detriment to our testimony. It ought to be the other way. 2 Corinthians 2:15 tells us that “we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish.”

Sometimes, we smell anything but sweet. Remember, we have eternal life. Tell your face to show that. Stop sitting in the seat of the scornful...stop looking scornful to those around you. The world needs to see Jesus in us, to see the way to that eternal life. You think about that!

Questions to consider: What are the things in our life that sometimes make us look like the most miserable people on the planet? It isn't putting on a show for the world. But shouldn't the glorious hope of our future life in heaven show in us as something other than scorn for others? What are some ways you have taken ungodly counsel in areas of your life? What are some of the places you might have gone where the Lord might have convinced you that this is a place where you probably shouldn't be standing? How can following the instructions above make us feel truly blessed? What does being blessed feel like?

Other Scriptures to study: Ephesians 5:2 “Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.” John 10:10 “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” Proverbs 1:15 “My son, walk not in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path.” Eph 4:17 “Walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind...who being past

feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.”

**PSALM
1:1**

BLESSED IS THE MAN THAT WALKETH NOT
IN THE COUNSEL OF THE UNGODLY,
NOR STANDETH IN THE WAY OF SINNERS,
NOR SITTETH IN THE SEAT OF THE SCORNFUL.

CHAPTER SIXTY TWO

HIS DELIGHT



PSALM 1:2 “BUT HIS DELIGHT IS IN THE LAW OF THE LORD, AND IN HIS LAW DOTH HE MEDITATE DAY AND NIGHT.” (KJV, NKJV, NIV, NASB, RSV)

“But they delight in doing everything God wants them to, and day and night are always meditating on his laws and thinking about ways to follow him more closely.” (TLB)

Hey! We already memorized a verse and talked about delight in Book 2. I think it was Chapter 34, Psalm 37:4, my wife, Cheryl’s favorite verse. “Delight thyself in the Lord and He shall give thee the desires of thy heart.” That isn’t Cheryl in the left picture above, but I can certainly imagine her running through the field, hands lifted high praising Jesus. Probably what she is doing in heaven now. I can’t wait to see that!

More likely, that is me as a kid in the picture in the middle. I like to think of me as a happy kid, taking great joy from reading the Bible like him. Unfortunately, that isn’t me either. And honestly, I was more of a moody, self-centered kid who occasionally fought with my little brothers than I was that joyous.

Now my brother Dan has lots of photos of him that happy. I just wanted to win at everything and be the best. Not a lot of delight in that...just personal victories.

Most of us, I'm sure, would readily admit that we spend a lot of our lives seeking after joy and, more often than not, come up short of finding it. Even as Christians, we aren't always the happiest people on earth. That really shouldn't be.

Maybe it was because David had so much time out in fields, nothing to do but tend sheep, under the stars at night, somehow enjoying the presence of God. He sure wrote a lot of songs/Psalms about that. He seems like the kind of person who would be considered an authority on delight.

We don't know how David came to know God so intimately, but we know that he did. His heart was tuned to God. So much so that, in Acts 13:22 Paul testified that God found David, "a man after My own heart, who will do all My will."

It's kind of funny. In 1 Samuel 13:14, when Samuel is telling Saul that God has rejected him, he explains his kingdom would not continue because, "The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart" and God knew that man was not King Saul.

Psalms 1:1 taught us three things that were definite characteristics of a blessed man: he didn't walk in the counsel of the ungodly, he didn't stand where sinners stand and he didn't sit scornfully. That is good guidance for what NOT to do. Here in verse two, we learn what the blessed man WILL do: "delight in the law of the Lord."

I have read the law. I took law classes at the Academy. I have to admit, I can't say I have ever delighted in the law. It was a lot of reading and most laws rely on established precedents and cases in the past. Boring.

I can't say I enjoy reading God's laws He passed to Moses and the Israelites that much either. I follow them, I believe in them, but I do not take great joy in meditating on them. Surely, we are talking about something more than just the law of Moses.

You know me...I rarely rely on any verse from the Living Bible. It is commonly a paraphrased version of the cannon Scriptures and sometimes doesn't really capture the doctrine being taught. However, in this example, I think they may have struck onto a more real truth in the way that the TLB treats Psalm 1:2.

"But they delight in doing everything God wants them to, and day and night are always meditating on his laws and thinking about ways to follow him more closely."

The blessed man doesn't necessarily relish in the ten commandments, or all the scores of Jewish laws of the Old Testament, nor even Jesus' own "new commandment I give unto you." I see the blessed man as one who delights in what the laws mean, delights in the giver of those laws, delights in seeking to please the Lord and follow Him more closely.

When we focus on Jesus day and night, the worries and pressures of the world just kind of fade away in comparison. When we delight in the giver of the law in every avenue of our lives and when we meditate on Him and His words day and night, we can certainly find the delight this Psalm is talking about.

While growing up as a kid, I enjoyed an experience every year during the summer months that provided strong contrast to the rest of the year. Like so many other kids before me...and still doing so today...I loved going to Bethel Youth Camp. In the scorching hot July summer days, despite sleeping in the hot dorms (they are air conditioned now!) and sweating through all the activities in those summer afternoons, there was the richest blessing of the evening services in the tabernacle.

We came to the tabernacle every evening expecting the Holy Spirit to move on us, through the singing, the preaching and through a lot of time seeking His face at the altar. Without fail, the Lord always met us there. Just like we sought, He filled us with His Holy Spirit and made us different than we were the rest of the year. I delighted in that!

During those days, I can see how we delighted in the presence of the Lord, we lived faithfully by some of those “laws” we may have disregarded back home and earnestly sought to please Him, meditate on His ways and learn ways to follow Him more closely. I think that is probably what David was writing about at the beginning of the Psalms.

Oh, how blessed we felt as we returned home with great testimonies of how we had “caught on fire” for Jesus during camp. Unfortunately, we all could share similar testimonies about how quickly that fire seemed to dim in us as we returned to our homes, schools and the same way of living...yet pledging to live for Him and never lose that fire!

For a brief time, that moody, self-centered kid learned that it was possible to delight in the Lord all day long and dwell on His truths and presence all day and all night. One would think that, as we grow older and have more time living the Christ-centered life, we would learn how to more successfully live that Psalm 1:2 “delight” all the time.

Of course, you know...sometimes we do, and sometimes we don't. That doesn't change the secret though. If we can delight in the Lord instead of the next TV show, the next athletic competition, the next video game or entertainment...we might find the blessedness of true joy, true delight.

It is amazing how quickly we can let the world dictate how we are supposed to live, respond to one another and never share

God's love. However, there are still occasions where I can find myself meditating on the Lord, day and night, as the Psalmist recommends.

Frankly, that is the only way I truly find the Lord's joy. And in the midst of that joy that comes all too infrequently, I find the Lord is right there, ready to comfort any sorrows, heal any pains, speak to me "friend to friend," just like He promises in the Scriptures He will do.

If you've never had that kind of relationship with Him, I encourage you to seek it. He wants that friendship with you too. If it has been a long time since you remember delighting in Him all day and all night, put the world on hold and spend some quality time with Him. He is waiting for you there.

This isn't some silly, all-too-temporary joy that occasionally comes from some excitement or some casual relationship. This is the honest, "one-on-one" friendship that can only come from Him. You need that kind of delight! Give it a try.

"Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face. And the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace."

Questions to consider: Why do we find it so easy to meditate on the things of the world and leave Jesus out of the picture? How long has it been since you remember feeling the utter joy that Jesus brings to those who love Him? Is it possible to love Jesus and draw closer to Him than anyone else you have ever known? If you have felt this joy from Him, what could possibly make us ever want anything else? Have you yet experienced that close comfort from Him when confronted with the loss of a loved one or some severe failure in your life? What did Jesus mean when He said He would be a "Friend who sticks closer than a brother?"

Scriptures to study: Psalm 37:4, Proverbs 18:24, “A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” Deuteronomy 31:6 “...the Lord your God goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you.” (Hebrews 13:5) Psalm 119:47 “I will delight myself in Your commandments, which I love.” Romans 7:22 “For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.”

Song to Remember: Psalms 1:1-3 “Blessed is the man”/
Scripture Songs for Kids

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

**PSALM
1:2**

**BUT HIS DELIGHT IS
IN THE LAW OF THE LORD,
AND IN HIS LAW DOTH HE
MEDITATE DAY AND NIGHT.**

CHAPTER SIXTY THREE

LIKE A TREE



PSALM 1:3 “AND HE SHALL BE LIKE A TREE PLANTED BY RIVERS OF WATER, THAT BRINGETH FORTH HIS FRUIT IN HIS SEASON; HIS LEAF SHALL NOT WITHER; AND WHATSOEVER HE DOETH SHALL PROSPER.” (KJV, NKJV, ASV)

“He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither, and in whatever he does, he prospers.” (NASB, RSV)

“He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.” (NIV)

“They are like trees along a riverbank bearing luscious fruit each season without fail. Their leaves shall never wither, and all they do shall prosper.” (TLB)

OK! Now, we're talking! I like Bible verses that say things like, whatever I do will prosper. In our culture we eat stuff like that up with a spoon.

I don't want to be too judgmental of those who preach what has come to be known as "Prosperity Doctrine." There is no shortage of those in (and out) of the church who are more than ready to "pile on" those who preach this: "If you will send this amount of money to my ministry, you will be planting a seed of faith that God will absolutely honor by pouring out wealth and blessings more than you can contain!"

It is true that the Lord does want to prosper us. Look at this verse: "Whatever I do will prosper." However, don't preach verse 3 without looking at Psalm 1, verses 1 and 2 first.

In the same light, we already talked about 2 Chronicles 7:14. We all want the Lord to "hear from heaven and heal our land." But how quickly we forget what comes before that...humble myself, seek God's face and turn from my wicked ways.

Psalm 1:1-3 seems to be telling me that if I do not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, stand where sinners stand and do not sit scornfully...if I delight in the Lord and seek to live a life more pleasing to Him...then, I will be like a tree and see my life prosper.

We might also want to examine just how this verse tells me I will prosper. I will be like a tree planted by rivers of water. That seems to be telling me that I will LIVE!

Without water, all vegetation eventually dies. The tree that will live, flourish and deliver what it was designed to deliver must also find all the water it needs. We know that Jesus is the river of life. In Him, I can find all the sustenance that I need.

I love seeing and being near trees that stand beside quiet streams. One of my favorite memories growing up was a trip our family made to Durango, Mexico to visit the Warrens, a

missionary family we supported. One trip we took while there was a drive up into the mountains to enjoy a picnic in a beautiful, scenic park. I loved observing the many trees that sat by the gentle, quiet stream, flowing down the mountain from water springs above. It was the epitome of serenity...I imagined heaven being just like that beautiful scene.

The Father promised in this Psalm that we would be like one of those trees, planted by such rivers of water. We will enjoy times of peace, security and comfort, knowing that the Living Water provides the life that we desperately need.

The Father also promises that, like those tree, we also shall produce fruit. Have you thanked the Lord lately for the children He blessed you with? I know some may have difficulty having children or may never experience that joy. Have faith! The Lord will provide fruit in your life in His way and in His season. Plus, He blesses us with far more fruit than our children.

Look at how blessed He has made us, especially in the United States. Sometimes, we are so focused on all the things we do not have that we fail to thank Him for all the blessings and fruit that are right in front of us.

Please remember that everything we have as His children are blessings He has given to us. Start “counting your blessings” and you will be surprised at how much He has already caused you to bear fruit.

Count the fruits of the Spirit He is currently growing in you...love, joy, peace. Take a look at those whose lives you have influenced who have come to know Him. Look at how much wealth and prosperity you already have received from the Lord. Don't think He has not produced fruit in you because you still don't have everything you want.

Your leaf will not wither! That doesn't mean our bodies will never die...of course, they will do that one day. This also does not mean that we will never suffer pain and illness. We are still in the world and it is still fallen due to sin. What this does mean is that even in the midst of life's struggles and trials, we can continue to see abundant life because we are safe in Him.

Our bodies will grow old and begin to fail. But look at the leaves of your life! You are still watched after and guarded by the Creator of the universe. Again, count the blessings He has already shown you.

Our wonderful memories, those who have so richly touched our lives, the usefulness we still have to our Lord...these are rich, alive leaves that He continues to nourish and supply until our last day.

Next, look at the heaven that awaits us as our "blessed hope." We have the promise of eternal life with Jesus! That should make our leaves glow with an unexplainable luster that goes beyond worldly explanation. The old body may show signs of starting to fade away...but look at how those leaves of mine still do not wither!

