

DISCOVER THE BIBLE

Small Group Leader Guide (WEEKLY PROGRAM)

Congratulations, you are making a difference with your decision to lead others through God's Word. We know that leading a group can be challenging. However, it's a challenge that is marked by rich and rewarding growth for everyone who is involved. In fact, the impact of God's Word on other people's lives is the very reason we started *Discover the Bible*.

If you are new to leading a group, don't feel intimidated; we're here to help. We have provided all the basics for you to get started. Of course, there is an endless amount of research a person could do, but don't let that overwhelm you when starting out. Encourage your participants to keep it simple, stay current with the daily readings, and dig deeper if time permits. There is an "Amplified Devotions" section on our site that will enable readers to search for deeper meaning and application for each devotional in their daily reading (see 2011 devotions). As *Discover the Bible* grows, we will be updating the site to provide some trusted resources to expand upon the readings.

Journeying through the Bible is a marathon. When it is run alongside others, it can build camaraderie that can effect changes that last a lifetime, and, God willing, many for all eternity.

Before you begin...

TIPS for you as a leader:

As with any step of faith, you should seal in your heart your confidence that the Lord has called you to lead this group.

Pray for your group of readers and your effective leadership.

The first month is crucial for habit formation. Frequently encourage your group to stay on task during this period.

The road is long, and some members of the group may fall off. Have them start back up where the group is. Don't concern yourself with those who aren't there—lead the ones who are.

Don't feel you need all the answers to the group's questions. It's okay.

You WILL feel alone or discouraged at times, but take heart; the Lord is with you every step of the way. Turn those thoughts over to Him and you will feel refreshed. He WILL not leave your side.

...and remember:

Only God can change lives. We are simply the ones used by the Lord to effect change in others by showing our love of Christ. Encourage your group to take ACTION with what they learn and read, so they will reflect the love of Christ in their own lives.

"Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (James 1:22).

TIPS for your group:

Pick a quiet time to devote to your reading and stick to it. Develop this habit early on. Habits determine success!

Pray before you read. Ask for an open receptive heart and mind. Pray for discipline and good habits to form.

If a reader falls behind the group, encourage them to skip ahead to stay caught up.

GETTING STARTED

1. Form your reading group:

Jesus said, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20).

Invite people to join your group as you journey through the Bible.

Encourage those committed to go out and invite others to share in the experience of reading and fellowship.

Gather the necessary contact information to communicate with them (i.e. email, phone numbers, etc.)

2. Order books: Determine the number of Discover the Bible books needed for your group. Have each person order individually or contact us for a group discount code when ordering.

3. Location: Identify a central location for the weekly meeting. A home is ideal for a small group, while a room at your church might serve a larger group more adequately.

4. Establish a time: You may want to set a time that works best for you or communicate to the group several suggested meeting times and choose the time that fits most everyone's schedule.

5. Launch date: We suggest building people up and preparing them for an official launch date. Give them some advance notice and make sure they all have their books in hand before the start. Set the start date 7 days before the first planned meeting time.

6. During the first week: We suggest sending out short encouraging emails to your group to remind them of what day they should be on and to dig in while forming some reading habits early on. Like a newborn, this is a period of nurturing and is crucial to the success of new readers. Make use of the "Tips for your group" listed above. Remind everyone of the upcoming meeting.

7. Meeting time: We've outlined a suggested format, but feel free to improvise wherever necessary.

- Welcome and introductions: Coffee and refreshments are a nice touch.
- Open in prayer: Thank the Lord for the opportunity to grow together.
- Discuss the reading and let the group share highlighted passages with one another.
- Discuss and answer the questions from the weekly guide.
- Questions from readers and discussion points.
- Closing prayer.

The Foundation of Creation

GENESIS 1:1

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Herein is the foundation upon which all the scriptures are built. Remove the creation model and you remove the Creator. Either God and His Word are true through and through or He and His Word are relegated to mere mythology. The laws of science, true science, do not refute the creation model. Consider the second law of thermodynamics. It is the law entropy; which basically says that anything left to itself will diminish. That is, go from a higher order to a lower order, never the reverse. Evolution, contrary to the is law, states that things left to themselves will progress.

“The Lord merely spoke and the heavens were created. He breathed the word and all the stars were born.” Psalm 33:6 NLT

Let's start with a great controversy of our time. Is not evolution more a philosophy than a science? Consider: “Then God said...” Genesis 1:3-31.

Is not evolution more a denial of a Creator than an explanation of the universe? Consider Psalm 53:1.

Is there design or randomness, order or chaos in the universe? What do you see? Consider Genesis 2:24.

Is the origin of mankind traced to a monkey in a tree or a man and woman created in the likeness of their Creator (Forgive the loaded questions; they are from an honest bias)? Consider Genesis 1:26-28.

To where does mankind trace its origin? Consider Luke 3:23-28.

To read more about creation or the Creator, visit our website and search the devotions and/or study guides. Keywords: creator, creation, foundation, etc.



READING

- Genesis 1:1-14:24
- Matthew 1:1-6:18
- Proverbs 1:1-2:5
- Psalm 1:1-4:8



READING

Genesis 15:1-28:22
Proverbs 2:6-3:12
Matthew 6:19-10:20
Psalm 5:1-7:17

Success Begins in Prayer

For to You will I pray. My voice You shall hear in the morning. Psalm 5:2-3

“Prayer is spiritual communication between man and God, a two-way relationship in which man should not only talk to God but also listen to Him.

Prayer to God is like a child’s conversation with his father.

It is natural for a child to ask his father for the things he needs.”

BILLY GRAHAM

Is there a model for prayer? Consider Luke 11:1-4.

Can we communicate with God without prayer?

When Christ Jesus prayed in Gethsemane, was it in preparation for the pending battle, or was it the battle?

Do you pray as you should? Discuss the challenges of prayer and how we can overcome them. Consider Colossians 4:2.

Share some of your own answers to prayer and how God communicated those to you.

“The penalty of not praying is the loss of one’s capacity to pray.”

EDWARD J. FARRELL

To read more about prayer, visit our website and search the devotions and/or study guides.

Keyword: prayer



READING

Genesis 29:1–42:38
 Matthew 10:21–14:21
 Proverbs 3:13–4:9
 Psalm 8:1–10:18

The God of the Bible

Some see the God of the Old Testament as different from the God of the New Testament. It has been said that the God of the Old Testament was angry, harsh, and vindictive, while the God of the New Testament has often been defined as merciful, kind, and benevolent. Yes, there was an Old Covenant and now there is a New Covenant. The Old revealed the wages of sin—a shadow of the good things to come. The New reveals God’s solution for that sin. We would not know what sin is without the full counsel of God’s Word, both Old and New Testaments. God’s wrath toward sin has not changed. He still is angry, harsh, and vindictive toward it. He hates sin so much that He sent His Son to save us from it. He therefore loves the sinner. He has always called mankind to accept His mercy, kindness and benevolence.

On day 15, we read in the Old Testament, “*Laban said, . . . ‘I have learned by experience that the Lord has blessed me for your [Jacob’s] sake’*” (Genesis 30:27). We also read in the New Testament, “*He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me*” (Matthew 10:40).

What was it in Jacob that caused Laban to recognize a blessing? What is it in you that others likewise recognize as a blessing? Do you see the correlation? When Laban received Jacob and others receive you, who are they receiving?

On day 16, we hear Jacob tell Laban, “*I have been in your house twenty years; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times*” (Genesis 31:41). In Matthew, we hear Jesus say, “*Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me . . . For My yoke is easy and My burden is light*” (Matthew 11:29-30).

Is there a parallel to these two life lessons? What is to be learned from Jacob’s relationship to Laban, and what is to be learned from our relationship to Christ?

On day 18, we hear the God of the Old Testament teach us, “*Do not strive with a man without cause, if he has done you no harm*” (Proverbs 3:30). And we hear Jesus teach us in the New Testament, “*But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment*” (Matthew 12:36).

If we asked someone who judged the God of the Old Testament as legalistic and the God of the New Testament as merciful (without them knowing the scriptural reference) which verse is from the Old and which is from the new, how do you think they would answer? Are these verses equally instructive?

On day 21, of the many Old Testament examples of God’s sovereignty, the life of Joseph is an amazing one. You know the story: Joseph is imprisoned and was forgotten by the chief butler, but later remembered. “*Then the chief butler spoke to Pharaoh, ‘I remember my faults this day’*” (Genesis 41:9). A somewhat of a parallel in the New Testament is the feeding of the multitude. “*They said to Him, ‘We have here only five loaves and two fish.’ He said, ‘Bring them here to Me’*” (Matthew 14:17-18). God delivered through the abilities of others. The butler remembered the dream. The apostles remembered the boy with the small basket.

From Genesis to the Revelation of Jesus Christ, we find God working in miraculous ways. Have you noticed that many, if not all, of the miracles of the Scriptures came just in time? A friend of mine has often said, “God is never late, but He has sure missed a lot of opportunities to be early.” Here’s the question: are the ways (the miracles) of God different in the Old Testament than the New? Are they different today? Are they at times supernaturally natural? Does not God seem to do the supernatural in an appearing natural way? Does He not always require us to see through the eyes of faith?

Here is a key to help in our understanding of the Scriptures: Always interpret the Old Testament in light of the New Testament, never the reverse. See Colossians 2:17.

*To read more about the sovereignty of God, visit our website and search the devotions and/or study guides.
 Keywords: “Only God,” “one God,” “holy,” “almighty,” “sovereign.”*

Life's Transitions

We are transitioning in our daily readings from the Genesis of mankind to the travels of the Exodus. Mankind went from the paradise of the Garden to the bondage of slavery. We are likewise in the midst of the first book of the New Testament (Matthew), the first of the Synoptic Gospels. We see Jesus transitioning from the genealogy of His birth to the heart of His ministry.

Here is a lesson that is repeated in many of the devotions: "Sin will take you further than you wish to go, keep you longer than you desire to stay, cost you more than you are willing to pay, and negatively affect others more than you could have ever imagined." In the Kingdom of God, there are very few plateaus. If they are to be found, they are composure steps, not nests. Sin is regressive, while godliness is progressive (not in the political sense). We are either metaphorically transitioning upward or downward. Either way, we are constantly in a state of transition, hopefully from faith to faith.

READING

Genesis 42:1–Exodus 6:30

Matthew 14:22–18:35

Proverbs 4:10–5:14

Psalms 11:1–16:11

Consider the transitions of Joseph the dreamer. He transitioned from a beloved son to a betrayed brother, from a favored servant to a falsely accused sinner, and from a prisoner to a man of great power. *"Judah...said: 'O my lord [referring to Joseph], please let your servant speak a word...and do not let your anger burn against your servant; for you are even like Pharaoh'"* (Genesis 44:18).

Was the hand of God on the life of both Joseph and his brothers? Consider: *"But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive"* (Genesis 50:20).

Is there a parallel between Joseph and Jesus? Consider the words of Jesus from day 24: *"Now Jesus called His disciples to Himself and said, 'I have compassion on the multitude...'"* (Matthew 15:32).

Are transitions always evident (whether growth or atrophy)? Did Joseph know what was going to transpire? Did David when fighting Goliath? Did Daniel when thrown into the lion's den? Do you? Consider James 4:13-15.

C. S. Lewis said in *The Problem of Pain*, "We are afraid that heaven is a bribe, and that if we make it our goal we shall no longer be disinterested. It is not so. Heaven offers nothing that a mercenary soul can desire. It is safe to tell the pure in heart that they shall see God, for only the pure in heart want to."

When we speak of transitioning, we are speaking of changing, whether in character or from the world to heaven. Where do changes take place? Consider what Jesus said about who or what we are on the inside: *"Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man"* (Matthew 15:19-20).

How do we transition from the sin nature of our hearts to the nature and heart of Christ? Consider the character of Joseph and the attitude of Jesus. Consider: *"Let this mind (attitude) be in you which was also in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 2:5).

Will heaven be a natural transition? Consider: *"As it is written: Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him"* (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Leonardo da Vinci said, "An arch consists of two weaknesses, which leaning against one another make a strength." (At this writing, I am in Florence Italy, where the strength and endurance of the arch has stood the tests of merciless time and wars.)

Can we transition from sinner to saint without the aid of others? Consider: *"And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching"* (Hebrews 10:24-25).

Can we be truly righteous without Christ? If not, where is He to be found? Consider the words of Jesus from day 27, *"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them"* (Matthew 18:20).

How do we recognize godly transition or sinful regression? Consider the progression of Joseph and the regression his brothers. *“But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive”* (Genesis 50:20).