Oh, one more blessing...whatever I do shall prosper. I have to testify that the Lord definitely has demonstrated HIS prosperity in my life a lot! Of course, the measurement of what we consider prosperity has to be examined closely by what we think prosperity is.

Lots of people have lots more money than I do. But financial wealth is subjective and relative. The Bible tells us "godliness with contentment is great gain." (1 Timothy 6:6) Sometimes, we might think we are the poorest person we know. But, if we look closely and honestly at all He has given us, we have to admit, He has prospered us with a lot.

How much does He have to bless us for us to feel contentment? (Pause a minute before you answer, “A whole lot more than I have now!”) If we add to His current blessings a growing sense of the godliness He is leading us more and more into, I’d say we have great gain.

Not every effort of my life has been met with what I considered to be success. I have found it interesting that, even in my failures, I could see how the Lord used those to help me grow and ultimately, bring about prosperity in many ways that I hadn’t even imagined.

The little widow whom Jesus and the disciples saw giving two pennies...all she had...might have quickly questioned, “where’s the prosperity for me?” There is no evidence that anyone ever asked her if she felt prosperous. Yet, her testimony of love, sacrifice and faithfulness is still being told two thousand years later. Imagine the reward she received in heaven and will be enjoying forever.

It may not look to you like the Lord is prospering you very much. I honestly think that might be why so many well-meaning Christians fall into the trap of believing that if they just give to this worthy ministry, the Lord just might make them rich.

He does make some of us rich. But the prosperity that He promises is so far beyond the riches of this world, that it would be a tragedy for us to be so easily satisfied with just those earthly riches.

Look closely at your life, Christian. I think that with the spiritual view the Lord brings to us when we trust Him for our salvation...when we really are filled with His spirit...would help us to see how truly prosperous He has made us. Whatever we do for Him WILL PROSPER!

Sing that song again: “Blessed is the man...”

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

Sing it over and over. Whether it looks like it with our worldly view of this life, we are like a tree, planted by living water, bringing forth fruit and prospering...the promise of the Word is true. Look again, with the spiritual eyes the Lord gives to us. You are probably a lot more prosperous than you think you are. Bless the Lord!

Questions to consider: Why are we so quick to think everyone else is more blessed and prosperous than we are? There is nothing wrong with supporting good, God-inspired ministries, especially with our finances. But what is wrong with thinking that because we offer that support, God owes us prosperity in return? Do you have a testimony where that has happened for you? Are there testimonies where it has not? Is God faithful to His word to do the things He promises to do? How do you define prosperity? What are some of the blessings of prosperity He has provided you in your life that might not seem like prosperity to the world?

Other Scriptures to study: Romans 6:23 "...but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord." Mark 12:42 and Luke 21:2 "but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living." John 10:10 "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." 3 John 1:2 "I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers." Prov 16:20 "Whoever gives heed to instruction prospers." Prov 19:8 "He who cherishes understanding prospers."

PSALM 1:3

AND HE SHALL BE LIKE A TREE
PLANTED BY RIVERS OF WATER,
THAT BRINGETH FORTH HIS FRUIT IN HIS SEASON;
HIS LEAF SHALL NOT WITHER;
AND WHATSOEVER HE DOETH SHALL PROSPER.

CHAPTER SIXTY FOUR

KINGDOM COME



MATTHEW 6:10 “THY KINGDOM COME. THY WILL BE DONE, IN EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.” (KJV, NASV, RSV)

“Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” (NKJV, NIV, NASB)

“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.” (ASV)

“We ask that your kingdom will come now. May your will be done here on earth, just as it is in heaven.” (TLB)

It is time again in our “memorizing quest” to return to one of our main techniques. As hard as it may be to memorize Scriptures, it is often very helpful to memorize ones that we already know. The Lord’s prayer is a good example.

We started our book with very familiar verses...Genesis 1:1, John 3:16, Psalm 23:1. We memorized short verses...John 11:35, 1 Thess 5:16. The Lord’s prayer is a good example of words many Christians already have memorized. We should include already-memorized verses in our goal of 100. This can also be a real

motivator when you realize that by having the Lord's prayer in your heart, you already have five verses memorized.

Take a look at the complete "model" prayer here quoted from the most familiar passage, Matthew 6:9-13:

"Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen." (Matthew 6:9-13, Luke 11:2-4)

In Chapter 7, Book 1 of Hide the Word, we learned/memorized/remembered Matthew 6:9, "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name." In Chapter 39, Book 2 we memorized Matthew 6:11, "Give us this day our daily bread." Now, let's add the other three verses from this prayer to our memory verse list.

Just think, with all five of these verses memorized you have 5% toward our goal already. This recognizes that we have already been working toward this goal our whole lives. That is a good thing!

"Thy kingdom come." Jesus spoke many times about the kingdom of heaven. In Matthew 4:17 He began His preaching with, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He told us in Matthew 6:33 to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."

In Matt 12:28 He told them "...the kingdom of God has come upon you." He spent most of His ministry describing what the kingdom of heaven is like...literally hundreds of times. Is it any wonder then that He would instruct his disciples (and us) to recognize and pray that God's kingdom would come? Because of

Jesus, the Father's Kingdom was (and is still) right here among us!

Of course, His greater difficulty was helping us recognize that it was here. He wanted us to pray for the Father's will to be done...right here, just like it was done in heaven. Our problem however, is that we tend to think that our will is more important than the Lord's. Before we can become even a part of that kingdom, then, we must recognize that the kingdom is here...it is now.

As many times as Jesus talked about the kingdom of heaven in his short three years of ministry (I counted over 150 times in a quick search of the Gospels alone), I find it amazing how few understood Him as King of that kingdom. It was a thief on a cross right next to His, not His own disciples, who just prior to dying said to Him, "remember me when you come into your kingdom." The thief recognized His kingdom that all those who shouted "Crucify Him" did not.

Next, regarding that kingdom, it is extremely important that we accept the kingdom. Jesus told his disciples that unless we are "converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matt 18:3) He quickly followed that up with, "whoever humbles himself as a little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Our problems with kingdoms is we want to be the king. In a real kingdom, there is only one king...all the subjects are ruled by that king. We must accept Jesus' rule in our lives if we are hoping to enter the kingdom. That is the Father's will...and Jesus wanted to teach us that our job is to accept His rule...not only in heaven, but here on earth as well.

We must recognize His kingdom. We must accept His kingdom. Third, as royal subjects of the King, we must bow down and worship Him as King of Kings!

The proper rule of order if one comes into the presence of the king of England is to bow when you enter his presence. We do not bow nearly often enough (if ever) when we enter the presence of the King of Kings. If He is truly King...as the Bible says He is...as we submit to Him when we come to Him for salvation...as we must learn to do as His true disciples...then bowing to Him and worshipping and praising Him needs to become a true and sincere action in our lives every day.

You see, we need to make Jesus' kingdom in our heart, not just in heaven. Does He rule every aspect of your life like a King? Is He in control of our moods, our temper, our tongue? Does His will come before and above our selfish will that seeks to satisfy all our needs with worthless stuff that won't last forever?

As King, Jesus promises to add to us all the things we need (Matt 6:33). How quickly we turn away and seek the latest entertainment, the newest toys or other things that promise to bring us happiness. Turn away from the world and focus on Jesus, saints!

If we approach King Jesus this way, everything we see about us will reveal that His kingdom HAS come, and His will is always going to be done, here on earth, just like it is in heaven. Are you living according to His will? Are these words the Lord taught us to pray merely rote, often repeated words, without real meaning? Or are we truly praying for and doing all we can to make His will always done, in our lives, in our communities, in all our actions...here on earth just like it is in heaven?

Questions to ponder: How do you imagine the Lord's will being done in heaven? Is it possible for us to examine all our decisions in light of how it will affect the kingdom, let alone how it will affect our walk with the Lord? What is the connection between God's "will" and our "won't?" The Bible tells us that the Lord is not willing that anyone should perish. Have you given your life to Him completely to make sure this is true in your life? How many have you helped find His salvation, so that they would not perish?

Other Scriptures to consider: 1 Thessalonians 4:3-6 "For this is the will of God, your sanctification..." 1 Thess 5:18 "In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God." 1 Peter 2:15 "For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men..." 1 John 2:1 "...he who does the will of God abides forever." Romans 12:2 "...you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Mark 3:35 "Whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother."

Songs to Remember: The Lord's Prayer, Andrea Bocelli
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u8jImIjg4UY>

**MATTHEW
6:10**

**THY KINGDOM COME,
THY WILL BE DONE,
IN EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.**

CHAPTER SIXTY FIVE

FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS



MATTHEW 6:12 “AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS, AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS.” (KJV, NKJV)

(Luke 11:4 “And forgive us our sins, for we forgive every one that is indebted to us.”)

“And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” (ASV, NASB, RSV, NIV)

“And forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us.” (TLB)

The word “debts” here implies money. I found it interesting as I researched this topic that I could not find verse 12 of the Lord’s prayer quoted anywhere as “trespasses.” But I distinctly remember several times in my life where I prayed/quoted this verse as, “...forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.” I grew up thinking that debts and trespasses meant the same thing.

In the verses that immediately follow these, the Lord does tell His disciples, “If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly

Father will also forgive you.” (verse 14) Also, “if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” (verse 15) So, the term trespasses is used in these verses...just not in verse 12 of the Lord’s Prayer.

It is also significant that Jesus spoke of forgiveness not only in terms of trespasses but also in terms of actual financial debt. In the best known parable on the subject, the Lord tells us that our forgiveness should be magnanimous. Peter, for whatever reason, asked the Lord if forgiving a brother who sinned against him seven times was enough. He was surprised by Jesus’ answer.

In Matthew 18:21-35, Jesus told Peter a story of one who owed so much that the king had every right to demand that he, his wife, his children and all that he owned be sold into slavery until the debt was repaid. As the servant begged forgiveness, that master was so “moved with compassion for him” that he actually forgave all of the debt.

Unfortunately, the servant did the opposite with one who owed him far less. Verse 28 says he took the other debtor by the throat and demanded that he “Pay me what you owe!” He even threw this debtor into the prison he himself had been threatened with!

When the master found out about this man’s calloused treachery, he delivered him to the “torturers until he would pay all that he owed.” Jesus shockingly said that the heavenly Father would do the same to us if, from our heart, we would not forgive our brother his trespasses.

Notice a key to this parable in the words, “from our heart.” Jesus taught Peter here that the act of forgiveness is far greater an act of our heart than it is of any amount of money. We can all identify with great debt...just ask any father who has a house mortgage. Yet, as overwhelming as that financial debt may seem,

we are quick to demand our rights anytime someone infringes upon our rights.

The debt of our sins is so great, only God who came in the flesh and lived among us could pay the price for our forgiveness. Only by recognition of the vastness of our own sin can we ask the Father, who has every right to throw us into a prison of hell for them, to forgive us and make us clean before Him. But, how quickly after experiencing such great love and compassion, are we prone to point out the smallest infraction upon us by others?

We really shouldn't have any hangups over our understanding of forgiving debts or trespasses. The real issue is how we forgive. "I love you and care for your soul. Just don't think about cutting me off in traffic dude!"

"I have every right to hate this person for saying bad things about me. But yes, I have probably done the same thing and certainly need the Lord's forgiveness for when I did that."

"How in the world could that guy cheat on his wife and leave her and the kids? But, yes, I'm kind of guilty of looking lustfully at images of other women myself. But no harm, right?"

Sometimes, I think we don't even see how great are the sins we need to be forgiven of. Honestly, no one paints a better picture of what a great guy I am than me! Yet, let the wife or kids push me a little too hard in the wrong direction and my justified anger can take me out of control.

I don't agree with the popular thought that Christians need to consider themselves as "practicing sinners" who always need forgiveness for whatever overtakes us that day. But I think it would certainly be wise to look in the mirror of honesty once in a while and remember that we aren't always as good as we think we are either. A humble appraisal of one's self should always lead us to the Master who can quickly remind us of how much we owe.

“Our sins, they are great. But God’s grace is greater!” How great a debt Jesus paid for our salvation. It is worth more than millions. Compared to that, the little offenses that our fellow humans inflict on us are far less significant. Practice forgiving them.

We need to be quick to forgive. We need to learn to be slower to condemn others. Instead of demanding what others owe us, we probably need to remember how much the Lord paid for us, look at their offenses in light of that and be quickly ready to forgive.

Lord forgive us our debts, our sins and trespasses, our failures and unforgiveness of others by showing us how to forgive others their debts, trespasses and sins against us that we think are so great...yet in comparison to ours, are so little.

Help me to forgive others like you forgive me. Help me to remember that I will be asking you to forgive me of my debts and trespasses. Help me to remember that you taught us that you would forgive our sins and trespasses just like we forgive the trespasses of others toward us. Amen.

Questions to consider: How great is the debt of your sins? Can it be measured? Can you forgive someone their trespasses against you who never asks for forgiveness? Are there conditions of granting forgiveness? Is it right to avoid debts to one another? What is the difference between giving and being in debt?

Other Scriptures to study: Romans 5:15-21 “the gift followed many trespasses.” Mark 11:25 “if you have anything against anyone, forgive him...” Luke 6:37 “Forgive and you will be forgiven.” John 20:23 What if I don’t forgive? Colossians 3:13 “Bear with each other, forgive grievances...forgive as the Lord forgave you.”

**MATTHEW
6:12**

**AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS,
AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS.**

CHAPTER SIXTY SIX

LEAD US NOT



MATTHEW 6:13 “AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL. FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE POWER, AND THE GLORY FOR EVER. AMEN.” (KJV, NASB)

(Luke 11:4 “...And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”)

“And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.” (NKJV)

“And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil (one).” (ASV, RSV, TLB, NIV)

Anyone who has been in a Sunday School class with me for very long knows I love logic puzzles. It annoys most people, but I love them. I’m sure I annoy some with them as well. I’m sorry.

This passage of Scripture is a perfect example of such a puzzle. We all want to pray for God to deliver us from evil. But, what does Jesus mean when He encourages us to plead that He would NOT lead us into temptation?

Most explanations of this Scripture suggest that both halves of this prayer plead with the Lord to help us in all areas of temptation. That is true. We do want that. But, can God lead us into temptation? If the verse is to be taken literally, it would seem that Jesus was instructing us to plead for the Father not to do that....not to lead us into temptation.

Of course, every Bible student will quickly quote James 1:13-14, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." So, logic says that God does not tempt any man, yet in this section of the Lord's Prayer, Jesus tells us to pray, "Father, lead us not into temptation."

As a quick aside, let me counsel you to consider this. If it appears to you that, in your understanding, the Bible seems to contradict itself, it is more likely **your** understanding that is at fault. Central to our Christian faith is belief in the inerrancy of the Bible.

Despite some suggestions that there are errors in the translations of the Bible over many centuries and through many languages, the Word of God is forever true and God will not contradict Himself. If error seems evident to you, I would encourage you to study the Word even more and learn how your understanding comes up short, not the Word itself. This Scripture is a good example.

This passage is undoubtably a plea to God, on our part, for guidance and strength to avoid situations where one might be tempted to sin or to overcome the desire to act against God's will. It is also an acknowledgment of human weakness and a request for God to either keep temptations away or provide the

spiritual resilience needed to resist them when they do arise, ensuring one's faith remains strong.

As one writer put it, “This prayer implies a need for God's intervention to give the strength and knowledge to resist temptations when they are encountered. In essence, it is a humble and ongoing petition for protection and guidance from the dangers of sin that permeate the world, rather than a direct theological statement that God causes temptation.”

On the other hand, we cannot deny the fact that the Lord does allow us to be tempted. This is not only what identifies us as human but also uniquely demonstrates our “God-like” quality He created us with that always gives us choice.

In the Garden of Eden, God did not tempt Eve (and later Adam) to eat of the very fruit He forbade them to eat. We cannot deny, however, that it was God who showed Adam and Eve the fruit from the only tree that they could not eat of.

On the contrary, it was Satan that did the work of tempting. As the quote from James previously described, it was when Eve was drawn away by her own lust for the forbidden fruit and enticed and allowed that lust to be conceived that it brought forth sin. Just as described in that passage, when sin was finished, it brought forth death...and we have suffered from her decision (and ours along the way) for thousands of years.

God did not tempt Adam and Eve. But in the same way, He didn't keep them away from the temptation either. He could have never presented them with that choice. But in making us like Him, He gave them...and us...the choice between good and evil.

They chose the evil in that temptation. We have done the same. That is why, despite our God-like quality of being able to choose, we also needed a Savior to redeem us from the sin that resulted. In a way, then, God could be seen as leading us in the

path that led to our temptation. Why then would Jesus tell us to ask Him to NOT lead us into that temptation?

I think the answer lies in our perception of what Jesus was teaching us. The prayer, even though we call it “the Lord’s Prayer,” is OUR prayer. In a very real sense, WE are praying a prayer that acknowledges our weakness and our need for His redemption.

When we are praying, “Lord, don’t lead us into any path of temptation,” we are acknowledging our weakness. We are admitting that we know that when temptation comes our way, we are weak and give into those temptations and, as a result, need His rescue from our own sinful ways. We are kind of praying, “Lord, I know how I am probably going to respond to temptations. Please don’t let me go that way! Please, don’t lead me in that path.”

If this concept is still a bit too difficult for you to comprehend, maybe see it from a slightly different perspective. In the weakness of our flesh, we know that health problems and sickness are going to come. Our lives are short, and our bodies will eventually fail, and we will all give up this earthly life for the eternal life to come.

Sometimes, the Lord heals us of our sickness along the way. Sometimes, He doesn’t. But it is inevitable, sickness and eventually death will come to us all. We would all naturally pray, “Lord, please heal me from my sickness...take away the cancer that plagues my body.” Would we similarly pray, “Lord, do not lead us into sickness in the first place?” Yes, we would.

Now, does Jesus lead us into sickness? No, He does not want us to be sick...but He often allows it for one of many reasons. Does He allow sickness to come? Yes, sometimes He does. And it is quite natural for us to pray, “Lord, please don’t lead me into this sickness” when or before it comes. And, that is OK for us to

pray that. More importantly, however, is how we deal with it when it comes.

Will we trust God, even when we are sick? Can I accept sickness, and maybe even death, if it brings glory to God? It is easy to trust a God who would never let me suffer any sickness or immediately gave me healing from it every time it came along. How much more does it glorify Him if healing does not come but we continue to trust Him anyway?

I have occasionally, selfishly prayed, “Lord, your healing of me, or this other person, would bring you so much glory!” “What a testimony of your greatness would be my healing right now!” When praying this for my wife who was dying from the effects of a stroke and dementia, I am sure I heard the Lord asking me, “David, does that mean that I cannot receive glory from this situation if I do not heal her?”

That was a hard question for me to answer. However, you realize that sometimes, His glory comes, maybe even in a greater way, from NOT necessarily answering my prayers in exactly the way I want Him to answer them.

The human aspect of Jesus pleaded with the Father, “Lord let this cup pass from me!” regarding His death on the cross. In the same way, He expects us to plead, “Lord, please don’t lead me (or at least allow me) to have to go through this sickness.” “Lord, please don’t lead me in this road of temptation.”

Jesus, however, came right back and said, “nevertheless, not MY will, but YOUR will be done.” If we are to become like Jesus, we need to pray the same prayer. “Lord, lead me not into temptation...don’t let me or make me go down this road where I will be tempted. Nevertheless, not my will but your will be done. Please deliver me! Please, deliver me from all evil, give me

victory over temptation, let me glorify you by finally saying no to every temptation. Let me be just like you!”

You know what? Through this kind of prayer, can we only, ever admit that we mean it when we finish the prayer by pleading that HIS would be the kingdom, the power and the glory forever.

We spend most of our lives trying to build up our own kingdoms. Power has an attractive allure, even though it is an obvious delusion. We all love our own glory...it is the natural Adam in all of us. We absolutely must want HIS kingdom, power and glory...even if it means us having none of it at all.

Jesus came so He could give it all up for us. He wants us to learn to do the same thing. He who was perfect came so, not deserving the punishment and death for sins, could take it on Himself FOR US! Praise you Jesus for doing that for us! Help every one of us to “believe on Him, so we should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

More so, let us apply every word of the “sample prayer” to our lives so we can bring glory and honor to Him. Let us daily worship “His holy Name.” Let us live to bring “His kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.”

Let us thank Him for every day’s “daily bread” that He so graciously provides. Let us forgive one another as He wonderfully forgives us our trespasses.

Even if it seems like He is allowing us to go down those paths that seem to lead to temptation, let’s trust Him to deliver us from not only those temptations, but from all evil. Let us bring His kingdom to earth, give Him all the power, the glory and all the honor that certainly belongs to Him...not us. Amen.

Questions to consider: Does the experience of temptations you are very familiar with in your own life ever make you think

that God was responsible for those temptations? Comedian Flip Wilson was famous for saying, “the devil made me do it.” Have you ever been tempted to blame the devil for your own weaknesses and failures when tempted? Are there any temptations you have experienced that you honestly think you could not resist? See 1 Cor 10:13.

Scriptures to study: Most temptation mentioned in the Bible comes from us tempting God: Exodus 17:17; Psalm 78:18, 41, 56; Psalm 95:9; Hebrews 3:9. They tempted Jesus: Luke 10:25; 1 Cor 10:9. Satan the source of Temptation: Matthew 4:1; Mark 1:13; Luke 4:2. Remember, we will never be tempted beyond what we have the ability to resist: 1 Cor 10:13

Dive Deeper: I feel that the Lord is leading me to introduce a new section to the writing of my books. I will call this “Dive Deeper.” I expect we will use these sections and suggestions to examine the topic deeper than I have in the short exposition above.

There are two YouTube videos I would like to recommend we view to see another person’s perspective of this topic. The first is a Bible scholar, Chad Bird, who encourages us to view this passage as "Explained from its Hebrew Background in the Psalms." Feel free to view it at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ynp3UNgmVZQ>

The second suggestion I would recommend is an excellent sermon on the topic by Pastor Alistair Begg. View it at the following YouTube address:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c4bWr79K-uY>

Both of these videos are excellent references on the topic and are certainly worth the investment of time to watch. If you have any difficulty looking them up, please feel free to check out our

website at <http://www.daveweb1a.com/hide/hide.html>, go to Book 3, Chapter 66 and click on the references at the bottom of the page.

MATTHEW
6:13

AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION
BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL.
FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM,
AND THE POWER, AND THE GLORY,
FOREVER. AMEN.

CHAPTER SIXTY SEVEN

WISDOM FROM ABOVE



JAMES 3:17 “BUT THE WISDOM THAT IS FROM ABOVE IS FIRST PURE, THEN PEACEABLE, GENTLE, AND EASY TO BE INTREATED, FULL OF MERCY AND GOOD FRUITS, WITHOUT PARTIALITY, AND WITHOUT HYPOCRISY.” (KJV)

“But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, without uncertainty or insincerity.” (RSV)

“But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.” (NIV)

“But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable (willing to yield), full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.” (NASB, NKJV)

“But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure and full of quiet gentleness. Then it is peace-loving and courteous. It allows discussion and is willing to yield to others; it is full of mercy and good deeds. It is wholehearted and straightforward and sincere.” (TLB)

OK, enough with the easy memory verses! This memory verse is harder...partially because it is longer, but also because it is a long list. I know that a lot of us do not like the “laundry list” verses. But there can be a great deal of wisdom that we can find in them. That makes them worthy of memory. Let me cite an example.

Just this week, I was preparing for an upcoming minister’s board meeting with our ministers’ association, the BMA. I was asked if I wanted to address a topic that I had previously had issues with. It is not important to this discussion what the topic was. The point is that I had issue with it and had previously expressed my disagreement with a certain decision.

I was asked if I wanted time in the board meeting to discuss the issue. I said I would pray about it. I did. To my surprise, direction from the Lord came later in the early hours of the morning when I know I heard His voice reminding me of this previously memorized Bible verse, James 3:17.

As hard as a verse may be to memorize sometimes, it is amazing how clearly the Lord can bring it back to my mind when He wants to use it to teach me something or give me His answer to a question. He used James 3:17 to do that this morning.

It took me a long time to memorize this “list” because it is kind of long. There are eight qualities or characteristics listed here which seem to define what wisdom “from above” is.

That morning, the Lord clearly asked me, “is your approach toward this issue pure?” “Have you expressed your concerns in a peaceable way?” “Did you demonstrate a gentle spirit when you stated your disagreements?” “Did your attitude show mercy and good fruits, the fruits of the Spirit that you might remember from Galatians 5:22?” “Remember that list you memorized too?”

Those of you who are now familiar with the format of the chapters of my books realize that I end these chapters with “Questions to Consider.” I’m not sure I need to add more questions after the ones I listed above. The Lord’s questions to me here are plenty!