*To read more about life’s transitions, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and/or study guides.
Keywords: “change,” “growth.” As you read your Bible, look for progressions or regressions in the lives of the patriarchs and disciples.*

Finding Favor with Both God and Man

“Moreover the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh’s servants and in the sight of the people” (Exodus 11:3).

Favor with God is found only through His Son, the Lord Christ Jesus. Jesus has never and will never lose favor with the Father. Therefore, our favor can only be secured by remaining in Christ. The favor of man is fickle. Study the history of the world, and you’ll see that those cheered one day may be hanged the next. There are several realms of favor with man. There is only one with God—Christ Jesus the Lord. A bribe to another person may find favor for a season. Yet with man it is not what have you done for me, but what have you done for me lately. With God, on the other hand, it is what He has done for us that is eternal. Therefore, if we seek the favor of God through His Son Jesus, the favor of man will eventually follow.

Favor in the Bible generally means “good will, acceptance, and the benefits flowing from these.” With regards toward man, we are told, “Favor is deceitful” (Proverbs 31:3 KJV). The same Hebrew words are sometimes translated grace.

Let’s look at the “What,” “Where,” “When,” and “How” of finding favor with God and man.

Moses was 84 when God tagged him to lead His people. The favor did not come quickly or easily. What were his qualities and characteristics that found such favor?

What do you think was Moses’ greatest strength? Consider Numbers 12:3.

What do you think was his greatest weakness?

Where was he (physically, mentally, and spiritually) when God called him?

READING

Exodus 7:1–22:31

Matthew 19:1–23:22

Proverbs 5:15–6:29

Psalms 17:1–18:50

When was he called (not only how old, but at what point of his life)?

How did he handle his favor (as a child, young man, and leader of the nation of Israel)? See Hebrews 11:23-29.

Jesus was about 30 when He began His three-year ministry. Luke said of Jesus, “*Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men*” (Luke 2:52). John said of Him, “*There are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen*” (John 21:25).

To find favor with God, do we have to know Who He is? “*When He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, ‘Who is this?’*” (Matthew 21:10).

Is God abstract or personal, mythical or present?

How does the Bible make God tangible?

How do you answer the question, “Who is this?”

Moses found favor with God. Jesus found favor with His Father. How about you and me? With whom have we found favor, and how? Consider: “*Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This*

is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37-39).

What was/is the character of Jesus? Consider Philippians 2:5-10.

Do you pray for favor? Should you? Consider the prayer of Jabez in 1 Chronicles 4:9-10.

To read more about finding favor, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and /or study guides. Keywords: “favor,” “grace,” “honor.” As you read, look for those who have found the favor of God and man.

Leading Our Generation

We seem to be devolving into a leaderless generation, and many of the leaders we have appear to be headed in the wrong direction. Governments are godless or “Christian-less”; many churches are Christ-less and homes Bible-less. Every generation has its faults, but this one seems to have more than its share. Kenneth Hamilton said in Christianity Today magazine in March 1972, “More than a hundred years ago, Soren Kierkegaard warned that the age of the crowd was upon us. In such an age, said Kierkegaard, people would not think of deciding for themselves. They would follow the advice given to children going off to a party: ‘Look and see what the others are doing and then behave like them.’” Soren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) was a Danish philosopher whose ideas about the human nature made him one of the founders of the modern philosophy.

The most repeated of the commandments is “Honor your father and mother.” We read on the morning of day 36, *“He who strikes his father or his mother...and he who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death”* (Exodus 21:15, 17). “We are losing our children to the world at a much earlier age than just a few decades ago. There was a time in the not too distant past that the church focused on reaching teenagers. Now we are focusing on a much younger generation. If they are not reached by the time they are teens, the chances of reaching them is greatly diminished.”

Under the Law, dishonoring parents had dire consequences. What are the consequences today? What should they be? Consider Proverbs 22:15. (Unfortunately, we live in a time that many parents do not know how to discipline in love. A godless society has created a generation that disciplines out of anger; thus, child abuse.)

Is not the first realm of leadership to be found in the traditional nuclear family of the home? Consider 1 Timothy 3:5.

We appear to be living in a crowd (some would call it a mob) mentality of leadership. “The crowd” is the current trends, fashions, and styles. In themselves, they may not be bad, but they are not to be followed to do evil. What may be “in” with man may be “out” with God. *“You shall not follow a crowd to do evil; nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after many to pervert justice”* (Exodus 23:2).

Why did Aaron follow the crowd and erect the golden calf? Why did Saul follow the crowd and spare that which God said to destroy? Why did Judas follow the popular crowd of Judaizer and betray the Christ?

What or who are the crowds that the church may be tempted to follow today?

How can we distinguish the crowd from the congregation?

In Matthew 24, we read of the signs of the times before the return of Christ. *“And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another”* (Matthew 24:10). Though every sign appears to have been fulfilled, let’s take a look at this one: to be a leader today, whether in our schools, businesses, or churches, you better be politically correct. Has political correctness gone amuck?

Can this question even be answered without fear of political correctness?

Why have we apparently become so easily offended?

Exodus 21:1–34:35
Matthew 23:1–26:25
Proverbs 6:26–8:5
Psalm 18:46–21:13

Jesus said that we will always have the poor among us (Matthew 26:11). In day 40, we read, *“For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away”* (Matthew 25:29). Is not this text a foundation stone of what has become known as “free enterprise” (capitalism)?

Does God want his people to prosper for the sake of prosperity?

Does He want to prosper us at His calling in our lives?

How much influence do leaders have with regard to prosperity?

Remember, we are always looking for the truth, primarily from the Word of God, the Bible. To read more about leading our generation, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and /or study guides. Keywords: “generation,” “lead(er)(ing).” As you read, look for leadership characteristics in the lives of the kings of Israel, patriarchs, disciples, and especially Jesus.



READING

Exodus 35:1–Leviticus 7:1
 Matthew 26:26–Mark 1:22
 Proverbs 8:6–9:12
 Psalm 22:1–24:10

The Source of True Wisdom

*I enjoy reading biographies of successful people. Inevitably, I have found that every great accomplishment has one thing in common—the wisdom by which they succeeded was biblical. Some applied the truths of God’s Word without the saving knowledge of Christ. Most applied it with that knowledge. I recently read a biography about Abraham Lincoln, *The Death of Lincoln*, by O’Reilly. The great emancipator knew the source of his strength when he said, “I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My wisdom, and that of all about me, seemed insufficient for the day.” Lincoln was a daily Bible reader. Every morning he could be found in a comfortable chair with his dog-eared Bible.*

Job in his wisdom asked, “*Where can wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?*” (Job 28:12). The Bible repeatedly instructs us that “*the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*” As did Job, we are to ask, “Where then can the fear of the Lord and His wisdom be found?” The answer is, the Bible, God’s Word, the Manufacturer’s Handbook.

Let’s look at the wisdom found in this past week’s reading: “*Wisdom is better than rubies, and all the things one may desire cannot be compared with her*” (Proverbs 8:11). What is the source of true Biblical wisdom?

How would you define wisdom, Biblical wisdom?

Is there a difference in the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of the Word? (I recommend you read John Bunyan’s wonderful allegory, *Pilgrim’s Progress*. There is a character in it named “Mr. Worldly Wise Man.”)

If the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord, what is the fear of the Lord? Consider our text from day 44: “*The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate*” (Proverbs 8:13).

Oswald Chambers said in his book *The Highest Good*, “The remarkable thing about fearing God is that when you fear God you fear nothing else, whereas if you do not fear God you fear everything else.” Chambers was born on July 24, 1874, in Aberdeen Scotland, where he became a Christian during his teen years under the ministry of Charles Spurgeon. If you have not already, I recommend reading Chambers’ *My Utmost for His Highest*.

Okay, let’s review the three questions from day 44. Do you fear anything more than you fear God?

Should there be anything that we fear more than Him?

What does it mean to fear God? Along with Proverbs 8:13, consider: “*Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire*” (Hebrews 12:28-29).

In day 45, we read that wisdom has seven pillars, “*Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn out her seven pillars*” (Proverbs 9:1). Why seven pillars? If literal, what do you think they may be? (The number seven occurs numerous times in Scripture. It obviously has significant meaning. God rested on the seventh day; there are seven days in a week; the seventh year is to be a year of Jubilee; there are seven churches in the book of Revelation, etc. The number seven has been called the symbol of perfection and also the symbol of rest.)

Theologians have described the “Seven Pillars of Wisdom” as the standards of almost every religious belief system in the world. Philosophically, they are seen as important for those seeking truth and have been expressed in a variety of ways. They are basically:

1. The Origin and Nature of the Universe, Creation
2. The Nature of God

3. The Nature of Man
4. The Nature of Salvation
5. The Nature of Existence
6. The Spiritual Journey and Ultimate Destiny of Man
7. Cycles, Ages, and the Ultimate State of the Universe

How might these make a difference in your seeking of truth or wisdom?

To read more about the source of true wisdom, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and/or study guides. Keywords: "wisdom," "knowledge," "understanding." Remember, the beginning of wisdom is "the fear of the Lord."



READING

Leviticus 9:1-20:27

Mark 1:23-5:20

Proverbs 9:18-10:12

Psalm 25:1-27:10

Pray the Word I

As you study each week's readings, look for a theme, a flow, or connected message from the four books being read. When it was decided that the devotional Bible would have a morning and evening reading, we did so for ease of reading. And when it was decided to read from the Old Testament and the Proverbs in the morning, it was so we would have principles that would apply to everyday work. The evening reading of the New Testament and Psalms was likewise to prepare for a night of rest. One thing we were not so prepared for is the unity between these readings. Yet, why be surprised that God's Word is unified, for there is only one God from the Creation of Genesis to the Revelation of time and eternity.

Have you noticed how much of the Word of God is people communicating with God? Isn't that what prayer is; sort of like praying without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17)?

"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1, day 55, evening).

When we read the Bible, are we praying?

Is not prayer communicating with God?

Are your desires prayers? *"One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord" (Psalm 27:4, day 56, evening).*

In his last talk on BBC radio, "The New Men." C. S. Lewis said, "Look for yourself and you will find in the long run hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin, and decay. But look for Christ and you will find Him, and with Him everything else thrown in."

Can we control our desires? How?

Should we priorities our desires? Why?

When do you communicate best?

"Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed" (Mark 1:35, day 50, evening). Are you a morning person?

What makes someone a morning, afternoon, or night person?

Consider the word *breakfast*, or *break-fast*. What does it mean? Consider also Psalm 5.

We will be speaking more about prayer in the future. Our goal this week is to recognize the communication taking place when we are reading God's Word. It is more than gathering information. It is communing with the Author.

To read more about this week's topic, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and/or study guides. Keywords: "word," "praying," "Scripture." When You open the Word of Life, listen to the voice of the Lord, and when prompted, pray the Scriptures.



READING

Leviticus 21:1–Numbers

6:27

Mark 5:21–8:38

Proverbs 10:13–11:3

Psalm 27:11–30:12

Praying the Word II

We could discuss prayer every week, for the Word of God is filled with the prayers of the saints and patriarchs. Often, prayer is thought to merely be a repeated mantra or incantation (a repeated mystical formula). We most often use the same lines in giving thanks for our meals and daily prayers, etc. Now, there's nothing wrong with repeating "The Lord's Prayer" or teaching our children to ask a simple blessing. However, as we mature in our relationship with the Lord, our prayers should likewise mature. Let's look at this week's readings and see if we can glean from the Scriptures the communication of prayer.

Billy Sunday (1862–1957), a baseball player turned evangelist, said, "There are two hundred and fifty-six names given in the Bible for the Lord Jesus Christ, and I suppose this was because He was infinitely beyond all that any one name could express."

When we pray, to whom are we praying? *"You shall not profane My holy name, but I will be hallowed"* (Leviticus 22:32, day 57, morning).

What and how would we "profane" the Name of the Lord in prayer? Consider the commandment found in Deuteronomy 5:11.

What are some of the holy Names of God? Do the Scriptures refer to titles or proper names or both?

What does it mean to hallow His Name? Consider the Lord's Prayer, Luke 11:2.

Why are some prayers answered clearly and others vaguely? *"His disciples said to Him, 'You see the multitude thronging You, and You say, "Who touched Me?"'"* (Mark 5:31, day 57, evening).

"Who touched Me?" There were obviously countless people touching Jesus, but one person touched Him by faith and that faith was noticed. Why? Consider her words, *"For she said, 'If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well'"* (Mark 5:28).

Do we truly touch Christ in prayer, in His Word, in the fellowship of the believers?