The point is, if you memorize these verses of the Bible, “hide them” deep in your heart as well as your memory, the Lord is going to bring them back to you in times of need or trouble, when you need an answer. More than once I have been amazed how clearly a verse I had memorized before spoke to a specific issue in my life or answered a specific question I had asked Him. And just like that, I had my answer.

The answer is particularly significant if, as I did above, I have to answer, “no, Lord, I have not been that way” or “no, Lord, I have not been living out the direction the verse from Your Word tells me I need to go.”

If you study the entire chapter of James 3, you will find that most of it deals with the tongue and how we use it. James quickly expresses to us the problem in verse 10 by saying, “out of the same mouth proceeds blessing AND cursing.” Of course, this ought not to be! Apparently, a lot of what comes out of our mouths has a lot to do with what wisdom there is inside of us.

James gives us lots of contrasts between heavenly wisdom and earthly wisdom. He even goes so far as to say that wisdom will be demonstrated by good conversation and works with meekness. Then he gives us a “measuring stick” with which to determine if what we say and do is really wisdom from above or just from deep within our old, stinky flesh. There are eight of them.

Is it pure? Are my motivations for my argument really coming from pure motives, guided and directed by the Lord, or am I trying to make a point for my side of the argument? Sometimes, this

results in lively, but often also divisive, discussion. Rarely, does this result in anything that can be described as peaceable.

Look real quickly and what James says in verse 18. “The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.” When I am trying to make my point, I frequently leave peace behind. I don’t want to make peace...I want to win my argument! Maybe not so wise.

I have always wanted to have a gentle spirit about things. But, I have discovered that the Lord didn’t make me that way. My mother, Doris Matthews, always demonstrated to me a gentle spirit that I pray for and have often wondered if I would ever inherit. A dear friend and mentor, Brother Joe Green, seemed to always demonstrate a gentle and unaggravated spirit, mostly demonstrated by always giving a soft answer (or often no answer) to many of my questions.

I have had plenty of examples of gentle spirit. The Holy Spirit and I are still working on incorporating that kind of spirit in my life. Hmm.

I would like to think I am approachable, and “easy to be intreated.” But most of the time, I find that that means not being so quick to give the answer to a particular problem or question because I know I am sure I know the answer. Were you the kind of kid that always had his hand up when the teacher asked a question because you wanted to demonstrate that, AGAIN, you knew the answer?

Mercy has never been my strong suit. I’d more often like to be right than to demonstrate what might be described as patient with others and willing to listen first. This is probably why James spent so much time talking about the tongue just prior to this.

I hope I am full of good fruits and demonstrating those in my life. I know what the fruits of the spirit are...I memorized them

from Galatians 5:22, remember? I'm not sure I am always checking myself to make sure I am demonstrating them in my speech and actions though. Oh look! There is gentleness again! I detect a trend here.

I think I do better with demonstrating impartiality and resisting hypocrisy. Like many others, I cannot stand hypocrites. Hypocritical attitudes and actions have probably done more to diminish the testimony of Christians than our actual sins. However, I am constantly being reminded by the Holy Spirit that even though I think I am doing well, a critical, prejudicial attitude can easily creep into the way I treat others. Just trying to be honest here.

OK. So, again, I realize that long lists of qualities and characteristics of holy living can be hard to memorize. The only way I handled that problem was to go over and over the verse and the long list numerous times until it was firmly planted into my memory. Of course, the only way to keep it there is to go over and over it...again, and again, and again.

That sounds like a lot of hard work. It is. But I also know it is worth it. Only by exercising this discipline are we able to get that Word hidden so the Lord can use it, bring it back to our memory and thoughts, and ply us into the image of Himself. That is what we are supposed to be doing after all.

Questions to Consider: As I mentioned, I listed lots of questions in the discussion above. Go over those again and see if they apply to where you are in your walk with the Lord. Let's ask again, is this discipline worth all the work it seems to require? Does this experience of the Lord using Scriptures we have memorized to teach and lead us seem familiar to you? How often does it seem like the Lord brings verses back to us in our prayer

time? On a measuring scale of “the wisdom from above” that we know can be ours, where do you feel you are?

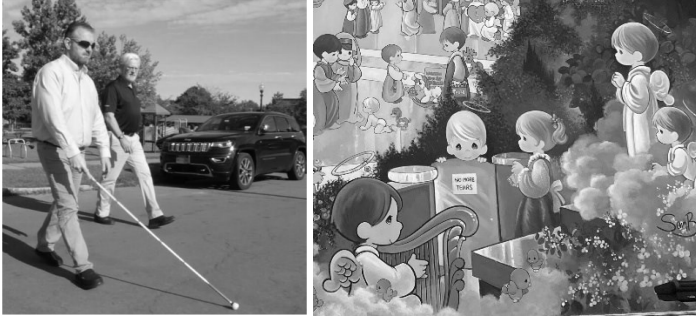
Other Verses to Study: James 1:5 “If any of you lack wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all...” Ephesians 1:17 “...the Father may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.” Colossians 2:3 “(know) Christ, in whom are hidden all treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” Matthew 11:19 “But wisdom is proved right by her actions.” Romans 11:33 “Oh, the depth of the riches both of wisdom and knowledge of God!”

JAMES 3:17

BUT THE WISDOM THAT IS FROM ABOVE
IS FIRST PURE, THEN PEACEABLE,
GENTLE, AND EASY TO BE INTREATED,
FULL OF MERCY AND GOOD FRUITS,
WITHOUT PARTIALITY, AND WITHOUT HYPOCRISY.

CHAPTER SIXTY EIGHT

WALK BY FAITH



2 CORINTHIANS 5:7 “FOR WE WALK BY FAITH, NOT BY SIGHT.” (KJV, NKJV, NASB, ASV, RSV)

“We live by faith, not by sight.” (NIV)

“We know these things are true by believing, not by seeing.” (TLB)

How about an easy memory verse? Just eight words in this one...seven if you memorize it from the NIV. Plus, this is a very well known, often quoted verse that in many ways, is the foundation of our belief. We walk by faith, not by sight.

You absolutely must read the verses before and after verse seven to understand the context. Paul is teaching the Corinthians about the next life. As followers of Jesus, we have a home prepared for us when this life on earth is over. But, like a lot that we learn from the Word, this too is an idea we accept without having seen it. So much of our faith is like that.

Paul discusses some interesting, if not peculiar, ideas about the next life in verses 1-5. We have a place after this life...he calls it a “building from God, an eternal house in heaven.” He admits we long for heaven. He reminds us how much better it will be than this life. He even tells us the Holy Spirit is given to us as a deposit for what is to come.

In the end, he tells us, believing in our eternal home, we long to be there much more than stay here. To be absent from this body will be to be present with the Lord. I’m looking forward to that!

My sweet mother, Doris, had very specific images of what her place in heaven was going to be like. She probably took the image of her “mansion, just over the hilltop” more literally than anyone else I ever knew.

We lost my next to youngest brother Duane before he was forty from cancer. Like the loss of any parents’ child, Mom and Dad missed Duane so much. Mom just knew that Duane was up in heaven, getting her mansion ready for her.

We teased her that he was probably hammering on the shingles on her roof just like he had done while here on earth. When Mom passed away in 2020, Dad swore that he knew Mom had not stopped hugging Duane since she got there.

We look forward to heaven a lot because it promises to be so great and who wouldn’t long to be there? Our mental images of the wonders of heaven fill our imaginations with wondrous beauty...streets of gold, gates of pearl, flowing rivers of life.

But, without doubt, we truly accept the reality of heaven...even accept the truth Paul is telling us in Corinthians...because we believe it to be true. We haven’t seen it, but we believe it. Like so many other aspects of our Christian faith, we walk in them by faith, not by sight.

The disciple Thomas found the stories of Jesus' resurrection so incredible that he said he wouldn't believe Jesus had risen from the dead unless he could see Him with his own eyes. Jesus accommodated Thomas' lack of faith (forever we will know him as "doubting Thomas") by coming to him in the resurrected flesh and letting him touch Him.

Thomas believed, but we are those Jesus said would be more blessed because we had not seen yet still believe. That is one of many outstanding definitions of FAITH.

Jesus calls us. We do not see Him, but through the Spirit who speaks to our spirit, we hear His voice. By faith, although we do not see, we believe and, as a result, receive eternal life. When we "believe on Him," we have everlasting life (John 3:16).

We learned in Hebrews 11:1 that our faith is "the evidence of things not seen." The rest of that chapter tells us of scores of believers who walked in faith, even though they could not see the promise they were given.

Hebrews 11 amplifies what 2 Cor 5:7 teaches us by giving us example after example of what it means to "walk by faith," in contrast to our natural desire to walk by sight. Abel offered a sacrifice without having to see why. Noah built an ark over one hundred years to save humanity from a flood without ever having seen a flood (or an ark). Abraham left home to go to a promised place, "not knowing where he was going."

Hebrews 11:13 tells us that all those "Heroes of the Faith" died in faith, "not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them." They saw them, but not with the vision of their earthly eyes.

They also are promised, even as we are promised, a city that God has prepared for us (vrs 16). The Bible uses them as examples to us so we can understand and live that same life of faith. Not a

faith that demands to see to believe, but one that sees with eyes of faith what our natural eyes cannot.

Earlier in this passage, Paul tells us quite plainly that without faith, it is impossible to please God! Verse 6 says that we must “believe that He is.” We quite literally must believe that God exists in the first place before we can demonstrate any kind of faith. Then, we are to believe (even sometimes without seeing) that He is “a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”

I can understand the deep urge to demand to see the proof before we believe the truth. Faith, however, is just the opposite. God wants us to believe the truth, even if we never see any proof, at least not in this life.

As men born of flesh, we want to see everything, touch it, confirm it with our eyes, our hands and our senses before we say we believe it. This is the greatest reason so many refuse to believe in Him. God wants us to walk by faith and sometimes that means purposefully, not walking by sight.

I thank the Lord that I have never lost my vision. Those who are blind, through training, can be taught to walk without sight. You have seen those like the photo above.

Through that training, they had to trust what those who could see told them about what they could do before they could walk “not by sight.” But, ultimately, anyone like them would have to have enough faith that what they learned would keep them out of danger before they could walk that way.

Here lately, as I have considered the truth in this statement about faith, I have tried to look at all that goes on around me through the lens of faith and not just how things appear to be. Through my earthly eyes, it sure seems like the world is running as hard as it can toward destruction. But, turning off my fleshly vision and trying to see through eyes of faith, it seems like I can

occasionally see the Lord's work as He prepares to return for his "bride" and fulfill the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation.

When a well-meaning acquaintance or friend of mine seems to be responding to me badly or acting like a jerk, I have started turning off the visual imagery they are impressing me with and instead ask the Lord to show me why they are acting the way they are. When it appears that bad things are happening to me or why a particular sickness is affecting me or someone I love, I stop emphasizing the visual aspect of the situation and look for the faith-inspired reason why the Lord is letting me walk through this.

These are just a few of the ways I can walk by faith if I am willing to stop depending on everything making sense in the way I see it. Have you ever tried this? Maybe we all need to close our eyes to walking by sight from time to time and see what the Word means by "walking by faith, and NOT by sight." Give it a try.

Questions to consider: God gave most of us great eyes, great vision. Why would He expect us to believe in what we cannot see instead of having it proven to us by sight? How easily can what we see deceive us into believing things that are not true? Ever watch a magician? How does he make those things we see seem so incredible? What does faith and the Word tell us about heaven that makes it so desirable and believable to us even though we have not seen it? What kind of rewards have you received here on earth because you chose to believe God instead of what the world told you about things?

Other Scriptures to study: Matt 8:26 "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Matt 15:28 "You have great faith. Your request is granted." Mark 10:52 "Your faith has healed you." Luke 7:50 "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace." Luke 18:8 "When the

Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” Romans 1:17
“The righteous shall live by faith.” (Galatians 3:11)

2 CORINTHIANS

5:7

**FOR WE WALK BY FAITH,
NOT BY SIGHT.**

CHAPTER SIXTY NINE

FAITH BY HEARING



ROMANS 10:17 “SO THEN FAITH COMETH BY HEARING, AND HEARING BY THE WORD OF GOD.” (KJV, NKJV, NASB)

Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. (NIV)

So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. (ASV)

So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by preaching of Christ. (RSV)

Yet faith comes from listening to this Good News—the Good News about Christ. (TLB)

In this passage of Scripture, Paul is expressing his frustration that his people, the Jews, have chosen not to follow the Gospel of Jesus. In the first verse, he states, “my heart’s desire and prayer is that Israelites may be saved.” They have a lot of zeal, but their zeal is not based on knowledge.

Quite well known is Paul's quote from verse 9: "if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." It would seem that message could not be any easier to understand. He devoted the rest of his life to preaching that message. The Jews, however, as Paul says, chose to believe in "their own righteousness," and as a result refused to submit to the righteousness of God. That sounds familiar.

We know from other explanations in Gospels written by Paul that we are drawn to the Lord's plan for our salvation when the Holy Spirit draws us. That is when our spiritual "hearing" starts to tune in. That is when, if we hear the preaching of the Gospel, we can choose to receive that faith. Have you received that faith?

Quite assuredly, Paul tells us, the Jews heard the Gospel because he preached it to them first, before he preached it to the Gentiles. The church has been developing preachers, disciples and witnesses of the Good News of the Gospel for two thousand years since. The motivation for all of us to become "preachers," as described here and in numerous other passages written by Paul, is encouraged in this Bible verse. And the message could not be simpler: the dying world needs preachers like you!

It has been famously said, the only Bible most people will ever read is YOU. The only Jesus many will ever experience is Jesus in YOU. And Paul warns us here in verses 14 and 15, "How will the lost call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of who they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent?"

Paul was sent to the Gentiles to declare the Gospel and bring salvation to the lost. So are YOU!

Many Christians have considered this “encouragement” to be pretty coercive. Some might even say, the church is sometimes “heavy handed” in trying to lay a “guilt trip” on Christians that they might be convinced to be those messengers by whom those around us would hear the Gospel. I get that. After all, sharing the Gospel to others can be pretty intimidating and scary.

On the other hand, such verses as these have caused uncounted thousands to feel the call to ministry and often, to a mission field somewhere, sometimes at the threat of harm to their own lives. What causes a man (and sometimes his whole family) to leave the comfort and safety of their own home to go somewhere far less comfortable, just to try to win others to Jesus?

I was influenced at a very young age by a young missionary family, Jerry and Nola Witt, who responded to just such a call, right out of Bible College, to move to the mission field with three young sons to Durango, Mexico. Jerry flew into the mountains of Mexico in a Cessna and dropped booklets of the Gospel of John to indigenous Mexican Indians who would have otherwise, never heard of Jesus. He would follow that adventure up with visits to those villages to lead souls to Jesus.

Jerry was that preacher who was sent...inspired by both the Holy Spirit and through support by pastors and churches back home. Because he was sent, many heard. Because they heard, many believed. Because they believed, many called on Jesus and were saved.

One day, Jerry’s airplane was shot at by local people with guns. The airplane was disabled and crashed into the surrounding mountains. The local people drug Jerry and his assistant from the wreckage of the plane and viciously displayed their dead bodies in the little town where they lived. Later, Jerry’s wife Nola and

her father had to claim their bodies and return them back home for funerals.

No one would have blamed Nola if she would have taken her three little boys and returned back to the United States for the rest of her life. But, she did not. Apparently, Nola heard that call for preachers to reach the lost as well. She stayed in Durango and continued the mission the Lord had assigned to her and Jerry.

Several years later, Frank Warren arrived. He and Nola were married and they continued the mission work together for decades to come. They had twin daughters themselves, right there in Durango, Mexico.

Not many years ago Frank went home to be with the Lord before Nola did. Nola continued the work right there in Durango, to include maintaining a very successful Bible School/College, witnessing and winning souls for Jesus in many villages and towns in Mexico until the Lord finally took her home to be with Him too.

Many of her own children continue the work of ministry, telling those who will hear about the Gospel that they can be saved. One of her children, Mark Witt, actually has an internationally famous singing ministry that has reached hundreds of thousands around the Spanish-speaking world.

Nola, Frank, Jerry, Mark and many, many others have been the preachers Paul was talking about in Romans 10. They heard the call of the Lord that convinced them that faith that leads to salvation only comes by hearing, that hearing comes from the Word of God, and the lost will not hear that Word unless someone goes to tell them.

These saints didn't need to be coerced or convinced. Hearing the voice of Jesus calling them, they said yes to that call. And, we will never know how many thousands of lives have been won to Jesus because of their faithfulness.

I would have loved to have been in heaven to see Nola's entrance into the presence of Jesus. I admire the answer to the call of Jesus by Jerry, Frank and Mark as well. But I think I knew Sister Nola best and know her lifetime of sacrifice for Jesus. Because she was so faithful, for so many years, despite so many hardships, it had to be exceptionally special when Jesus told Nola, "well done, good and faithful servant." I hope I can just come close to that kind of faithfulness.

The lost will only come to faith by hearing, and that hearing must be hearing the Word of God. But they cannot hear without a preacher (Romans 10:14), and the preachers cannot preach unless they are sent. Are you willing to be a sender? Are you willing to be sent? Is the preaching of the Gospel so important that it is worth great sacrifices so that others can be saved? Yes, it is.

Questions to consider: Name a missionary that you know. How have you helped send them? Have you ever considered a missionary visit to some foreign land to see what a missionary does and experience how they heard the Lord's call? Such a visit will change your life. Do you have a burden for family members who are probably not saved? How will you be that voice that they can hear so they also can believe? Whether you ever go to a mission field or not, how does such a call to tell others about Jesus affect how you live every day of your life?

Other Scriptures to study: Acts 16:9 Paul's vision of a man of Macedonia. Verse 10: "concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them." Philippians 4:14-16 "...you sent me aid again and again when I was in need." Mark 16:15 "Go into all the world and preach the gospel..." Romans 10:15 "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring

glad tidings of good things.” 1 Corinthians 9: 16-18 “...woe is me if I do not preach the gospel...”

**ROMANS
10:17**

**SO THEN FAITH
COMETH BY HEARING,
AND HEARING
BY THE WORD OF GOD.**

CHAPTER SEVENTY

CLEAN HEART



PSALM 51:10 “CREATE IN ME A CLEAN HEART O GOD;
AND RENEW A RIGHT SPIRIT WITHIN ME.” (KJV, NKJV,
ASV)

Create a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit
within me. (NASB)

Create a new, clean heart, O God, filled with clean thoughts
and right desires. (NLB)

Create a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within
me. (NIV)

Many versions of the Bible begin Psalm 51 with the
explanation, “A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came
to him, after he had gone into Bathsheba.” No kidding!

I have often wondered, how could a man like David, whom
the Bible claimed was a “man after God’s own heart,” do what
David did? We are always quicker to judge than we are to look in
a mirror.

I will not go into my sins. A wise man once said, “Confession may be good for the soul, but it is bad for the reputation.” I sure don’t want to ruin your opinion of my reputation or make you think I could ever be as bad as David. Let’s not discuss the fact that my parents gave me the same name.

Another of my faults is that I pretty much “wear my reputation on my sleeves.” That means I am not even close to being good at hiding my frailties, failures and weaknesses. I have many of those and most who know me well enough, know that I do.

If you do not know King David’s most famous sin, take a good read through 2 Samuel 11. I’ll wait for you to go through it. It is a sordid story and the Bible does a thorough job telling it. If you read beyond the initial completed sin you will see many issues that follow David’s sin. Psalm 51:10 is about the last issue I will mention, but I must talk about the first issues and what this Psalm is NOT about:

I am convinced that all men are tempted like David was. If not the temptation of lusting after a woman (let alone lusting after another man’s wife), we are always wanting what we don’t have.

David should have been on the battlefield (2 Samuel 11:1). He should not have been gazing on a woman bathing, even if she was up on the roof. He should not have taken her for himself, had sex with her and then try to cover it up by having her husband killed in battle. And, thinking he had covered his tracks, it should not have had to take the prophet Samuel to convict him of his sin. See 2 Samuel 12.

David was not praying “Create in me a clean heart,” after he had sex with Bathsheba. I have no doubt that, if he was a man after God’s own heart, the GUILT of his sin was with him from the moment of the conception of his sin (no pun intended). Notice that the guilt he experienced did not lead him to repentance.

David certainly did not pray “Create in me a clean heart” while he was covering up his sin. This sentiment really wasn’t the motivation for his conviction when Samuel confronted him, when he repented after he was caught nor whenever David eventually received forgiveness for his sin. No, certainly, the plea to the Lord for a clean heart came once David started dealing with the CONSEQUENCES of his sin.

My experience has been that the cry, “Lord, please create in me a clean heart,” comes well after I have been dealing with an unclean heart for a long time, just like David. The big clue is in the rest of that verse, “and RENEW a right spirit within me.”

We are not preaching to those who have never known the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ in their lives. The Bible clearly tells us we are “dead in our trespasses and sins” before we are “born again” and receive eternal life. Folks, if you have never given your life to Jesus; if you have never acknowledged your lostness, asked Jesus to forgive you for your sins and accepted His free gift of eternal life, please do that now!

No, we can never plead for a clean heart if we have never enjoyed the knowledge of ever having had one. We cannot pray, “renew a right spirit within me,” if we are still living in our trespasses and sins. Give your life to Jesus today.

Unfortunately, as with the example of David, and the example of almost any Christian we might have ever known, when we are saved the truth is we will still sin. I am convinced that David was “a man after God’s own heart” long before this episode in his life. But, the burden of the consequences (or results) of his sin (and our sins) are what brought him to the point of understanding that the “clean heart” he once had disappeared with his sin.

It doesn’t seem like it was after the child he and Bathsheba bore through this sin died that David pled for God to restore his

clean heart. Maybe it was right after Samuel declared to David, “You are that man” (2 Sam 12:7). Samuel shared one of the consequences of David’s sin when he told him, “the sword will never depart from your house.” (verse 10)

Maybe it was when Samuel declared that other men would now sleep with his wives and “you did this in secret, but the Lord will repay you in broad daylight before all Israel.”

David would plead to God for a clean heart. He confessed in verse 13, “I have sinned against the Lord.” Notice right after that, Samuel declares “The Lord has taken away your sin.” Was it then?

No, I think it was maybe months or even years after suffering from the consequences of this sin David realized his need for a clean heart. Only after being constantly reminded that some sins carry bad results did David plead to return to that state of having a clean heart again.

How often do we return to our old ways, our sinful nature, and maybe even repent and receive forgiveness for them only to find out the heart has been severely affected by that act of disobedience?

I believe the Lord answers our prayer for a clean heart. He can take what we have made into an unclean heart, and make it clean again! I think He is anxious to restore a right spirit within all of us. I think He understands our weaknesses and longs to have a restored, holy relationship with us.

I do think, however, that He hopes that we would pray, “Lord create in me a clean heart” BEFORE we sin! I think He would like it if He didn’t always have to renew a right spirit within us, but wants us to keep that right spirit in us all the time.

I recognize, from my experiences in life, that I may never arrive at total freedom from temptation and sins this side of

heaven. I know some who teach that kind of doctrine. I have just not met any of them who have gotten there yet.

I have to admit that I have not arrived there yet. I do know that I still disappoint the One who died for all my sins when I want to go right back to them. I pray I will arrive (and daily strive to arrive) at that point where I will always have victory over temptation and sin. But so far, it seems like I give in and submit to my temptations instead of to the Holy Spirit. I fail, I fall and I sin.

Jesus is always right there with me...He does not leave me. He wants me to feel the guilt and conviction of my sins and plead for forgiveness. And, He always forgives me when I ask.

My sins separate me from the living, loving relationship Jesus wants to have with me every day. If I choose to live a way not pleasing to the Lord, my heart will ache. It will experience grief through the conviction of the Holy Spirit. If I dwell around sin too long, serious damage can come from that separation...even though the Father would never want that for us. Such sin can create a dirty heart in us and He so wants us to have clean hearts.

If we take the instructions of this prayer of David truly to heart, the truth is we need to pray, "Create in me a clean heart" every day. Yes, the prayer is effective when we have drifted off from the center of His will for us, maybe into deep sin. Yes, this prayer is an effective tool to ward off temptation before we take, even the first step into sin. But it may be that David, even as we should, discovered that this prayer is most effective if we pray it every day!

First thing of the day, maybe over that first cup of coffee, I want to start praying, "Lord, create in me a clean heart today." I know that might easily become nothing more than a habit that can turn into routine. But maybe, if I turn my heart toward Him first

thing every morning and, as I look at the morning sun rising in the east, I pray for Him to, once again, purify, sanctify and clean up whatever might have been left from the day before that did not glorify Him, He might be able to use that prayer to guide every next day into one that follows the direction of a clean heart.

Some day...hopefully in this lifetime...I will get to experience a life that does not ever “look at Bathsheba.” Maybe not. And for my sins, I know I have one who saves me from them. However, I have to believe that if I can learn to pray, “Lord, create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me” BEFORE I am drawn away into that sin, maybe I can create the atmosphere where I won’t have to pray it long after the consequences of those sins do their best to wreck my life. What do you think?