Mark 5:30 is a powerful nugget of the Scriptures. *"Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said, 'Who touched My clothes?'"* Some translations use the word *virtue* instead of *power*. What do you think it means?

In day 62, evening, we read the quote from Greg Asimakoupoulos: "When complimented on her homemade biscuits the cook replied: 'Just consider what goes into the making of these biscuits. The flour itself doesn't taste good, neither does the baking powder, nor the shortening, nor the other ingredients. However, when I mix them all together and put them in the oven, they come out just right.' Much of life seems tasteless, even bad, but God is able to combine these ingredients of our life in such a way that a banquet results."

“When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets...did you take up?” They said to Him, ‘Twelve.’ ‘Also, when I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets...did you take up?’ And they said, ‘Seven’” (Mark 8:19-20).

When God answers prayer, does He answer all at once or a little at a time (like the biscuit recipe)?

What is it that God cannot do? Consider Titus 1:2.

What can He do?

What has He done for you, and what would you like Him to do?

To read more about this week's topic, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and/or study guides.

Keywords: “prayed,” “ask.” As you read your Bible, look for prayers.

There Are No Lone Rangers in the Kingdom of God

Show me a Christian out of fellowship, and I will show you someone out of sorts. Consider this quote from John Donne (1572–1631): “All mankind is of one author, and is one volume; when one man dies, one chapter is not torn out of the book, but translated into a better language; and every chapter must be so translated.... As therefore the bell that rings to a sermon, calls not upon the preacher only, but upon the congregation to come: so this bell calls us all: but how much more me, who am brought so near the door by this sickness.... No man is an island, entire of itself...any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.”

READING

Numbers 7:1–20:29

Mark 9:1–12:1

Proverbs 11:4-24

Psalms 31:1–33:9

This may be the reverse of how this study should go, but start with day 64, the evening reading, “The Core Go to the Mountain.” “*Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John and led them up on a high mountain again by themselves; and He was transfigured before them*” (Mark 9:2).

What does it mean to be “core?” Consider the term *cadre*.

How does one become “core?” Consider that of the twelve disciples, three were chosen. Of the three, Peter stood out more. Also consider Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane with Peter, James, and John (Matthew 26:36-40).

One is more apt to stumble walking alone than walking arm-in-arm with friends. On Day 65, we spoke of Sunday school (Mark 9:42). Sunday school or Bible classes have their origin in the first-century church. Countless ancient small lectionaries have been discovered that are believed to have been used as Scriptural study guides.

Countless people come in a bit late to church, sit in the back, then during the closing, slip out. Can you hide in church? Do you?

Is it not harder to hide in a small group of likeminded folks who are concerned for one another? “*Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching*” (Hebrews 10:24-25).

Whether it is Sunday school, a small group Bible study, or family devotions, should we not take part?

On day 70, we quoted John Chrysostom from the fourth or early fifth century, “The lack of scriptural knowledge is the source of all evils in the church.” How does that relate to our text in Mark 12:24, “*Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God?’*”

Remember, scriptural knowledge is not like other kinds of knowledge. Scriptural knowledge is based on a relationship with its Author, the Lord Christ Jesus. The difference is that worldly knowledge makes one arrogant, but scriptural knowledge, found in the love of God, edifies (1 Corinthians 8:1). Discuss this together.

Can we know God without knowing the Scriptures? Consider: “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*” (John 1:1).

Can we know the Scriptures without knowing God? Consider: “*You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me*” (John 5:39).

Can we not study the Scriptures alone? Consider: *“He who separates himself seeks his own desire; he quarrels against all sound wisdom”* (Proverbs 18:1 KJV). (May I interject, by all means study the Bible on your own, but share what you have studied with others.)

*To read more about this week’s topic, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and/or study guides.
Keywords: “separates,” “study.” Be quick to share what the Lord is revealing to You in His Word. Maybe consider working in or even teaching a Sunday school class. No one learns as much as those who teach.*

When the Student Is Ready, the Teacher Will Come

When we think of teachers, we tend to think of those who instruct our children in public schools. Let us thank God and pray for them. However, there was a time in America when the title of teacher was ascribed mainly to those who taught the Word of God, the Bible. The second definition given in Noah Webster's 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language is, "One who instructs others in religion; a preacher, a minister of the gospel."

"Then the Lord opened the mouth of the donkey, and said..." (Numbers 22:28, morning of Day 71). God is able to get our attention. He is able to communicate His truths to us. Hopefully we are willing students. Nevertheless, willing or not, His truths will be declared. Consider: *"The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men"* (Titus 2:11).

What are a few ways God has spoken in the Bible? Consider: *"Have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him..."* (Mark 12:26). *"The fingers of a man's hand appeared and wrote opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace"* (Daniel 5:5). *"The Lord which He spoke through His servant Ahijah the prophet"* (1 Kings 14:18).

How does God speak through the Bible? Consider: *"The entirety of Your word is truth"* (Psalm 119:160).

How does God speak through teachers and preachers? Consider: *"I will send them prophets and apostles..."* (Luke 11:49).

How does God speak through our consciences? Consider: *"Not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience"* (2 Corinthians 4:2).

Numbers 21:1-34:29

Mark 12:28-15:24

Proverbs 11:25-12:2

Psalm 33:10-35:16

How does God most clearly speak to you?

Jesus said, *"Take heed that no one deceives you"* (Mark 13:5, evening of Day 72). It's been said that the best way to detect counterfeit money is to know the real thing. Likewise, the best way not to be deceived is to know the Word of God. Consider Jesus when being tempted by the devil. He answered him by quoting the Scriptures correctly. *"Jesus answered him, saying, 'It is written...'"* (Luke 4:1-13).

The context of Mark 13:5 is with regard to Jesus speaking of the last days and His return. Speaking of Christ's return, have there been deceptions in our day?

What is the source of deception? Consider: *"Many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist"* (2 John 7).

Why are many "Christians" so easily deceived? Consider: *"Jesus answered and said to them, 'You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God'"* (Matthew 22:29).

Are there any topics concerning mankind that are not taught in the Bible, either explicitly or implicitly? Consider Day 75, "There Is a Difference," and the thought for the day by Elizabeth Cody: *"The challenge is for husbands and wives to strive for a relationship closer to God's original design for men and women."*

To read more about this week's topic, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and/or study guides. Keywords: "teacher(s)," "instruct(ion)," "disciple." Remember: it is the ready student that gets the teacher.



Numbers 35:1–

Deuteronomy 12:32

Mark 15:25–Luke 2:24

Proverbs 12:3-14

Psalm 35:17–37:22

The Pinnacle of Time and History

Historically, B.C. is an abbreviation for “Before Christ.” A.D. is an abbreviation for “anno Domini,” which is Latin for “In the year of our Lord.” The revisionists of late are attempting to eradicate any semblance of biblical history by changing terms. CE, “Common Era,” is used in place of A.D., and BCE, “Before Common Era,” is to replace B.C. Though these attempts may be made, the cross of Calvary remains the turning point of time. Famed nineteenth-century English preacher Charles H. Spurgeon said it so very well: “All historians must confess that the turning point of the race is the cross of Christ. It would be impossible to fix any other hinge of history. From that moment the power of evil received its mortal wound. It dies hard, but from that hour it was doomed.”

Day 78’s theme was “He Made It to Calvary.” The text was: “When they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do’” (Luke 23:33-34). The significance of the crucifixion of Christ is immeasurable.

How did Calvary affect both the Father and the Son on Calvary? Consider: “Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?’ which is translated, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’” (Mark 15:33, quoting Psalm 22, please read Psalm 22:1-3).

How is it possible that every sin goes to the cross? Consider Isaiah 53:5. If available, read Isaiah 53 from the Living Bible.

Have you been to Calvary physically and/or metaphorically? Consider the words of the apostle Paul: “I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2).

In Day 79, “Believe the Good Report,” we read: “Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen” (Mark 16:14). If it had all ended on Calvary, what do

you think would be the result of Christ’s sacrifice? What if there was no resurrection? (It is easy to believe that Christ died. The greater thing to believe is that He rose from the dead.)

Again, let’s consider the words of the apostle Paul, “If Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!...If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable” (1 Corinthians 15:12-19).

Nineteenth-century apologist G. K. Chesterton said, “All men matter, you matter, I matter. It’s the hardest thing in theology to believe.” Is belief a hard thing, especially when means to stand alone?

What does it mean to believe?

Do you believe? Consider: “‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ So they said, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved...’” (Acts 16:30-31). “Jesus said to him, ‘If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.’... ‘Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!’” (Mark 9:23-24).

In Day 81, “God’s Word Is the Foundation of All Truth,” we read: “All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which is translated, ‘God with us’” (Matthew 1:22-23). Is belief in the virgin birth of Christ necessary for the work of Calvary to have meaning?

Why is the virgin birth important? Consider: *“You were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot”* (1 Peter 1:18-19).

Should Mary be revered? Consider: *“Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!”* (Luke 1:28).

How important is the virgin birth to you? How important should it be? Consider: God promised that the seed of the woman would crush the serpent’s head (Genesis 3:15).

*To read more about this week’s topic, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and/or study guides.
Keywords: “crucify,” “crucified,” “Calvary,” “Golgotha,” “virgin,” “Mary.” This week’s discussion is one of the most important doctrines in the Scriptures. It is worth our prayerful study.*

Who We Are in Christ

We began this week with Deuteronomy 14:2, "For you are a holy people to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples who are on the face of the earth." Yes, Moses' directives were for the children of Israel. Nevertheless, as Christians we have been grafted into the family of God (see Romans 11:11-23). We are children of the King of kings. We are a royal priesthood. We are a chosen generation. Are we servants? Yes. We are also children and friends. Think about it: we are known intimately and loved wonderfully by the Creator of the universe. Therefore, what manner of loves should we live?

READING

Deuteronomy 13:1-26:19

Luke 2:25-6:26

Proverbs 12:15-13:6

Psalms 37:29-39:11

In Day 85, we are described as a holy people. In defining holiness, "Holiness goes beyond humility, piety, and godliness. Our holiness is founded on our relationship with the Creator of the universe. Holiness has little to do with our abilities and ways, but everything to do with God's abilities in our ways."

Who does God say that we are? Consider 1 Peter 2:9-10.

What are our responsibilities as Christians?

Here's a loaded question: If we are indeed somebody in Christ, how can there be room for self-pity?

In Day 86, we spoke of being in the Lord's Construction Business. The greatest building tool God has given us is the tongue. With it we proclaim not only what we believe, but who we are and what we

think of others. The tongue can cause wars or bring peace, institute marriage or bring divorce. James gives an analogy of the tongue: "Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things" (James 3:4-5).

As a tool, what is the tongue better at doing, building or demolition? Give examples of each.

As a tool, does the tongue often do its best work when not in use? Consider Proverbs 17:2.

Words have meaning. When we speak, do we mean what we say and say what we mean? How do we "speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15)?

In Day 88, who we are in Christ depends on who Christ is in us. D. L. Moody said, "My friends, you are no match for Satan, and when he wants to fight you just run to your elder Brother, who is more than a match for all the devils of hell." Consider: "Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!'" (Jude 8). "When you go to battle against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the Lord your God is with you" (Deuteronomy 20:1).

Is there a difference in standing for Christ and standing with Christ?

Can one know a lot about Christ without knowing Him?

When we face the deceiver, the accuser of the redeemed, how are we to respond?
Consider the evening reading and devotion, “Even the Demons Know.”

*To read more about this week's topics, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and/or study guides.
Keywords: “redeemed,” “chosen,” “church,” “Christians.” Never forget who you are in Christ. Never allow the enemy to deceive you into thinking that you have no value or that you are not worthy of such a great salvation.*



READING

Deuteronomy 27:1–
Joshua 6:27
Luke 5:27–9:36
Proverbs 13:7-21
Psalm 39:12–42:11

Quenching Our Thirst for God

C. S. Lewis said in his book Mere Christianity: “Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists. A baby feels hunger; well there is such a thing as food; a duckling wants to swim; well there is such a thing as water.... If I find myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing.”

Have you ever been thirsty, I mean really thirsty—that kind of thirst that can only be quenched with water? You don’t want a soda or sweetened drink; you want water. In the spiritual sense, have you ever had a thirst for God—I mean a real spiritual thirst? You don’t want religion or religious platitudes; you want God.

In Day 97, evening, we read: *“My soul thirsts for God, for the living God”* (Psalm 42:2). Does God use hunger and thirst to draw us unto Himself? Consider: *“Behold, the days are coming,’ says the Lord God, ‘That I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord’”* (Amos 8:11).