Questions to consider: Am I the only Christian who struggles with sin after I was saved? Is it possible to NOT sin? Do we recognize that the Lord wants us to deal with any sin in our life immediately? What happens to us if we allow habitual sin to dominate our lives? Have you ever tried applying this verse to your situation when you are tempted? Is it possible that memorizing this verse and applying it every time we are tempted might keep us from giving into that temptation? What other things can create hearts in us that need cleaning? What should it feel like when the Lord answers this prayer and does create in us a clean heart again?

Other Scriptures to study: James 4:7 “SUBMIT to God. RESIST the devil and he will flee from you.” James 1:14 “Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings death.” Any wonder why our

hearts would start to feel like they are not clean? Titus 2:14-15
“...He might purify for Himself His own special people...” James
4:8 “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you...purify your
hearts...”

A Song to Remember: “Create in Me a Clean Heart”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b7Hk3WFUMvo>

PSALM
51:10

**CREATE IN ME
A CLEAN HEART O GOD;
AND RENEW A RIGHT SPIRIT
WITHIN ME.**

CHAPTER SEVENTY ONE

CAST ME NOT AWAY



PSALM 51:11 “CAST ME NOT AWAY FROM THY PRESENCE; AND TAKE NOT THY HOLY SPIRIT FROM ME.” (KJV, ASV, RSV)

Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. (NKJV, NASB, NIV)

Don’t toss me aside, banished forever from your presence. Don’t take your Holy Spirit from me. (TLB)

Frankly, I don’t want to write this chapter. The topic of God taking His presence from us is one we don’t all agree on in evangelical churches. Honestly, it makes a lot of my friends “bristle” at the notion that God would do such a thing.

After all, doesn’t the Bible clearly teach us that there is nothing we can do to remove ourselves from God’s love? See Romans 8:35-39. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” Didn’t Jesus say in John 10:28, “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand?”

At the opposite end, the Bible also clearly teaches that God will not tolerate evil and wrong. Habakkuk 1:13 says, “Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong.” Romans 1 lists a whole bunch of evils that we can surrender to and Paul tells us God “gave them over” to their sinful desires (vrs 24) and to shameful lusts (vrs 26) and to depraved minds (vrs 28). He even says in verse 32, those who do such things “deserve death.” That is pretty harsh.

I hope you won’t abandon me if I share what I believe regarding our salvation. I truly believe that our salvation is secure. I also believe, however, that it is not unconditionally secure. Truly, nothing can separate us from the love of God...Satan can’t, others attacking us can’t, even the church can’t. But I do not believe that, having received the loving sacrifice of Jesus’ blood for our sins, we have freedom to trample on it and live whatever kind of life we want to live, knowing that Jesus is always there to forgive us.

No “thing” can separate us...but we always have the ability to separate ourselves. Even the “ultimate (unforgivable) sin” of rejecting Jesus’ sacrifice for our sins and turning from Him is unforgivable.

1 Timothy 1:19 describes “...some having rejected concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck.” Paul reminds us in 1 Tim 4 that “in latter times some will depart from the faith.” Hebrews 3:12 warns us, “See to it BROTHERS, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that TURNS AWAY FROM THE LIVING GOD.” Even 2 Peter 3:17 warns us to “be on guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your SECURE POSITION.”

Jesus warned in John 15:6, “If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches

are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.” We are told in Hebrews 6:4-6 “It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.”

If that isn’t enough, Hebrews 10:26-27 further tells us, “If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.”

Can there be any wonder that David would pray, “Cast me not away from thy presence?” Whether David actually experienced it or not, I cannot help but think that, while he was laying with Bathsheba, he surely felt God removing His Holy Spirit from Him because of his disobedience.

If a Holy God will not tolerate evil in His children, did David not feel the Holy Spirit moving away from him while he was hiding his sin from Israel? He surely knew that there was no way he could hide his sin from God! He knew God well enough to know better.

Whether or not God actually cast David away from His presence, David slipped far enough away from Him that He feared losing God’s presence. I have to think that the FEAR of having God take His Holy Spirit from him was enough for him to pray this prayer in Psalm 51:11.

The fear of God casting us away from His presence should be enough for us to run from temptation and not give into our own

lusts. Having experienced the Holy Spirit and His comfort, peace and strength should be enough to make us fear having it “taken away from us.”

But, the Bible lets us in on all the gory details of David’s failure and sin...because we are just like him. Sad though it may be, I’m pretty sure that, this side of heaven, we will all continue to be tempted and sometimes fail to always overcome those temptations because we too are flesh.

We will feel it...like David did. When we sin we should feel that fear that He has every right to cast us away from His presence. And the answer to that dilemma is, “God, please, create in me a clean heart!”

Fear of being “cast away from God’s presence” should not be our only motivation for learning to rely on the strength of the Holy Spirit to help us resist the devil. Our love for Jesus and what He did for us should be enough.

That evidence of the grieving of the Holy Spirit isn’t a threat that God will take it away from us if we aren’t good enough. It is evidence that we serve a Holy God and that He will not tolerate unhindered, indulgent unholiness from us.

As I said in the previous chapter, we don’t just need to plead, “Lord, create in me a clean heart” AFTER we have allowed sin to take over and we have been caught, the consequences of our sins are catching up with us and we can’t handle it any more. That prayer will help us and our wonderful Savior has promised to forgive the pleas of a repentant heart. No, we need to pray that prayer BEFORE we sin, even as we are being tempted, so we will find the strength to say “NO” to sin and turn from our wicked ways.

And yes, we need to pray that prayer every day so we rededicate ourselves to Jesus and walk in His ways, not our own.

I think it is safe to say that, if we can do this, we probably won't have to worry about Him casting us away from His presence, nor will we ever feel that He might take His Holy Spirit from us.

Questions to consider: Why is it so easy to give in to temptations and lusts and so hard to say no to them? How far in sin do we need to go before we repent and turn back to Jesus? Do you feel that tug of the Holy Spirit when you give in to temptation? How many times are we allowed to fall and then ask the Lord to forgive us and restore us to a right relationship with Him? How can we balance our understanding of the greatness of the security of our salvation with the truth that only we can take it away? We shouldn't be asking, "how far can I get away from God and still be saved?" Instead, we should be devoting all our attention to seeing how close we can get to Him.

Other Scriptures to study: We listed a lot of Scriptures on this topic in the text. Here they are again for in-depth study: Romans 8:35-39. John 10:28. Habakkuk 1:13. Romans 1. 1 Timothy 1:19. 1 Timothy 4. Hebrews 3:12. 2 Peter 3:17. John 15:6. Hebrews 6:4-6. Hebrews 10:26-27.

A Song to Remember: "Create in Me a Clean Heart"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b7Hk3WFUMvo>

**PSALM
51:11**

**CAST ME NOT AWAY
FROM THY PRESENCE;
AND TAKE NOT THY
HOLY SPIRIT FROM ME.**

CHAPTER SEVENTY TWO

JOY OF MY SALVATION



PSALM 51:12 “RESTORE UNTO ME THE JOY OF THY SALVATION; AND UPHOLD ME WITH THY FREE SPIRIT.” (KJV)

Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit. (NKJV, NASB, NIV)

Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit. (NASB, ASV, RSV)

Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. (NIV)

Restore to me again the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you. (TLB)

Christians ought to be the happiest people alive! After all, what could bring you more joy than knowing you are saved? So, the obvious question is, what causes us to sometimes look like we need joy restored to our lives?

We don't need to dwell on David's sin with Bathsheba a lot more, but you can see how the consequences of his sin had left

him very far from the joy he had previously demonstrated. Sin will do that. The urge to satisfy a momentary, sinful pleasure can lead every one of us on a path of destruction and sorrow that can bring about loss, pain and sometimes, even death.

Already, from the last two chapters, we know that a man who had once danced in front of the entire nation of Israel in praise to the Lord, had sunk to unbelievable lows and depression after indulging in a momentary pleasure. Convicted of his sin by Nathan the prophet, he had to deal with the guilt of murder, the loss of his child, the future rejection of many of his children and resulting turning away by his nation from God. Sin will do that.

Have you ever found yourself far from God because of your sins, turned from them in repentance and pleaded with Him to “create a clean heart” in you again? Along with that second request to “renew a right spirit within me,” now comes David’s plea to “restore the joy of his salvation.”

I hope you have felt that joy that comes from knowing you are clean in God’s eyes, free from the shackles of sins that felt like they would doom you for eternity. We don’t always “feel” that joy, but oh what incredible rapture it can be if you ever take in the full realization that Jesus’ sacrifice for me paid the price that I should have had to pay.

There are many who can testify how low they were in this life and how the miracle of Jesus’ saving them made them feel such an immense joy. If you have never felt that, I would encourage you to ask Jesus to show you the kind of joy such “good news” should bring you.

There are maybe even more of us who, once having felt that joy, know how miserable it feels to journey far from that joy, in search of some of life’s promising pleasures, only to eventually discover there was no joy in them at all. I ache every time I hear

stories of God's preachers and ministers of the Word who get drawn away, usually after lustful desires, only to find that not only has sin caught up with them, but the testimony of their failure has ruined their ministry. The tears flow, the sorrow heaps, forgiveness is usually found, but what was originally a life filled with the joy of salvation and usefulness for the Lord comes crashing down around them.

Much later, maybe after years of repentance and picking up the destroyed pieces of their lives, they learn that there is still forgiveness from the Lord. But some damage that results from our sins, we learn that we just have to live with.

David's child who came as a result of his lustful heart died. David had to live with that consequence the rest of his life.

The preacher who chased after his own "Bathsheba" ruined a ministry that the Lord was so abundantly blessing. The evangelist who gave into drugs or alcohol might still have a great testimony of deliverance by the Lord, but he or she has to live with some of the consequences that made their testimony so much less than it could have been.

It's easy to see how we can lose that joy that was so evident before our fall in sin. Praise the Lord, He is still ready to forgive us of our sins and restore us to right relationship with Him. We can remember that we had a clean heart before. In answer to our prayers, He can create a clean heart again. He can renew that right spirit that we didn't realize we were sacrificing.

The Lord can even restore the joy of our salvation...maybe not the same as before, but maybe even better! Unfortunately, we tend to want to hang onto the memory of our failures because guilt doesn't go away easily. That's what calls for the need of the second part of this verse: "Jesus, please uphold me with Your Spirit!"

Notice that the different versions call that a free, generous, willing Spirit. Only the Lord can restore the joy of our salvation. If we try to generate that joy ourselves, we will fail. Once again, (just like we remember it was before we were saved), it takes the generous, free and willing Holy Spirit to touch our damaged, wounded lives and provide healing. Only He can bring joy back again after our failures.

God is faithful. He wants us to never leave His side. But He knows, many of us will...even after having felt the joy that comes from being freed from the chains of slavery of our sins. But the good news is, He never lets go!

Even while we are chasing what we think will bring us joy, He knows the way we are going. When we fall, the Lord is patiently waiting for us to plead, "Lord, please forgive me and pick me up again!" He answers those prayers by picking us up and forgiving us and renewing right spirits within us.

I like the way the KJV says it: "He UPHOLDS me with His free (generous, willing) Spirit." Only the Lord can hold me up! Everything else...everyone else...will let me down eventually. He picks me up. He cleans me up again. He brings joy, just like the joy of our original salvation, back into our lives so we can live for Him again.

Only Jesus can do this for us in our lives. Let Him restore that joy of your salvation today. Live in the life that continually enjoys how only He can uphold you with His free Spirit. Watch what comes next!

Questions to consider: Have there been any followers of Jesus who have not fallen? The Bible can be so brutally honest about the weaknesses and failures of those God has chosen to follow Him. Does the Bible give examples of anyone who never fell?

Have you ever asked, “how many times can I fail and fall and expect Jesus to forgive me and restore me?” Is it reasonable for us to expect, after a fall into sin, that the Lord will use us the same way He used us before? After David’s sin, he and Bathsheba gave birth to Solomon, the wisest man to live and in the lineage of Jesus. Does Jesus still use us after our failures?

Other Scriptures to study: 2 Samuel 12:22-25 (see especially the part that says, “The Lord loved him.”) See Peter’s example of restoration: John 21:15-18. Deuteronomy 34, Moses pays for disobeying God, yet is blessed with seeing the Promised Land and is buried by God Himself: “Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face...”

A Song to Remember: “Create in Me a Clean Heart”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b7Hk3WFUMvo>

**PSALM
51:12**

**RESTORE UNTO ME THE JOY
OF THY SALVATION;
AND UPHOLD ME
WITH THY FREE SPIRIT.**

CHAPTER SEVENTY THREE

TEACH TRANSGRESSORS



PSALM 51:13 “THEN WILL I TEACH TRANSGRESSORS THY WAYS; AND SINNERS SHALL BE CONVERTED UNTO THEE.” (KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB)

Then I will teach transgressors your ways and sinners will turn back to you. (NIV)

Then I will teach your ways to other sinners, and they-guilty like me-will repent and return to you. (TLB)

Now, I can teach!! Have you ever known anyone to say something like this? I’m not sure I want to hear teaching from such a person. A person who is confidently assured of his ability to tell others how to live their lives might not be the best choice to teach sinners. Plus, why is David talking about sinners converting? I thought this was Old Testament.

The Bible talks a lot about sinners. Because of the fall and due to our “Adam” nature as his descendants, we know we are all sinners. Earlier, we memorize Romans 3:23 which tells us, “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” So, how am I supposed to teach transgressors about Jesus?

In our churches, hopefully we are being taught and encouraged to reach out to sinners so that they might be saved. The encouragement to be evangelists, preaching and teaching the Word to bring sinners to salvation, is a major tenet of our faith. Maybe we should learn the “Roman Road” method of bringing others to Jesus. Sinners in the world need to be saved and converted. As Jesus returned to heaven at His ascension, He told His disciples (and us) to GO and TEACH (Matthew 28:19-20).

So, what’s the problem? Jesus commanded it, we are supposed to do it. So, why do we have such problems “teaching transgressors Thy ways?”

Why are most Christians not avid witnesses, evangelizers or teachers? Certainly, the fear of rejection keeps a lot of us from witnessing. Many Christians give the excuse that their own lives are not good enough to tell others how to live. The concern about saying something wrong hinders many. More often than not though, outright laziness and lack of concern for the lost is probably the leading excuse for not obeying Jesus’ command to “go and teach.”

I come from a long history of preachers and teachers. My father pastored for over fifty years...I learned a lot about preaching and teaching from him. The photo above is one of our elder pastors teaching a lesson at our annual Youth Camp. Although not called to pastor, I have been preaching and teaching now for fifty years myself. I like to think I can prepare a cogent

sermon or Bible lesson with the best of them. Surely, that would “qualify” me to teach transgressors, right?

I would like to quickly point out the context of this passage in Psalm 51. We have already spent three chapters learning how David pleaded with the Lord for a clean heart, a right spirit and a restored joy of his own salvation. Oh, and let’s not forget the request for the Lord to uphold him with His “free” spirit. That might come in handy when we might want to “teach transgressors His way.”

Sometimes, I think the best technique for reaching the lost might be demonstrated in the photo to the right above. That photo is an old one, picturing two men walking along discussing something, maybe important, with a young boy behind them trying to look just like them...trying to walk just like them.

I remember, at a very young age, watching my father while he was waiting on something at a store, standing a certain way. I imitated him like the little boy is imitating the men in the photo above, and wondered if I would grow up to be like my father.

Most times, the best testimony we can give to others of the saving knowledge of Jesus is demonstrated, not necessarily spoken. Now, let me quickly say, the encouragement by the church for us to open our mouths and witness to others about what Jesus has done in our lives is extremely vital. But, sometimes demonstrations of Christ-likeness speak louder than words.

Remember Romans 10:14 in which Paul asks, “How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher (teacher)?”

Frankly, I think if you have been a Christian for any number of years and you have never told another person that they need Jesus, I think you need to get over your fears and TELL THEM!

Crudely said, you need to “suck it up Buttercup!” More people you know will be going to hell than to heaven and you will probably be the only Jesus many of them will ever see. TELL THEM!

Jesus died for you! He died for all men (and women, and children). We need to “teach transgressors thy ways” by TELLING THEM!

I know this comes across as a little bit demanding and maybe putting pressure on you. I know the church has been accused (rightfully so) of trying to guilt followers into telling others about Jesus. But, sometimes this is the only method that works to convince Jesus-followers that they need to follow His Great Commission and win souls into the kingdom.

Now, having given you the age-old motivation for witnessing to others, let me quickly add that your life does not have to be perfect before you decide to witness. If you wait for that, you will never tell another soul about Jesus. You will never be perfect (big shock!) BUT, it is extremely difficult to lead others away from a life of sin when you are living a huge life of sin yourself!

We need to be genuine when we try to teach others about Jesus. They already know we aren’t perfect and may see by how we talk, how we act or where we go that we aren’t perfect examples of non-sinners ourselves. But Jesus longs for us to look like Him without being perfect.

David could not begin to talk about “teaching transgressors” when he was, himself, deep in transgressions of lust, murder and lying. David needed to repent! David needed a clean heart. That’s why he prayed for that in Psalm 51:10.

His spirit...like ours can be sometimes...needed to be renewed. He needed to restore the joy for the Lord he felt long before he fell in sin...that joy he remembered from years before,

in the pasture with the sheep, maybe in the dark of night when it was just him and the Lord. He remembered those times. We need to remember those times too.

I said it in the last three chapters. We need the Lord to create in us clean hearts every day, probably the first thing every day. When we first gave our hearts to Jesus, we should have felt a great change from the way we used to be. We need to pray for the Lord to renew that spirit within us...every day.

Do you remember the joy of your salvation? Do you recall moments of joy Jesus has brought back to you many times since, maybe just at the memory of how great His salvation of us is? Sometimes, that joy may be the only witness others need to see in us to be convinced that they need what you have too.

Create in me a clean heart Lord! Renew a right spirit in me, not this grumpy, grouchy one I have been demonstrating for a long time. Remind me of the joy of my salvation, Lord. If I haven't felt that joy in a long time, please, restore it to me today. Please, uphold me with YOUR Spirit...free, strong and encouraging. THEN, if by nothing more than people seeing Jesus living in me, then will I teach transgressors thy ways. Then, I will see many sinners converted unto YOU.

Questions to consider: Be honest. What is the leading reason you can give why you do not personally tell others about Jesus? I recognize that emotion and great demonstrations of joy might not have followed everyone's decision to give their life to Jesus. But, what emotions have you felt that you can say directly came from recognizing what Jesus did for you? What are some ways to get over fears of witnessing to others? Have you ever taken a class on witnessing in your church or Sunday School class? If not, ask your leader(s) to help you with one.

Other Scriptures to study: Romans 10:14, “How will they hear?” Mark 2:16 “How is it that He (Jesus) eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?” Mark 2:17 “I came to call sinners to repentance.” Romans 5:8 “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Luke 8:13 “...those who, when they hear, receive the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.” Isaiah 52:7 “How beautiful...are the feet of him who brings good news...who proclaims salvation...who says, our God reigns.”

A Song to Remember: “Create in Me a Clean Heart”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b7Hk3WFUMvo>

**PSALM
51:13**

**THEN WILL I TEACH
TRANSGRESSORS THY WAYS;
AND SINNERS WILL BE
CONVERTED UNTO THEE.**

CHAPTER SEVENTY FOUR

REMEMBER THY CREATOR



ECCLESIASTES 12:1 “REMEMBER NOW THY CREATOR IN THE DAYS OF THY YOUTH, WHILE THE EVIL DAYS COME NOT, NOR THE YEARS DRAW NIGH, WHEN THOU SHALT SAY, I HAVE NO PLEASURE IN THEM.” (KJV)

Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, “I have no pleasure in them.” (NKJV, NIV, NET)

Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near when you will say, “I have no delight in them.” (NASB, RSV)

Don’t let the excitement of being young cause you to forget about your Creator. Honor him in your youth before the evil years come-when you’ll no longer enjoy living.” (TLB)

I have a few things I want to discuss with you, my readers. I hope you are doing well and are keeping up with memorizing chapter and verse of the Bible Scriptures the Lord and I have chosen.

Writing Chapter 74 of this book gives me pause. We are almost finished with Book 3. Soon with Book 4, only 25 verses will be remaining to our goal of 100 verses memorized.

I admit these are my own, personal choices for which verses to memorize. Please know that I have prayed about them. I have memorized them. Many, I have been memorizing for years and am including them in these books. I hope you approve of my choices, but we will leave that with the Lord.

In reading these books, hopefully memorizing many if not all of the Scriptures, you have received some kind of inspiration that is only available from the Holy Spirit. It may be that some of you might even write your own book with additional Scriptures you might also want to memorize.

Please know that I am not against any inputs you might want to send my way. Please feel free to write/email/call/text me with recommendations that you might have. I promise I won't be offended. Just know that, with only 25 verses left, I want to make sure the last verses are ones the Lord definitely wants us to study and memorize.

As I mentioned much earlier, Ecclesiastes 12:1 brings back a lot of memories for me. Remember how I described the children's church "sword drill" we used to have and how my brother, Dan would always shout out "Jesus wept" from John 11:35. I also remarked that I had to pick another verse, hopefully easily remembered, that I could quote and I chose this verse and chimed in, "Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth." Danny and I grew up competing sometimes.

Even at a very young age, I understood that I was the "youth" that Solomon was talking to when he was telling me to "remember my creator." I got away with not quoting the rest of the verse because, frankly, I didn't understand what it meant...that plus, I

think Sister Patterson was just happy any of the children could remember any verses at all.

Now that I am getting ready to pass my 72nd birthday, I think I am qualified to call myself an official “rememberer.” I’m old. Like so many “getting older” folks, I am now qualified to start sentences with the words, “I remember when...” I won’t go into a lot of those right now.

Ecclesiastes 12:1 essentially reminds us to remember. There are a lot of verses in the Bible that call us to remember. My PC Study Bible software points out 164 of them. That easy one in Luke 17:32 that we memorized from Book 1 tells us to “Remember Lot’s wife.”

Job told us in Job 7:7 to “remember that my life is a breath.” He also pleads with God to “remember that You have made me like clay,” in 10:9. David pleads in Psalm 25:6-7 “Remember O Lord, Your tender mercies and Your lovingkindness, for they are from of old. Do not remember the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions.” There’s a prayer we all want to pray!

In Psalm 105:4-5, David reminds us to “remember His marvelous works which He has done.” Paul encouraged the Ephesians to “remember that...you were without Christ...having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus...we have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” (Ephesians 2:11-13) Oh, all the good things God has given us that we need to remember.

Now, here in Ecclesiastes, the writer is reminding us, even when we are young to remember the Lord, our creator. This reminder comes with a warning in the last part of the verse. It reminds us that there may come a time, later in life, when either evil will try separate us from Him or, in our older age, we might

start to say, “I don’t have pleasure in that any more.” Oh, that this would never be the case.

Honestly, I don’t like teaching Ecclesiastes. On initial inspection, the writings of Ecclesiastes seem kind of depressing. “All is vanity.” “From dust we come, to dust we return.” It kind of seems like Solomon could have been one of those characters from “Hee Haw” who sang that little song, “Doom, despair, agony on me, Deep dark depression excessive misery. If it weren’t for bad luck I’d have no luck at all. Doom, despair and agony on me.”

Just look at the rest of Ecclesiastes 12: “the clouds return after the rain.” “...the grasshopper drags himself along and desire is no longer stirred.” “...mourners go about the streets.” “everything is meaningless!” Oh my!

Anytime I read, teach or suggest readings from Ecclesiastes, I strongly encourage everyone to keep reading ahead. Fortunately, the very next words in the Bible come from the Song of Solomon. Hubba hubba! Just don’t go back into Ecclesiastes for good cheer!

Unfortunately, I do actually know some Christians very well who make it their call in life to stay miserable. In their defense, the wisdom that comes from the words of Ecclesiastes recognizes that life is going to be difficult. In this world we will find enough sorrows. As we get older, this really seems like it doesn’t get a lot better. The body starts to have problems and we slow down at best or fight sickness and poor health at worse.

Solomon takes a frank look at life and tells us...like we don’t already know...that life is difficult and can seem full of sorrows. Have a doctor tell you that you have cancer and see if you come out beaming. Lose your spouse or a child and it can seem like the world is coming to an end. And don’t depend on the world around you to make it any better...they are worse off than we are.

Beware! The world and its hopeless situations can drag you down into despair if you let them. Don't let that happen to you.

The secret: REMEMBER your Creator...not just in the days of your youth, but all throughout your life. Christians should be best at keeping a proper perspective. We should know how to look beyond our problems. We should be the ones continually looking up! We should be students of the Word and remember all the promises we have memorized from it! Read the rest of the Book!