Have you ever been hungry or thirsty for anything other than food and/or drink (maybe things such as a job promotion, a person, success, finances, etc)?

How do we acquire a thirst for God? Consider the application for the evening of Day 97, “Work up an appetite/thirst for righteousness...”

For us to have a thirst for God, we must likewise have the love of God. For us to experience the love of God, we must have a love of others and ourselves. Author Brennan Manning said it this way: “To me, it’s more important to be loved than to love. When I have not had the experience of being loved by God, just as I am and not as I should be, then loving others becomes a duty, a responsibility, a chore. But if I let myself be loved as I am, with the love of God poured into my heart by the Holy spirit, then I can reach out to others in a more effortless way.”

Can there be a thirst for God without the love of God? Consider: *“We love Him because He first loved us”* (1 John 4:18).

Can we love God without loving each other? Consider this haunting verse: *“If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?”* (1 John 4:20).

On Day 92, evening text, we read the golden rule: *“Just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise”* (Luke 6:31). Do you think that God considers this a golden rule? Does it cause a thirst for God?

Consider the story of the woman at the well: *“A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, ‘Give Me a drink.’ For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, ‘How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?’ For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Jesus answered and said to her, ‘If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.’ The woman said to Him, ‘Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?’ Jesus answered and said to her, ‘Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life’”* (John 4:7-14).

Jesus referred to Himself as the Bread of Life (John 6:35, 48). Here He is the Living Water. As we cannot live bodily (mortally) without physical food and water,

can we expect to live spiritually (eternally) without the spiritual Bread of Life and Living Water?

How do we acquire this spiritual nourishment? Look for the answer in this text.

*To read more about this week's topics, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and/or study guides.
Keywords: "thirst," "living water," "food," "manna." Stay thirsty, my friends.*



READING

Joshua 7:1-20:9

Luke 9:37-12:59

Proverbs 13:22-14:11

Psalm 43:1-46:6

This or That or Both

You may have heard the adage, “You’re so heavenly minded that you’re no earthly good.” Speaking of failing businesses, James C. Collins wrote in his book Good to Great: “They get caught up in what we call ‘The Tyranny of the ‘Or,’” the belief that you cannot live with two seemingly contradictory ideas at the same time, that you can have change or stability, you can be conservative or bold, you can have low costs or high quality—but never both. Our visionary companies all operate in what we call ‘The Genius of the ‘And,’” the ferocious insistence that they can and must have both at once.”

Can we be heavenly minded and yet do earthly good? Can we be aware of both the spiritual needs of people as well as their humanitarian needs? Jesus was.

Can/should we live and leave a legacy? Our text for Day 99, morning, reads: “A good man leaves an inheritance to his children’s children...” (Proverbs 13:22). We defined both inheritance and legacy as synonymous with regard to passing a possession on to a successor. I like to distinguish the difference as being: an inheritance is “something bequeathed of monetary value,” and a legacy is that which has both “monetary and moral value,” especially a moral value of remembrance.

How would you define a living legacy?

What is the difference between a legacy and an inheritance?

Which is the greater to receive?

What does it mean to be an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ Jesus (Romans 8:16-17)?

On Day 101, morning, “Conquering Both Sides of Our Jordan” states: “*These are the kings...whom the children of Israel defeated...on the other side of the Jordan...and these are the kings...conquered on this side of the Jordan*” (Joshua 12:1-7). Some folks just remain in the past; their lives are mere nostalgic memories, such as high school, old neighborhoods and churches. Then there are those who have forgotten from where they have come—their traditions, history, and forefathers. Consider Henri J. Nouwen’s thought for the day: “The real enemies of our life are the ‘oughts’ and the ‘ifs.’ They pull us backward into the unalterable past and forward into the unpredictable future. But real life takes place in the here and now. God is a God of the present. God always is in the moment, be that moment hard or easy, joyful or painful.”

Let’s get a little political. This ought to be fun. Be nice. Would you say that the difference politically in those called “conservatives” and those deemed “progressives” is that of looking to history or looking to the future?

Do you see the riff in the tyranny of the “or”?

Would not many political problems be solved in the genius of the “and”?

In Day 102, morning, we spoke of Second Generation Leadership. “*These are the areas...which Eleazar the priest, Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers...distributed as an inheritance*” (Joshua 14:1). Consider P. T Forsyth’s thought for the day: “You must live with people to know their problems, and live with God in order to solve them.”

Let’s consider some tyranny and/or genius leadership options. The application is up to you.

Should I hold on or let go? Consider: *“The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith”* (2 Timothy 4:6-7).

Should I lead or follow? Consider the words of Jesus: *“Whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many”* (Matthew 20:26-28).

Should I run the entire race or pass the baton. Consider: *“Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor”* (1 Corinthians 3:5-8).

*To read more about this week’s topics, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and/or study guides.
Keywords: “disciple,” “legacy,” “heir,” “mentor.” These weekly study guides are not intended to teach a specific lesson, but we trust to stir up the Spirit within you. Blessings as you grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Christ Jesus.*

The Bible Cannot Be Separated from the Church Nor the Church from the Bible Nor the Believer from Neither

John Donne (1572–1631) said, “No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as a manor of thy friends or of thine own were; any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind. And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.” Also, no church is an island, and the Bible is not one. A trinity of the believer is: the Bible, the church and the conscience. Therefore, when the church bell tolls, does it toll for you?

Is my life a witness? If I were brought before a court of law and the accusation was that of being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict me? *“The children of Reuben and the children of Gad called the altar, Witness, ‘For it is a witness between us that the Lord is God’”* (Joshua 22:34, Day 106, morning).

F. B. Meyer (1847-1929) stated, “We ought to be Christians in large type, so that it would not be necessary (for others) to be long in our society, or to regard us through spectacles, in order to detect our true discipleship. The message of our lives should resemble the big advertisements which can be read on the street-boardings by all who pass by.” Is it so?

Can I be a true witness outside of the body of Christ, His church? Consider: *“They assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians...”* (Acts 11:26).

READING

Joshua 21:1–Judges 10:18

Luke 13:1–16:31

Proverbs 14:12-27

Psalms 46:7–50:6

Is not the church of Jesus the source of the government of God? Consider: *“He [Christ Jesus] Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith...”* (Ephesians 4:11-16).

In Day 107, morning, we spoke of the hidden backslider. As no man is an island, there are no Lone Rangers in the kingdom of God. One of the great deceptions of the deceiver of the brethren is to keep believers from the fellowship of the saints. He is a master at getting people to forsake the assembling of the church (Hebrews 10:25). I just love it when someone says to me that the church is full of hypocrites. My pat answer is, “Hey, we’ve got room for one more.”

Just about every Christian I know has left one church for another. Have you, and if so, why? (I have found that this is a very hard question to answer honestly.) Consider: *“Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica—Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me... Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works. You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words. At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them”* (2 Timothy 4:10-16).

How is it that *“the backslider in heart will be filled with his own ways, but a good man will be satisfied from above”* (Proverbs 14:14). How would you define a backslider?

In Day 108, “Let Us Fill His House,” the evening’s thought is from Luis Palau in his book *Here’s the Church, Here’s the People*: “Beware of the mind-set in looking to see if the church will meet your needs... When my family is ready to leave for church, we take certain expectations about what we want to receive and leave them at home with our dog. Consequently, everything we do receive is a blessing.”

The parable in Luke 14:23, *“Then the master said to the servant, ‘Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled,’”* is without doubt in reference to the church of Jesus Christ. Therefore, what is a great work of the church to be?

In Day 110, evening, the question was asked: Who is drawn to your church? Unfortunately, among many churches it is the great shuffle from one church to another. Too many believers choose churches like they choose fast food restaurants. Without criticizing, who is drawn to your church? Consider who was drawn to Jesus: *“Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him”* (Luke 15:1).

Try this advice from cartoonist Bret Legg: “Now, while the instruments play, please shake hands with two people who aren’t in your clique.” Are we not to reach out to those in need of the Savior? Consider: *“Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons”* (Acts 10:34 KJV).

To read more about this week’s topics, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and/or study guides.
Keywords: “Christians,” “way,” “church,” “government,” “fellowship.” Remember: “For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:12). See you in church.

Biblical (God's) Timing

In day 117, our evening theme was: "Latent Abilities Atrophy." C. S. Lewis said: "He [God] seems to do nothing of Himself which He can possibly delegate to His creatures. He commands us to do slowly and blunderingly what He could do perfectly and in the twinkling of an eye. Creation seems to be delegation through and through. I suppose this is because He is a giver."

Consider and discuss (as you do so, check the Scripture references): As God's ways are not ours, His timing seldom matches our expectations (Isaiah 55:8). Nevertheless, His timing is perfect. A dear friend has repeatedly said to me, "God is never late, but He sure has missed a lot of opportunities to be early." That always makes me smile.

READING

Judges 11:1–Ruth 4:22

Luke 17:1–20:26

Proverbs 14:28–15:7

Psalms 50:7–52:9

Consider and discuss (as you do so, check the Scripture references): God does not dwell in a measurable realm of time; He dwells in eternity. He is not relegated by days and hours. He simply is and was and is to come simultaneously (John 8:57; Revelation 4:8). Nevertheless, we dwell in this era called time. It is for all practical purposes, directional and consistent. It is our greatest commodity, equally measured. Solomon said it so wisely, "There is a time there for every purpose and for every work" (Ecclesiastes 3:17).

In Day 114, the morning principle was: "The Folly of Impulse," and the text was: "He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, but he who is impulsive exalts folly" (Proverbs 14:29). Impulsive people usually have bad timing. They make decisions based on emotion and/or the desire of the moment instead of sound counsel and godly direction. Consider the phrase: "I'm going shopping." Unless there is a "for what?" question and answer, there is a chance of great financial peril.

What or who compels you? Consider: "Paul was compelled by the Spirit..." (Acts 18:5). "Do not be quick...do not be hasty..." (Ecclesiastes 5:2 NIV).

Is Ben Franklin's old adage, "Time is money," true?

What is the difference between impulse and inclination?

In Day 114, the evening theme was: "The Time Is Right," and the text was: "As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man" (Luke 17:26). Three times in the book of Hebrews we read the words, "Today, if you will hear His voice" (Hebrews 3:7, 15; 4:7). It is amazing that people will impulsively buy cars and houses, get married, and make all manner of life-changing decisions, but when it comes to the will of God in their lives, they will say, "I'm not ready."

Are there not things that are always timely? Consider: "O Lord, in the acceptable time...hear me" (Psalm 69:13).

Should obeying the Lord ever be delayed? Consider the words of Samuel to Saul: "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king" (1 Samuel 15:22-23).

What time is it in your life? Consider: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.' Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

To read more about this week's topics, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and/or study guides. Keywords: "time," "day," "epoch," "season." Remember: time is our most precious commodity; spend it wisely.



READING

1 Samuel 1:1-15:35

Luke 20:27-23:25

Proverbs 15:8-25

Psalm 53:1-57:3

What a Friend We Have in Jesus

I can remember as a little boy singing this hymn by Joseph M. Scriven (1820-1886) in Sunday school: "What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear! What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer! O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer. Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere? We should never be discouraged; take it to the Lord in prayer. Can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrows share? Jesus knows our every weakness; take it to the Lord in prayer. Are we weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care? Precious Savior, still our refuge; take it to the Lord in prayer. Do thy friends despise, forsake thee? Take it to the Lord in prayer! In His arms He'll take and shield thee; thou wilt find a solace there."

In the Day 122, the evening text was: *"Attend to me, and hear me; I am restless in my complaint, and moan noisily"* (Psalm 55:2). The thought for the night was from Joni Eareckson Tada: "You don't have to be alone in your hurt! Comfort is yours. Joy is an option. And it's all been made possible by your Savior. He went without comfort so you might have it. He postponed joy so you might share in it. He willingly chose isolation so you might never be alone in your hurt and sorrow."

Is God truly merciful, caring, and loving? Consider Lamentations 3:22-23.

When Jesus taught us to pray, why did He tell us to call God our Father (Luke 11:1-4)?

Which quality of God has the preeminence in your life: Lord, Creator, Master, King, Father...? Consider: *"He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence"* (Colossians 1:17).

In Day 123, the evening theme was: "What Happened to My Friend?" and the text was: *"We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in the throng"* (Psalm 55:14). C. S. Lewis said in the *Four Loves*: "Eros will have naked bodies; friendship naked personalities." Friendships are very important to God. Abraham was called a friend of God (James 2:23). Jesus said to His disciples, *"No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends"* (John 15:15). Consider the blessing and heartaches of friends. Jesus' friends forsook Him. One betrayed Him. Yet He remained a faithful Friend.