“The joy of the Lord is our strength.” “In everything give thanks.” “Trust in the Lord with all your heart...He shall direct your path.” “We have everlasting life!” “Whatsoever you do shall prosper.” “I will give you rest.”

We are not like those who suffer as though we have no hope. Honestly, deciding to be miserable in your circumstances is a choice. It isn't a good choice, but it is a choice. I believe we will be amazed about a hundred years into eternity in heaven when we realized just how short those 70 or 80 years we spent here were.

Hopefully, we won't look back with regret wishing we had made the decision to focus on Jesus and His promises to us instead of our situation. Yes, if we want to focus on this world and its sorrows we are probably going to live miserable lives, but we don't have to. **YOU DON'T HAVE TO CHOOSE TO BE MISERABLE!**

Remember your Creator. Remember that He is good. Remember that in all things, He wants what is best for you. Remember that sorrow may last for a night, but joy comes in the morning! Ask Him for the peace, joy and strength that comes from trusting Him. He promises He will give that to you.

Questions to consider: I would never suggest that we diminish the pain and suffering many of us have to endure sometimes. I

recognize life often seems like it is too much for us to handle. But, can you visualize the shortness of this life and its sufferings in comparison to the joy we are promised for eternity after this life? Can that comparison give you relief in your current pain? Have you prayed for relief from your trials and believed that the Lord will answer your prayers? Have you found a Christian brother or sister with whom you can share your burdens and let them help you? Have you offered comfort and a listening ear to someone else who is also struggling?

Other Scriptures to study: 2 Kings 20:3 “Remember, O Lord, how I have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes.” 1 Chron 16:12 “Remember the wonders He has done, His miracles...” Psalm 63:6 “On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night.” Philemon 4 “I remember you in my prayers...” Psalm 30:5 “Weeping may endure for a night but joy comes in the morning.”

A Song to Remember: “Tell It to Jesus”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7wSIdiviQSU>

ECCLESIASTES
12:1

REMEMBER NOW THY CREATOR
IN THE DAYS OF THY YOUTH,
WHILE THE EVIL DAYS COME NOT,
NOR THE YEARS DRAW NIGH,
WHEN THOU SHALT SAY,
I HAVE NO PLEASURE IN THEM.

CHAPTER SEVENTY FIVE

AS THE DEER



PSALM 42:1 “AS THE DEER PANTS FOR THE WATER BROOKS, SO PANTS MY SOUL FOR YOU, O GOD.” (NKJV, KJV, NASB)

As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. (NIV, RSV)

As the deer pants for water, so I long for you, O God. (TLB)

Please listen to this Song to Remember: As the Deer

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LthkibTzuj8>

The Bible, and especially the Psalms, use a lot of metaphors to depict our relationship with God. I am not a hunter, so the metaphor of a deer panting for water doesn't ring as true to me as does the many times in life I have watched the dogs we have owned pant for water.

The imagery of a deer longing for water reflects a deep, instinctual need. Certainly, in the arid lands of Israel, an observer would notice deer, or other wildlife, enthusiastically seeking water as a necessity for survival.

Nearly every dog I have ever observed loves to run. We watched beagles chase after rabbits when my grandpa hunted them and, without exception, when the hunt was over, the single most important thing those dogs wanted was water! It was like they needed it for survival, more than anything else. But, give them that water they so longed for and give them the chance to go out there and do it again, every one of them would charge back out into the adventure.

In a more domestic environment, I have observed those same beagles (we have owned three of them now) absolutely adore chasing a toy or a ball around the yard or living room just to be part of the life of my son, Josh, and his love for them. That panting that I see coming from them is often just as much an indication of devotion as it seems to be a thirst from all that running.

Another writer expressed it like this: “The psalmist expresses an intense yearning for God, paralleling the deer’s physical thirst. This longing indicates a deep spiritual desire and recognition of God as the ultimate source of life and fulfillment. The soul’s thirst for God suggests an intimate relationship and dependency, reflecting the covenant relationship between God and His people.”

Like a deer (or one of our beagles) panting for water, I can see the parallel with my occasional deep spiritual desire for that intimate and dependent relationship with the Father. I have to sadly admit however (as I think most men would), that those times of intimate closeness with Him are pretty rare. But, I can recall occasions when the Lord felt close enough because I had spent the time to draw near Him, that it was easy to see how I could describe it as a deep hungering and thirsting that only He could satisfy.

I know I share experiences with many friends of those times at Youth Camp, in the summers of my teen years, where I sought the Lord with all my heart. Sometimes, we responded so

enthusiastically because others around us were doing so...or because we wanted to share in the deep relationship we knew we could only get there at camp.

I can't count the number of times when, after a particularly moving message from the evening's evangelist or pastor, we all came forward, repented of the way we lived the rest of the year, cried out to the Lord to be filled with His Spirit and "waited at the stream," lapping up the spiritual water that we were craving.

We were never disappointed. Jesus met us there. He filled us with His Holy Spirit. Sometimes, that resulted in speaking in tongues. Many times it brought about tears and purity after repentance. It seemed like it was always a joyful experience. It was like finally getting that drink of water that we knew we had been running after and craving so much that we hadn't even recognized that we had been missing it.

Sadly, it seems like that craving doesn't happen as often as I grow older. I still see it, especially in my daughter Andi, as she dives into the water of praise and worship, seeking the closeness and refreshing that only comes from Him. But, as life gets busier, more hectic, more like work...especially among us men...and as the years get longer and we get older, it can almost seem like we no longer find pleasure in them.

Wow! That sounds like Ecclesiastes 12:1 that we discussed in the last chapter! Remember how, in that verse, we were told to "Remember your creator" before those things in life seemed to rob you of the blessings of such closeness?

I know, and have to admit, that as I have grown older, and especially after losing my dear wife Cheryl last year, that the thirsting for that water has slowly been replaced by the hunger for that time when we will be together again in heaven. Those feelings are natural and require no apologies. But I have to wonder if our

Lord would prefer to have us still “thirsting like a panting deer” for Him, instead of looking forward to the upcoming glory of heaven.

The deer represents a soul in desperate need of God, illustrating a natural and intense longing for sustenance and refreshment. Symbolic of spiritual nourishment and life, streams of water represent the presence and sustenance provided by God. I still need that every day. The soul of the psalmist is depicted as longing and thirsting for God, indicating a deep spiritual need and desire for communion with the Divine.

As long as we continue to walk the paths of this life, here on earth, we ought to want that kind of intimate relationship with Jesus that He promises to provide. Psalm 63 tells us to declare, “O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. I have seen you in the sanctuary” (are you seeing Him there every Sunday?) “and beheld your power and your glory. Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands.”

Jesus promised the woman at the well (just like He promises us today) “whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.” (John 4:14) Just like that woman, we need to tell Jesus, “Sir, give me that water!”

In John 7:37, at the last day of “the Feast,” Jesus stood up and said in a loud voice (I can imagine that voice that was loud enough so everyone could hear Him), “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, streams of living water will flow from within him.”

We might not know we are thirsty because we forgot what thirsty felt like. Or maybe, we have become so busy and burdened by all the problems and difficulties of life, we have let them replace the thirst. Whatever you do, don't let your thirst for other things replace that thirst for Him.

I know that the same Lord who supplies the solution to our thirst also loves us enough to keep that thirst for Him alive if we let Him. Remember how much He wants us to hunger and thirst after Him. If you have never experienced that thirst, ask Him to give it to you. He will.

If we earnestly seek Him, He will not only give us that thirst for Him, but as we start panting for the water of the Holy Spirit, He will provide the living stream that will give us the water that we desperately need. Just like the deer pants for water, my soul will long after You.

Questions to consider: What things in life have you found replace that thirst for the things of the Lord? The rich, young ruler thirsted to follow Jesus. But when the cost to follow Him became too high, he turned and walked away. Can our possessions and riches replace a thirst for Jesus? A fear of dangers in life can make us forget about the divine provision of the water of life. Are you fearful of things in this life that need to be replaced by the water of life? How long has it been since you remember thirsting after Jesus more than anything else in life you could want?

Other Scriptures to study: Matthew 5:6 "Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." John 6:35 "...he that believeth on me shall never thirst." Revelation 7:16 "They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore...for the Lamb will lead them to living fountains of

waters.” Nehemiah 9:15 “You gave them bread from heaven for their hunger, and brought them water out of the rock for their thirst.”

PSALM
42:1

AS THE DEER PANTS FOR THE WATER BROOKS,
SO PANTS MY SOUL FOR YOU, O GOD.

SUMMARY

CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE MATTER



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

SEVENTY FIVE VERSES! Wow! Have you really memorized 75 verses now? Just 25 verses from our goal of 100 Bible verses memorized.

In my flesh, I honestly don't expect many to follow me to actually memorizing 100 Scriptures. I mentioned this a while back while teaching a Sunday School class on one of these topics. I was rebuffed by one lady who took the bait and said, “we will see if you are the only one!” I love that spirit.

Describing this process and my writing this way, of course, demonstrates a carnal view of what I think the Lord is trying to do with these books. It also reminds me of what I believe He said to me about it at the outset. His words were, “Be obedient. Write the books. Leave the results up to Me!” I have to admit, I'm having a hard time with that approach.

It is quite natural for all of us to want to succeed. Of course, we need to be careful about what measure we use to evaluate

success. My brother Dan, trying to be encouraging of course, bought the first book I ever sold, knowing it would some day sell thousands and he would own the very first one. The Lord tells me He doesn't measure by the standard of number of books sold.

I hope you will be inspired by these books to join the very worthy challenge of memorizing 100 verses of God's word in your mind and heart. That is, very honestly, between you and the Lord. I will write the books.

I hope we are also providing valuable Bible studies in these chapters for Sunday School classes and Bible Study groups. I have to admit, I haven't sold a lot of books for that purpose to many churches. Again, however, He will determine if He uses it that way and I will...write the books.

Please excuse the confession of my feelings of vulnerability here. If you know me, I know you understand. Despite my thoughts, I am not discouraged. Watch closely for the fourth (and final?) book, Hide the Word IV.

In the mean time, I know that if you've gotten this far, you know the Lord personally and will allow Him to use these books in your life exactly as He has planned. With that, I will be thrilled. I will write and publish the books. I hope you find them enjoyable and useful in your daily walk with Him.

With three laps of the four-lap mile race done, I have to say, "press on to lap four!" With the finish line in sight, I encourage those who have 75 verses memorized now to join me to make it 100! Those who have found the Bible studies to be useful, we will have another 25 on your way soon.

I also hope you have discovered and found useful our website at www.hidetheword.us or daveweb1.com. Remember that online link to the "Sword Drill." I find it extremely useful, just like those 3x5 cards, to help Hide the Word deep in my heart.

Feel free to send me a text, email or give me a call any time with comments and suggestions for the books. Your help makes the product even better for us all.

So, I encourage you to PRESS ON! Let's go to Book 4, HIDE THE WORD, Part 4. 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.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

King James Version references all taken from The **King James Version (KJV)**, also the **King James Bible (KJB)** and the **Authorized Version (AV)**, an early modern English translation of the Christian Bible for the Church of England, which was commissioned in 1604 and published in 1611, by sponsorship of King James I.

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.

“Let There Be Light,” **Hillsong Worship**, Ch 52.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q7JsK50NGaA>

“How Great is Our God” by **Chris Tomlin**, Ch 52.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KBD18rsVJHk>

"Come Unto Me" - **Esther Mui**, Ch 53.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pRzRrc7XEjs>

“Come Unto Me,” **Sabrina Hew**, Ch 53.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=twLO6NEILOA>

“The Healer,” **Jimmy Swaggart**, Ch 57.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5WXBnNngvh4>

“So Much God,” **Rodney Griffin**, Ch 57

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kGTXDf2Begw>

“If My People,” **Terry Blackwood** and the Imperials, Ch 59.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1MXbn1yhXwc>

“Blessed is the man,” **Scripture Songs for Kids**, Ch 61.

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

“The Lord’s Prayer,” **Andrea Bocelli**, Ch 64.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u8jImIjg4UY>

“Lead us not into Temptation,” **Chad Bird**, Ch 66.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ynp3UNgmVZQ>

“Create in Me a Clean Heart,” **Grace Fellowship**, Ch 70.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b7Hk3WFUMvo>

“Tell It to Jesus,” **Gary Chapman**, Ch 74.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7wSIIdviQSU>

“As the Deer,” **Steffany Gretzinger**, Ch 75.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LthkibTzuj8>

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 many years. 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. These books are in memory of her and the decades of living lives together dedicated to the Lord.