How important are friendships to God? Consider: *"The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him, and he makes his covenant known to them"* (Psalm 25:14 NRSV). *"You are My friends if you do whatever I command you"* (John 15:14).

Of the four loves, which would you deem to be the greatest? Discuss first and then consider John 15:13.

Are your friendships healthy? Consider: *"Make no friendship with an angry man"* (Proverbs 22:24).

On Day 126, the evening theme was: "Make Him Your Comfort," and the text was: *"Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me! For my soul trusts in You; and in the shadow of Your wings I will make my refuge, until these calamities have passed by"* (Psalm 57:1). The thought for the night was from Charles Spurgeon: "The trials of Christian life you shall find heavy, but you will find grace will make them light."

Is there a greater demonstration of friendship than mercy?

Why is mercy such a great advocate for friendships? Consider: “*Judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment*” (James 2:13).

Of the Scriptural virtues—Faith, Hope, Love, Patience, Justice, Prudence, Temperance—where would you place Mercy? Consider Micah 6:8.

To read more about this week's topics, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and/or study guides.

Keyword: “friend” and its derivatives. May I recommend researching the people quoted in the thought for the day, such as Spurgeon. Remember: “A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24).



READING

1 Samuel 11:1-28:25

Luke 23:26-John 3:18

Proverbs 15:26-16:6

Psalm 57:4-61:4

What Were They Thinking?

For the most part, we know the endings of famous Bible stories. We know that David slew the giant; Daniel survived the lion's den, and Peter became a leader in the church. They, however, didn't know the end result of their original actions. Yes, they knew by faith, but remember: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). Esther said it this way: "If I perish, I perish!" (Esther 4:16). And Job said it like this: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him" (Job 13:15). That's what they did—they trusted God. They would, as the psalmist proclaimed, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me" (Psalm 23:4).

Have you ever been there? Concerning your faith and the decisions you made because of it, has anyone ever asked you, "What were you thinking?"

In Day 127, the morning principle was: "From Sheep to Giants," and the text was: "Moreover David said, 'The Lord, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine'" (1 Samuel 17:37). What was David thinking?

Arthur Ashe (1943-1993) said, "True heroism is remarkably sober, very undramatic. It is not the urge to surpass all others at whatever cost, but the urge to serve others at whatever cost."

How was David judged by his brothers? Consider 1 Samuel 17:28.

How was David judged by King Saul? Consider 1 Samuel 17:33-37.

How have you judged David's life? Consider the story of Uriah and Bathsheba.

How did God judge David? Consider 2 Samuel 12:10-12 and Acts 13:22.

To be "brave" is to trust God in the midst of pending rejection, ridicule, or persecution for the Gospel's sake. It is not just the risking of life, but the living of life for Christ.

In Day 130, the morning principle was: "The Obvious May Not Be So," and the text was: "Saul was told that David had gone to Keilah. So Saul said, 'God has delivered him into my hand, for he has shut himself in by entering a town that has gates and bars'" (1 Samuel 23:7). Here is what I know about the obvious, there is at least one thing about it that I do not know. What was Saul thinking?

Did Saul believe that he was doing the will of God? Consider 1 Samuel 9:2.

Did David believe that he was doing the will of God? Consider 1 Samuel 14:47.

Do you see these types of factions in our day? Consider 2 Timothy 3:1-4.

Consider Oswald Chambers' statement: "It is easy to say we believe in God as long as we remain in the little world we choose to live in; but get out into the great world of facts, the noisy world where people are absolutely indifferent to you, where your message is nothing more than a crazy tale belonging to a bygone age, can you believe God there?"

In Day 133, the morning principle was: "The Tale of a King," and the text was: "*So his servants, together with the woman, urged him; and he heeded their voice*" (1 Samuel 28:23). Saul went to a fortune teller, the medium at En Dor (does the name *Endora* ring a bell?). What was Saul thinking?

Matthew Henry stated: "Those that expect any good counsel or comfort, otherwise than from God, and in the way of His institutions, will be as wretchedly disappointed." Is there anything wrong with horoscopes, fortune tellers, Ouija boards, and the like? Have you ever dabbled in such? If so, what were you thinking? Seriously consider Deuteronomy 18:10-12.

What was the beginning of Saul's downfall? Consider 1 Samuel 15:28.

What were the signs of Saul's demise? Consider 1 Samuel 18:7-8.

If we find ourselves in this kind of downward spiral, what can we do to turn it around? Look to 1 John 1:9.

To read more about this week's topics, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and/or study guides. Keywords: "Saul," "David," "witchcraft," "sorcery." "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate [think] on these things" (Philippians 4:8).

Leading as a Servant

The Lord's disciples were arguing about who was going to be the greatest when the kingdom of God comes. Jesus, in the simplicity of the Gospels, instructed them, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all" (Mark 9:35). This lesson is repeated seven times in the Gospels. Warren Wiersbe, former pastor of Moody Church in Chicago, explained this servanthood: "Submission is not subjugation. Subjugation turns a person into a thing, destroys individuality, and removes all liberty. Submission makes a person become more of what God wants him to be; it brings out individuality; it gives him the freedom to accomplish all that God has for his life and ministry. Subjugation is weakness; it is the refuge of those who are afraid of maturity. Submission is strength; it is the first step toward true maturity and ministry."

In Day 135, the morning principle was: "Honoring God's Appointed Authority," and the text was: "Then David lamented...over Saul and over Jonathan his son" (2 Samuel 1:17). David never rebelled against Saul, even though God had anointed him king. David understood, "Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies" (Romans 8:33). David led as a servant.

"Authority" in the Scriptures is not just having knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures, but is being designated by God to rightly apply them. Remember, God appoints all authority (Romans 13:1).

Has not God always dealt with His people through designated authorities, even if those authorities were or were not angels?

Were not the patriarchs and apostles designated authorities?

Are there God appointed authorities in your life; if so, who are they?

In Day 136, the evening theme was: "God Knows and He Rewards," and the text was: "For in this the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps'" (John 4:37). It has been rightfully said, "Anonymity is its own reward." It has always been a great comfort to me to understand that

God knows. I may not receive accolades from man or man's rewards, but God knows and He rewards. We may never know in this life who has sown and who has reaped. Yet God knows. Anonymity is a quality of a servant leader.

"Reward" simply means to repay, recompense, or compensate. "For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works" (Matthew 16:27). God rewards obedience. Often, the obedience will be its own reward. For through obedience comes success.

What does God reward more than obedience? Consider: "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice..." (1 Samuel 15:22).

Does reaping receive a greater reward than sowing, or visa versa? Consider: "I [Paul], planted Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:6-7).

Would you most consider yourself a sower, a nurturer, or a reaper? If time allows, consider the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-29).

In Day 137, the morning principle was: "The Journey to Greatness," and the text was: "So David went on and became great, and the Lord God of hosts was with him" (2 Samuel 5:10). French writer Francois de la Rochefoucauld (1630-1680) said, "The fame of great men should always be judged by the methods they employed to achieve it." True greatness is only achieved by the servant leader.

"Greatness"—there are great sinners and great accomplishers. There are those who are great in the sight of man and those who are great in the sight of God; naturally, the latter is the greater. Greatness is a measurement noted by characteristics. Therefore, do not seek greatness; seek to serve, and greatness will follow.

Does God see greatness the same way man sees greatness? Consider: "The people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits" (Daniel 11:32).

READING

1 Samuel 29:1-

2 Samuel 12:31

John 3:19-6:51

Proverbs 16:7-24

Psalms 61:5-65:13

Can greatness be achieved before it is recognized? Consider David, who like Moses repeatedly asked, “Who am I?” Moses said to God, “*Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?*” (Exodus 3:11).

What must we do to be great in God’s kingdom? Consider: “*He [Jesus] sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, ‘If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.’ Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, ‘Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me’*” (Mark 9:34-37).

To read more about this week’s topics, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and/or study guides.

Keywords: “lead,” “great,” “authority,” “servant,” “disciple,” and their derivatives. Remember, Jesus said, “If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.”

Prove Yourself a Man

We live in a day where “political correctness” has diminished the difference in the sexes. The institution of marriage and the nuclear family appear to have suffered the most. Sexual cohabitations and single parent homes have become a norm. I would imagine that just about everyone reading this study has been impacted by these degradations (do you have a better word?). In this lesson, let’s openly and honestly consider the proper role of men in society. Let’s make an attempt of doing so by what we have read this past week (also reference devotions not listed).

Here’s what I see: when men take their proper biblical place in society—the home, church, and marketplace—no one is diminished or relegated to a lower rank. On the contrary, everyone is more elevated and honored and respected. C. S. Lewis said in *The Four Loves*: “When I have learnt to love God better than my earthly dearest, I shall love my earthly dearest better than I do now. In so far as I learn to love my earthly dearest at the expense of God and instead of God, I shall be moving toward the state in which I shall not love my earthly dearest at all. When first things are put first, second things are not suppressed but increased.”

In Day 147, the morning principle was: “Prove Yourself a Man,” and the text was: “*I go the way of all the earth; be strong, therefore, and prove yourself a man. And keep the charge of the Lord your God*” (1 Kings 2:2, 3). Prove yourself a man, be a man after God’s own heart (Acts 13:22).

John Henry Jowett said in his book *Listening to the Giants*: “Men who are possessed by a powerful God can never themselves be impotent. But have we not robbed the Almighty of much of His lawful glory, and to that extent are we not ourselves despoiled? We have contemplated the beauties of the rainbow, but we have overlooked the dim severities of the throne. We have toyed with the light, but we have forgotten the lightning. We have rejoiced in the fatherhood of our God, but too frequently the fatherhood we have proclaimed has been throneless and effeminate. We have picked and chosen according to the weakness of our own tastes, and not according to the full-orbed revelation of the truth.”

Why do you think that the Word of God is not written gender neutral? Why do you think that many new translations are paraphrased as such? Consider: “*So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them*” (Genesis 1:27).

2 Samuel 13:1–
1 Kings 2:46
John 6:52–9:41
Proverbs 16:25–17:9
Psalm 66:1–68:14

What is the biblical view of equality between the sexes? Consider: “*There is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus*” (Galatians 3:28). What is the context of this verse?

If you are a man, are you puffed up by being called to lead your home? Consider the phrase: “Prove yourself a man.” It is not machismo, compassionless, or hardhearted, but holding to the character and nature of the Son of God. David said to Solomon: “*Keep the charge of the Lord your God: to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies...*” (1 Kings 2:3). The apostle Paul said to the church: “*Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ*” (1 Corinthians 11:1).

Men are very often sexually driven. In Day 141, the morning principle was: “Pseudo-Love,” and the text was: “*Then Amnon hated her exceedingly, so that the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her*” (2 Samuel 13:15). Louis McBurney, M.D., said, “A common path to sexual sin is the notion that feelings are not only all-important but also totally uncontrollable; they just happen to you.” Prove yourself a man in godly love.

The difference between the emotion of lust and love (Eros) is often undistinguishable. Lust is the antithesis of the love (Agape).

Is there any form of lust that is good? Consider: “*The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world*” (1 John 2:16).

What is lust’s source? Consider: “*Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But 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 forth death*” (James 1:12-16).

Is there a difference between infatuation and lust? Consider: We are to be careful not to mistake lust for love. If there are doubts, check the attributes of love found in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

In Day 142, the evening theme was: “Pay Your Vows,” and the text was: *“I will pay You my vows, which my lips have uttered and my mouth has spoken when I was in trouble”* (Psalm 66:13–14): Some vows are formal—wedding vows, pledges, contracts, etc. Many are informal, but nevertheless to be kept: a promise, commitment, your “yes” and your “no.” Prove yourself a man, keep your word.

Does God hold us accountable for our vows? Consider: *“I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned”* (Matthew 12:36-37). Ecclesiastes 5:5 says it this way: *“Better not to vow than to vow and not pay.”*

Does God see a formal vow any differently than a “yes” or “no?” Consider: *“Above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No,’ lest you fall into judgment”* (James 5:12).

Are you keeping your word? Consider: *“It is a snare for a man to devote rashly something as holy, and afterward to reconsider his vows”* (Proverbs 20:25).

Prove yourself a man. Find a model, a mentor, someone to imitate, and likewise endeavor to be that person. Be careful not to mistake lust for love. Be a man of your word. Make your word your vow. You will be trusted, blessed, and successful.



READING

1 Kings 3:1-16:34

John 10:1-13:20

Proverbs 17:10-26

Psalm 68:15-69:28

The God of the Bible

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit; three distinct Persons, yet One God. The church calls this epiphany of the Godhead, the Holy Trinity. There have been countless attempts to define how or why Three, yet only One God. Here is my feeble attempt: in chemistry, there is a point where many if not all liquids and gases reach what is known as a "triple point." Let's take water, H₂O, for example. If it is contained, pressurized, and cooled, it is able to be simultaneously in three distinct forms: liquid (water), gas (vapor), and solid (ice). Now, if the most abundant substances (hydrogen and oxygen) can be in three distinct forms at the same time, surely the Creator of these substances can present Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit concurrently.

In the Bible, every attribute ascribed to the Father is likewise evident in the Son and the Holy Spirit.

In Day 149, the evening theme was: "One," and the text was: "*I and My Father are one*" (John 10:30). Vernon Grounds stated: "Explain the Trinity? We can't even begin. We can only accept it—a mystery, disclosed in Scripture. It should be no surprise that the triune Being of God baffles our finite minds. We should be surprised, rather, if we could understand the nature of our Creator. He would be a two-bit deity, not the fathomless Source of all reality."

Easton's Bible Dictionary states: "*Trinity*: a word not found in Scripture, but used to express the doctrine of the unity of God as subsisting in three distinct Persons"

I do not expect that we are going to fully grasp the doctrine of the Trinity in one short point of a lesson. Therefore, it is more than a worthwhile continued study.

Is there not but one God? Consider: "*You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!*" (James 2:19).

How would you biblically define the trinity to a seeking believer? Consider: "*All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen*" (Matthew 28:18-20).

How would you biblically explain the deity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? Consider: "*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen*" (2 Corinthians 13:14).

Do you recognize God in three Persons, the blessed Trinity? I have found that the distinguishing characteristic between orthodox Christianity and the cults is the deity of Christ. It is a distinguishing plumb line.

In Day 150, the evening theme was: "Why We Are to Believe in Him," and the text was: "*Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live'*" (John 11:25). Noah Webster's 1828 *American Dictionary of the English Language* defines *resurrection* as "a rising again; chiefly, the revival of the dead of the human race, or their return from the grave, particularly at the general judgment. By the resurrection of Christ we have assurance of the future resurrection of men. 1 Peter 1. In the resurrection, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage. Matt. 22."

George Herbert said, "Death used to be an executioner, but the gospel has made him just a gardener." We are to not only believe and proclaim the resurrection; we are to live our lives as if it were a sure thing, because it is.

How significant is the resurrection of Jesus Christ? Consider: "*If Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty*" (1 Corinthians 15:14).

What if Christ had not risen? Consider: "*If Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!*" (1 Corinthians 15:17).

What do you think our resurrected bodies will be like? Consider: "*This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality*" (1 Corinthians 15:53).

In Day 151, the evening theme was: “Believing Is Seeing,” and the text was: “*Jesus said to her, ‘Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?’*” (John 11:40). B. Clayton Bell stated: “Faith in God is not just believing He exists, but doing what He says because you believe He will keep His promises.”

Believing is the first step of faith. Considering that faith’s equation is “Believing + Trusting + Obeying = Faith.” “Belief” is the persuasion of truth.

How important is “believing” to God? Consider: “*These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God*” (1 John 5:13).

How important is “believing” to you? Consider: “*If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.’ Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, ‘Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!’*” (Mark 9:23-24).

In God’s kingdom, do you have to see to believe or believe to see? Consider the disciple Thomas: “*Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe*” (John 20:24-29).

To read more about this week’s topics, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and/or study guides.
Keywords: “Trinity,” “Deity,” “Son of God,” “Holy Spirit.” Put your faith in the God of the Bible. Be careful of those who would deny the Father or the Son or the Holy Spirit.



READING

1 Kings 17:1–2 Kings 8:29

John 13:21–18:40

Proverbs 17:27–18:13

Psalm 69:29–72:16

Being a Friend of God

Abraham is called “the friend of God” three times in the Scriptures (2 Chronicles 20:7; Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23). James tells us why: “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” And he was called the friend of God.” Abraham believed God by faith. He trusted Him at His Word. And he simply obeyed Him. We are also told in Galatians 3:7, “Only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.”

Of the four loves: Agape (unconditional), Storge (sibling), Eros (romance), and Phileo (friendship), which would you think to be considered the greatest in the Scriptures? Discuss and then consider John 15:13.

In Day 157, the evening theme was: “Christ’s Condition for Friendship,” and the text was: “*You are my friends if you do whatever I command you*” (John 15:14). “Conditional friendship” is not only wise, but just. We are rightly warned, “*Friendship with the world is enmity with God*” (James 4:4). Friendship with God demands obedience, because He is such a faithful and true friend. Being a friend of God is conditional.

Is obedience to Christ a prerequisite of friendship with God? Consider, if you can have a friend who would never lead you astray or harm you in any way, wouldn’t you want to do the things that he says. Christ Jesus is such a friend and more.

Of the relationships we can have with God—son/daughter, servant, friend—which do you most to desire (I do not believe that there is a wrong answer)? Consider Proverbs 18:24.

How would you describe a friendship with God? Consider Abraham.

How would you describe your friendship with God?

In Day 158, the evening theme was: “Take Advantage of Your Age,” and the text was: “*Do not cast me off in the time of old age; do not forsake me when my strength fails*” (Psalm 71:9). Philosopher Will Durant said on his 90th birthday, “The love we have in our youth is superficial compared to the love that an old man has for his old wife.” Who are your old friends?

“Old age.” I do not consider anyone old until they have surpassed the number of years God has intended for man to live. With age comes an abundance of life’s experience, wisdom, and understanding. It is to be esteemed and honored, respected and sought. “*Even to your old age, I am He, and even to gray hairs I will carry you! I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you*” (Isaiah 46:4).

Does God age? How or at what age do You see Him? Consider: “*You are the same, and Your years will not fail*” (Hebrews 1:12).

What do you think prompted the psalmist’s request (Psalm 71:9)?

Has not God chosen to use the aged as much if not more so than youth? Consider and discuss, “*You shall rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the Lord*” (Leviticus 19:32).

In Day 159, the evening theme was: “Avoiding the Foolishness of Youth,” and the text was: “*O God, You have taught me from my youth; and to this day I declare Your wondrous works*” (Psalm 71:17). There is something special about new friends. Most are based

on first impressions. There is a little mystery with new friends. They are fresh, not familiar, and, well, just new.

What is the difference in being a childlike friend and childish friend? Consider: *“When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things”* (1 Corinthians 13:11).

What do you think God considers to be the age of accountability? Consider: Matthew 19:19 and Luke 18:16-17.

How old were you when you came to Christ and do you wish you had come sooner?

To read more about this week’s topics, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and/or study guides.

Keywords: “friend of God,” “friend,” “friendship.” Jesus said to His disciples: “No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends” (John 15:15).



READING

2 Kings 9:1-24:20

John 19:1-Acts 2:47

Proverbs 18:14-19:3

Psalm 72:17-74:23

The Manufacturer's Handbook

Think about the word Bible. Consider that it is not defined in Webster's 1828 Dictionary of the American English Language, not because it was of little or no significance, but because it needed no description. There was a time in America when the laws of the land and the values of the people were based on the book called the Bible. To my knowledge, every president since Washington has taken the oath of office with his hand on its pages. It was taught in our public schools and was the foundation of our most prestigious universities. Sixty-six books, written by some forty authors from every walk of life (kings, shepherds, fishermen, and carpenters) over a fifteen-hundred-year span, about the most controversial subjects (politics, money, and sex). Yet inerrant and without contradiction. It is accurate historically, scientifically, grammatically, and in any other realm that it may be contested. It is the Book of the Ages.

Martin Luther declared, "The Bible is alive, it speaks to me; it has feet, it runs after me; it has hands, it lays hold of me."

In Day 164, the evening theme was: "The Manufacturer's Handbook," and the text was: "*These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name*" (John 20:31). The purpose of the Bible is "that you may believe." The question to this statement is, "Believe what?" Are we to believe in Christ? By all means. However, to believe in Christ, we then must likewise believe Him. That is, listen to Him and obey Him in all things. The Bible is not a spiritual smorgasbord that we may choose some things and reject others. It is to be digested in its entirety.

Can we know God without the Word of God? Consider: "*By this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments*" (1 John 2:3). "*Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*" (2 Peter 1:20-21).

How do we know the Bible is truly the Word of God? Consider its claims about itself: "*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God*" (2 Timothy 3:16).

If you believe it to be God's Word, how much influence does it or should it have in your life? Consider: "*You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life*" (John 5:39-40).

In Day 162, the evening theme was: "The Turning Point of Eternity," and the text was: "*And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha*" (John 19:17). The Bible is more than a history book. It contains the turning point of all history. It is past, present, and future. It tells of what was, what is, and what is to be. Charles H. Spurgeon said, "All historians must confess that the turning point of the race is the cross of Christ. It would be impossible to fix any other hinge of history. From that moment the power of evil received its mortal wound. It dies hard, but from that hour it was doomed."

"The turning point of history"—maybe it would be better to define the finished work of the cross of Calvary as the center or crux of all eternity. Our Lord said of it, "*It is finished!*" (John 19:30). From the creation to the Revelation of Christ, is there any event of greater significance than Calvary? Consider the testimony of the apostle Paul: "*I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified*" (1 Corinthians 2:2).

Why did the Son of God have to die, especially in this manner? Consider Romans 5:8.

Have you been to Calvary? Consider the words of Jesus from the cross: "*When they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him.... Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do'*" (Luke 23:32-34).

In Day 166, the evening theme was: “The Theme of Acts,” and the text was: “*You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth*” (Acts 1:8). Acts is the history book of the New Testament Church. It was written by the disciple Luke, whom many scholars consider the greatest historian. To know where we are and where we are going, it is important to know where we have been. Therefore the history of the Manufacturer’s Handbook is crucial to our daily venture of life.

What is the power of God? Consider: the word *power* to mean “the ability to achieve.” Power can be latent or active, partial or complete. When we speak of the power of God, we are speaking about the Word of God (Romans 1:16). “*His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness*” (2 Peter 1:3).

Has God ever manifested His power aside from His Word? Consider: “*He spoke, and it was done*” (Psalm 33:7). “*The Lord merely spoke, and the heavens were created. He breathed the word, and all the stars were born*” (The Living Bible).

Has the Word of God lost its power? Consider: “*Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away*” (Matthew 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33).

To read more about this week’s topics, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and/or study guides.
Keywords: “Scripture,” “Word of God,” “Bible.” Live your life according to the revelation of God as it is found in His Word.
Read it, study it, learn it, memorize it, listen to the preaching and teaching of it, and above all apply it to every realm of your life. If you have the Word of God, you have the power of God. Therefore, live by this power.



READING

2 Kings 25:1–
1 Chronicles 12:40
Acts 3:1–7:21
Proverbs 19:4-19
Psalm 75:1–77:20

The Cadre

A cadre is the core of a larger unit. For example, there were many who followed after Jesus' ministry. There were many who literally followed Him. Then there were the twelve disciples. Yet among them were Peter, James, and John; these three would be the cadre. Likewise, in any local New Testament church, there are attenders, members, those in various ministries, deacons, pastors, and elders. The greater the serving, the closer to the cadre. Therefore, a biblical cadre is a group of mature believers around which the body of Christ can grow and mature.

In Day 170, the morning principle was: "One in Twelve," and the text was: "These were the sons of Israel: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Joseph, Benjamin, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher" (1 Chronicles 2:1–2). Of these twelve patriarchs, we know very little about most. We know a little about Reuben (much not very good). We know the blessing Jacob (Israel) gave them, but nothing about their accomplishments. Other than the one named Joseph. One in the twelve made all the difference.

Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) stated, "I go out to preach with two propositions in mind. First, every person ought to give his life to Christ. Second, whether or not anyone else gives him his life, I will give him mine."

From the sons of Jacob to the twelve apostles, why is it that only a very few made a difference in recorded history? Consider: "Many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14).

What does it take to be the one-in-twelve? Consider: are not "difference makers" those who walk in obedience to Christ? They may not always be noticed by man, but they are renown in heaven.

What are you willing to do to be a Joseph, Peter, John, or Paul? "He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out... Simon, to whom He gave the name Peter [1]; James [2] the son of Zebedee and John [3] the brother of James, to whom He gave the name

Boanerges, that is, 'Sons of Thunder'; Andrew [4], Philip [5], Bartholomew [6], Matthew [7], Thomas [8], James [9], the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus [10], Simon [11], the Canaanite; and Judas Iscariot [12], who also betrayed Him" (Mark 3:14-19).

In Day 170, the evening theme was: "Have You Been with Jesus?" and the text was: "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). To be in the cadre, you must be at the core, the place where Jesus is. I am not speaking of attending every meeting and burning the proverbial candle at both ends; I am speaking of being with Jesus.

What does it mean to be with Jesus? Consider the difficult text, Luke 14:25-33.

Do you have to go to seminary to have been with Jesus? Consider: "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes" (Matthew 11:25, see also 1 Corinthians 1:27).

Where are we most likely to encounter Him? Consider: "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20).

Do people perceive that you have been with Jesus? In Acts 4:13, our text, what would you say is the key word that caused them to say, "They had been with Jesus?"

In Day 175, the evening theme was: "Follow the Leader Who Follows the Leader," and the text was: "You led Your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron" (Psalm 77:20). S. I. McMillen, in his book *None of These Diseases*, tells a story of a young woman who wanted to go to college, but her heart sank when she read the question on the application blank that asked, "Are you a leader?" Being both honest

and conscientious, she wrote, “No,” and returned the application, expecting the worst. To her surprise, she received this letter from the college: “Dear Applicant: A study of the application forms reveals that this year our college will have 1,452 new leaders. We are accepting you because we feel it is imperative that they have at least one follower.” The cadre does not lord over; they serve under.

How does God lead His people? Consider Jesus with His disciples: *“He who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I [Jesus] am among you as the One who serves”* (Luke 22:26-27).

How and who are His people to follow? Consider: *“Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct”* (Hebrews 13:7).

Who and how do you follow, and who and how do you lead? Consider: *“Do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises”* (Hebrews 6:12).

To read more about this week’s topics, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and/or study guides. Keywords: “cadre,” “core,” “follow,” and their derivatives. “Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24-25).

Our Biblical Heritage

Years ago I wrote: "We are losing our history and our heritage because we are failing to pass our faith and knowledge on to our children. Dare to ask your children about their heritage. Ask them about the history of our nation. Ask them what they know about the Bible and its impact on the Constitution. You will most likely find that our heritage is being eroded. A new tolerance does not tolerate our Judeo-Christian virtues. They have been replaced by meaningless humanistic values. Our children are being taught that whatever they value as important and meaningful is to be accepted. We must instruct our children in the virtues of honesty, integrity, godly patriotism, and Biblical righteousness. Get your children to read biographies of our founding fathers and religious leaders. Teach them that they may in turn teach their children. If we do not, we may be the heritage that is lost in the next generation." It is probable that you were those children of whom I was speaking. So I ask you, "Do you know our heritage?"

In Noah Webster's preface to *The America Dictionary of the English Language*, he wrote: "In my view, the Christian religion is the most important and one of the first things in which all children, under a free government ought to be instructed.... No truth is more evident to my mind than that the Christian religion must be the basis of any government intended to secure the rights and privileges of a free people."

Heritage means not only our history, but the source of that history. For example, the intent of the framers of the Constitution of these United States does matter. It matters greatly. If it ceases to be followed and passed down it shall be lost.

In Day 176, the evening theme was: "Are We Losing Our Heritage?" and the text was: "*That the generation to come might know them...that they may arise and declare them to their children*" (Psalm 78:6). Charles Krauthammer said, "After 500 years the Columbian legacy has created a civilization that we ought not, in all humble piety and cultural relativism, declare to be no better or worse than that of the Incas. It turned out better. And mankind is the better for it. Infinitely better. Reason enough to honor Columbus and bless 1492."

Is there such a thing as a godly heritage, and if so, what is it? Consider: "*A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children*" (Proverbs 13:22).

Are we losing our heritage? Consider Psalm 11:3 (it is my most quoted verse of the Psalter). Discuss "*If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?*"

What can we do to restore our heritage? Consider and discuss: "*You shall raise up the foundations of many generations; and you shall be called the Repairer of the Breach*" (Isaiah 58:12).

In Day 180, the morning principle was: "A Loving Father to a Wise Son," and the text was: "*Then you will prosper, if you take care to fulfill the statutes and judgments.... Be strong and of good courage; do not fear nor be dismayed*" (1 Chronicles 22:13). The greatest attack on our godly heritage has been on the institution of the family. Consider the average TV sitcom—the father, if there is one, is thoughtless and the child/children the sensible. Are our children being kidnapped from the authority of the home to the dictates of the State? Are we accepting things that were once repulsive and illegal in America? "*If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?*"

Of all the possible relationships that God could use toward those created in His image, why did He choose that of sons and daughters? Consider: we call them our Founding Fathers. Why?

How important is our godly heritage to the prosperity of the nation? Consider: "*As long as he sought the Lord, God made him prosper*" (2 Chronicles 26:5).

READING

1 Chronicles 13:1-27:34

Acts 7:22-10:23

Proverbs 19:20-20:5

Psalm 78:1-78:66

How important is the family unit for the preservation of our Biblical heritage? If time allows, consider and discuss Colossians 3:18-25.

In Day 182, the morning principle was: “People of the Way,” and the text was: “*King David made officials...for every matter pertaining to God and the affairs of the king*” (1 Chronicles 26:32). *Government* in a word is simply the “way” we do the things that we do. Even anarchy is a form of government. There appears to be a war between the government of the state, the government of the home, and the government of God.

Dr. Diogenes Allen states, “The Latin root of *authority* and *authentic* means ‘that which allows growth and life.’ Our resentment of the authority of God in Christ is, therefore, foolish.”

Do you function in and under the government of God? Consider: “*I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets*” (Acts 24:14).

Where are the government of God and the foundation of civil government to be found? Consider and carefully discuss: “*Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same...*” (Romans 13:1-7).

Whose government are we to obey? Consider: “*Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge*” (Acts 4:19).

Words Have Meanings

Words having meanings, therefore words have power. If we change their meaning, they lose their power. Consider the word marriage. Historically, and in just about every noteworthy dictionary, it is defined as "the legal union of a man and woman as husband and wife." If we lose the meanings of our words, we lose our culture and heritage. "If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Psalm 11:3). It is no accident that the Word of God has been preserved in its original languages. Nor is it coincidental that countless words in the English language have a biblical foundation or reference (see Noah Webster's 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language). Just about everything we have ever accomplished has been done by the accurate use of words. Our words institute marriage and instigate divorce. Our words bring success or bring about failure. Our words trigger wars and bring peace. Our words can unite or they can separate.

READING

- 1 Chronicles 28:1-
- 2 Chronicles 12:16
- Acts 10:24-15:21
- Proverbs 20:6-21
- Psalm 78:67-80:19

In Day 189, the morning principle was: "It Begins with the Mouth," and the text was: "Whoever curses his father or his mother, his lamp will be put out in deep darkness" (Proverbs 20:20). John Jay, one of the Founding Fathers, said, "Nothing is useful except what is honorable." He was called "the best writer on literature of his generation." Our words are to be honorable from youth through all of life. We are to teach our children that words not only have meaning but consequences.

Why do you think that the commandment to honor our fathers and mothers is the most repeated of the 10 Commandments? Consider that it is repeated ten times in the Scriptures and that there are 10 Commandments. Is there a correlation?

What about the use of euphemisms, the substitution of a mild, inoffensive, relatively uncontroversial phrase, for a frank expression that might offend or otherwise suggest something unpleasant. Consider: darn it, golly-gee, holy cow, gee-whiz, etc.

Is there a conflict of words between traditional American biblical values and American humanistic values (i.e. political correctness)? Consider: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer" (Psalm 19:14).

In Day 189, the evening theme was: "Debate and Leadership," and the text was: "And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them" (Acts 15:7). Quoting Vicki Edwards in *Preaching Today*, she said, "It's nice to talk with people who can make a point without impaling anyone on it." Be willing to debate with honest words.

To debate means the passionate presentation of opinions. In 1828, Noah Webster defined it, "To contend for in words or arguments; to strive to maintain a cause by reasoning; to dispute; to discuss; to argue; to contest, as opposing parties; as, the question was debated till a late hour."

Does God encourage honest debate? Consider: "Put Me in remembrance; let us contend together; state your case, that you may be acquitted" (Isaiah 43:26).

Do there have to be winners and losers in debate? Consider: "Come now, and let us reason together," says the Lord" (Isaiah 1:18).

Are there areas of your life that would benefit from debate? Consider: "Put Me in remembrance; let us contend together; state your case, that you may be acquitted" (Isaiah 43:26). Let us ask: do I debate my cause with passion. Am I honest and willing to, with the same passion, listen and accept the truth?

How are we to debate? Consider: *“We should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ”* (Ephesians 4:15–16).

In Day 187, the evening theme was: “Biblical Belief,” and the text was: *“By Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law”* (Acts 13:39). Charles Blake stated in *Leadership Magazine*, “Today people will listen when we say, ‘This is what the Bible says.’ Test it. You’ll find it authentic.” The foundation of words is the Bible.

Can we truly believe in God without believing in His Word, the Bible? Consider: *“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit”* (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Can we truly obey God without obeying His Word, the Bible? Consider: *“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path”* (Psalm 119:105).

Do your words have biblical meanings? Are your faith, hope, and love, biblical faith, hope, and love?

To read more about this week’s topics, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and/or study guides.
Keywords: “Psalm 11:3,” “word,” “Psalm 119.” Count your words and make your words count. Make them few. Be quick to listen and slow to speak. Jesus said, “I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” (Matthew 12:36-37).

Courage

In 1939 movie The Wizard of Oz, the cowardly Lion said, "All right, I'll go in there for Dorothy. Wicked Witch or no Wicked Witch, guards or no guards, I'll tear them apart. I may not come out alive, but I'm going in there. There's only one thing I want you fellows to do." The Tin Man replied, "What's that?" Cowardly Lion answered, "Talk me out of it.... Courage! What makes a king out of a slave? Courage! What makes the flag on the mast to wave? Courage! What makes the elephant charge his tusk in the misty mist, or the dusky dusk? What makes the muskrat guard his musk? Courage! What makes the Sphinx the seventh wonder? Courage! What makes the dawn come up like thunder? Courage! What makes the Hottentot so hot? What puts the 'ape' in apricot? What have they got that I ain't got?" Dorothy and the Tin Man answered, "Courage!"

READING

2 Chronicles 13:1-27:9

Acts 15:22-19:20

Proverbs 20:22-21:5

Psalms 81:1-84:7

In Day 192, the morning principle was: "Dare to Be Sold Out for Christ," and the text was: "Amasiah...willingly offered himself to the Lord, and with him two hundred thousand mighty men of valor" (2 Chronicles 17:16). Is there not any greater courage than the courage it takes to be sold out for Christ? Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) said, "I go out to preach with two propositions in mind. First, every person ought to give his life to Christ. Second, whether or not anyone else gives him his life, I will give him mine."

"Sold out" means a depleted availability. A limited edition that is no longer available in the marketplace, complete commitment, sanctified. How would you define someone who is sold out to Christ?

Other than individuals in the Scriptures, who do you know that is totally committed to Christ?

This will take courage to answer: On a scale of 1-10, what would you say your level of commitment is? Consider: "I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: 'whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?' Then I said, 'Here am I! Send me'" (Isaiah 6:8).

In Day 192, the evening theme was: "You Have Got to Love This Story," and the text was: "But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, 'Do yourself no harm, for we are all here'" (Acts 16:28). Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia said, "God assumed from the beginning that the wise of the world would view Christians as fools... and He has not been disappointed.... If I have brought any message today, it is this: Have the courage to have your wisdom regarded as stupidity. Be fools for Christ. And have the courage to suffer the contempt of the sophisticated world." True courage comes from the grace of God.

"Grace"—God granting you the ability to be conformed to the likeness of His Son and equipping You to be joyfully obedient to Him in the good as well as the hard times of life.

Can grace operate outside of faith? Consider: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

Does it take courage and grace to suffer with joy? Consider: "He [Christ] said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

Have you experienced God's grace to be courageous in a difficult time?

In Day 193, the morning principle was: "It Takes Courage to Live," and the text was: "Behave courageously, and the Lord will be with the good" (2 Chronicles 19:11). Don Moen wrote these lyrics based on Joshua 1:9 "Be strong and take courage. Do not fear or be dismayed. For the one who lives within you will be strong in you today." British actor Alistair Cooke said, "The great need for anyone in authority is courage."

Are the brave always courageous and the courageous always brave? Consider that most dictionaries do not distinguish a difference. However, a closer examination would infer that *courage* is an inner trait, while *bravery* is an outward act. Courage is a constant. Bravery a single act. Neither to be diminished.

What examples can you give of courage?

In what realms of life could you use a little more courage?

*To read more about this week's topics, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and/or study guides.
Keywords: "courage," "brave," "fearless." Take courage, and when or if the need arises, bravery will follow.*

A Glimpse at a Biblical Church

Our churches are filled with traditions. Traditions are for the most part a good thing. That is why they became traditions. However, too often we forget why we keep them and what their origin was. Which reminds me of the story of the Easter ham: A young mother was teaching her daughter to cook the traditional Easter ham. She instructed her how to spice the ham and to what temperature it is to be cooked. She then told her to cut the ends off of the ham before placing it in the pot. The daughter asked, "Why do you cut the ends off of the ham?" The mother replied, "Well, that's how my mother taught me to do it." So wondering why, the young mother called her mother and asked why. To which she replied, "That's how my mother taught me to bake the Easter ham." So the young mom decided to call her grandmother to ask why.... The grandmother replied, "So that it would fit into the pan." It is good to know why we do the things that we do.

2 Chronicles 28:1–
Ezra 6:22
Acts 19:21–23:15
Proverbs 21:6-20
Psalm 84:8–87:7

In Day 197, the morning principle was: "Praise and Worship Is Good," and the text was: "So they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshiped" (2 Chronicles 29:30). We are not to worship the worship or praise the praise. We are to glorify God with our voices and the abilities He has given us. Yes, it is to be a blessing, but the greater blessing is to be directed to our heavenly Father through His Son Christ Jesus, by the anointing of His merciful Spirit. Pastor and author Erwin Lutzer said, "If we haven't learned to be worshipers, it doesn't really matter how well we do anything else."

How important is praise and worship to God? How important is it to you? Consider: the longest book in the Bible, the Psalms, is dedicated to it.

Does music style make a difference in our ability to sing praises to God? Should it? Consider Psalm 150.

What is "a sacrifice of praise"? Consider: "Let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name" (Hebrews 13:15).

In Day 197, the evening theme was: "The Church Needs More Ushers," and the text was: "For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness" (Psalm 84:10). The word *doorkeeper* means "to stand at the threshold." It is to recognize the privilege and honor of being with God's people in a house of worship.

When attending the gathering of the believers, the place we call "church," who welcomes you? Whom do you welcome? Consider: "Greet the friends by name" (3 John 14).

How important are first impressions? Consider: James 2:1-6.

In Day 200, the evening theme was: "When Company Comes," and the text was: "And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly" (Acts 21:17). Dorothy C. Bass said in *Christianity Today* magazine, "In an era when many of us feel that time is our scarcest resource, hospitality falters.... 'In a fast-food culture,' a wise Benedictine monk observes, 'you have to remind yourself that some things cannot be done quickly. Hospitality takes time.'"

Is God hospitable? Consider: "In My Father's house are many mansions... I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:1-3).

Is your church hospitable? Consider: "Hospitality: The act or practice of receiving and entertaining strangers or guests without reward, or with kind and generous liberality" (Noah Webster's 1828 dictionary).

Are you hospitable? Consider: *“Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God”* (1 Peter 4:9-10).

In Day 199, the evening theme was: “Giving Is a Gift from God,” and the text was: *“And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’”* (Acts 20:35). A. W. Tozer, a contemporary and friend of C. S. Lewis, who called him a “twentieth-century prophet,” said, “I do not think I exaggerate when I say that some of us put our offering in the plate with a kind of triumphant bounce as much as to say, ‘There now, God will feel better!’...I am obliged to tell you that God does not need anything you have. He does not need a dime of your money. It is your own spiritual welfare at stake in such matters as these.... You have the right to keep what you have all to yourself—but it will rust and decay, and ultimately ruin you.”

Am I to tithe? Consider: *“Bring all the tithes into the storehouse...try Me now in this,’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it’* (Malachi 3:10). Likewise, consider for those who would contend that the tithe was a law issue and not a grace issue: *“This I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect”* (Galatians 3:17).

Am I to give offerings? Consider: *“Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you”* (Luke 6:38).

Am I to be a living sacrifice? Consider: *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service”* (Romans 12:1).

To read more about this week’s topics, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and/or study guides.
Keywords: “church,” “assembly,” “house of God,” “remember.” *“I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth”* (1 Timothy 3:15).

The Battleground of Prayer

I know of no greater realm than the realm of prayer. Take prayer out of the Bible and its power will be removed. Likewise, take prayer away from the Christian and all that is left is a powerless religious shell. Prayer is the battleground of the believer. It is the place of victory or defeat. If the battle is won on our knees, it will seldom have to be fought on our feet. The only thing remaining to do is walk in victory. Prayer is not easy, but it is powerful and the place of blessings. Prayer is not a preparation for work, but the work. Jesus did not pray in the Garden of Gethsemane for strength for the battle of Calvary; Gethsemane was the battle.

In Day 204, the morning principle was: “Fasting and Praying,” and the text was: “So we fasted and entreated our God for this, and He answered our prayer” (Ezra 8:23). Prayer and fasting are as hand-in-hand as faith and hope. The fasting aspect of prayer is not so much making a sacrifice to get God’s attention, but a means of God getting our attention.

“Fasting: the voluntary abstinence from food, as a religious mortification or humiliation; either total or partial abstinence from customary food, with a view to mortify the appetites, or to express grief and affliction on account of some calamity, or to deprecate an expected evil” (Noah Webster’s 1828 Dictionary). John Piper stated in his book *A Hunger for God*, “Christian fasting, at its root, is the hunger of a homesickness for God.”

What is “breakfast?” Isn’t the morning a great time to pray? Consider praying before breaking-the-fast. What an opportune time to pray. Your body is rested, cleansed from the toxins of yesterday. Your mind is not consumed with the events of a passing day. “O Lord; in the morning I will direct it to You, and I will look up” (Psalm 5:3).

What do you see the purpose of fasting and praying to be? Consider: “Is this not the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke?” (Isaiah 58:6).

Ezra 7:1–Nehemiah 11:36
Acts 23:16–28:31
Proverbs 21:21–22:2
Psalm 88:1–89:29

Is there a situation in your life to which God may call you to fast and pray? “This kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting” (Matthew 17:21).

In Day 204, the evening theme was: “Where the Battle Is Won,” and the text was: “O Lord, God of my salvation, I have cried out day and night before You” (Psalm 88:1). Again, Jesus did not pray in the garden of Gethsemane for strength for the battle of Calvary; Gethsemane was the battle. “Being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luke 22:44).

To pray is to ask with earnestness or zeal, as for a favor, or for something desirable; to entreat; to supplicate. “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God” (Philippians 4:6). Supplication is earnest prayer made in or accompanied by worship.

Does God pray? Consider John 17:6-20.

Are your prayers a monolog or dialog?

How do we pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:16)?

In Day 209, the evening theme was: “Through Life’s Storms,” and the text was: “Then, fearing lest we should run aground on the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern, and prayed for day to come” (Acts 27:29). When life is good, my prayers sadly are for the most part clichés, polite acknowledgments given to a far off God. However, in life’s storms, heartaches, and troubles, I am holding on to the hem of His garment, pleading with all prayer and supplication.

Alan E. Nelson said, “Suffering is not evidence of God’s absence, but of God’s presence, and it is in our experience of being broken that God does His surest and most characteristic salvation work. There is a way to accept, embrace, and deal with suffering that results in a better life, not a worse one, and more of the experience of God, not less. God is working out his salvation in our lives the way He has always

worked it out—at the place of brokenness, at the cross of Jesus, and at the very place where we take up our cross.”

Does God bring about the storms of life or calm them—or both? Consider: *“He commands and raise the stormy wind, which lifts up the waves of the sea. They mount up to the heavens, they go down again to the depths; their soul melts because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits end. Then they cry out to the Lord in their trouble, and He brings them out of their distresses. He calms the storm, so that its waves are still”* (Psalm 107:25-29).

Is God ever out of control? Do we ever take Him by surprise?

Do you trust Him in the midst of the storm?

*To read more about this week's topics, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and/or study guides.
Keywords: “pray(er),” “supplication.” You will find that there are most likely more references to prayer than any other topic.*

The Letter to the Romans

The magnificent letter to the Romans was written by the apostle Paul. There are countless commentaries and critiques written about it: when, where, and to whom it was written, etc. However, let us focus on its content and application—knowing that its truths are from everlasting to everlasting. They are as applicable today as they were when written, maybe more so. As we continue to read through the Bible as a whole, I encourage you to stop occasionally and read the individual letters as they were likewise meant to be read, “in their entirety.” They were letters.

“Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God... To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints” (Romans 1).

In Day 211, the evening theme was: “We Are Called to an Obedient Faith,” and the text was: *“Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name”* (Romans 1:5). The phrase “the grace of apostleship” means the establishment of God’s government (way) among believers through those whom He has appointed as designated authorities. A. W. Tozer, author of *The Pursuit of God*, said of this faith, “The Bible recognizes no faith that does not lead to obedience, nor does it recognize any obedience that does not spring from faith. The two are at opposite sides of the same coin.”

What pleases God? Consider: *“Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him”* (Hebrews 11:6).

Is grace dependent on faith? Can they be separated? Consider: *“By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast”* (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Can you be obedient aside from grace through faith? Consider a hindrance: *“I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among*

you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith” (Romans 12:3).

In Day 212, the evening theme was: “God Is Not Prejudiced,” and the text was: *“There is no partiality with God”* (Romans 2:11). Author Madeleine L’Engle wrote, “It seems that more than ever the compulsion today is to identify, to reduce someone to what is on the label. To identify is to control, to limit. To love is to call by name, and so open the wide gates of creativity.” Strong’s lexicon defines partiality as personal favoritism, “respect of the outward circumstances of man and not to their intrinsic merits.” The letter to the Romans was not written just to the first-century Christians, but to every epoch of believers.

Has the Word of God changed? Consider: Jesus said, *“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away”* (Matthew 24:35).

Will the sins that brought about the fall of the Roman Empire bring the fall of nations today? Consider: *“Do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?”* (Romans 2:3).

Has the love of God or the judgments of God changed? Consider: *“I am the Lord, I do not change”* (Malachi 3:6).

In Day 213, the evening theme was: “Our Pedigree,” and the text was: *“There is none righteous, no, not one.... For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Romans

READING

Nehemiah 12:1–Job 2:13
Romans 1:1–7:25
Proverbs 22:3–14
Psalm 89:30–91:13

3:10, 23). Our “pedigree” is our inherited nature, genealogy, besetting sin nature, inclination, intrinsic character, etc. Our natural pedigree is that of sin, but our supernatural inheritance is the righteousness found only in Christ Jesus.

Gospel singer Steven Curtis Chapman said, “In the gospel, we discover we are far worse off than we thought, and far more loved than we ever dreamed.”

Is the righteousness of God attainable aside from Christ? Consider what has become known as “The Roman’s Road”—Romans 3:10, 23; 6:23; 5:8; 10:9, 13.

Other than Christ, has there ever been anyone without sin? Romans 3:23.

How have you managed your sin problem?

In Day 216, the evening theme was: “What Keeps Me from Sin?” and the text was: “*Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!*” (Romans 6:15). “Sin: the voluntary departure of a moral agent from a known rule of rectitude or duty, prescribed by God; any voluntary transgression of the divine law, or violation of a divine command; a wicked act; iniquity. Sin is either a positive act in which a known divine law is violated, or it is the voluntary neglect to obey a positive divine command, or a rule of duty clearly implied in such command. Sin comprehends not action only, but neglect of known duty, all evil thoughts purposes, words and desires, whatever is contrary to God’s commands or law” (Webster’s 1828 Dictionary).

Does God accept any sin? Consider Revelation 21:8.

Do you accept any sin? Consider: “*Do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?*” (Romans 2:1-3).

What keeps you from sinning? Consider: “*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?*” (Romans 6:1-2).

To read more about this week’s topics, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and /or study guides. Search for any subject and read the references to Romans. The entire Bible is applicable forever. Nevertheless, there are certain books that seem to be more applicable for various times of history. Romans and the Gospel of John seem to be speaking to our time.



READING
Job 4:21-16:22
Romans 8:1-11:36
Proverbs 22:15-29
Psalm 91:14-94:23

The Proverbs of the Bible

There are 31 chapters in the book of Proverbs. Reading a chapter a day is a very good practice to keep one sharp in the seeking of wisdom and the gaining of understanding. A proverb by definition is a pithy and memorable saying—eternal maxims, applicable to everyday life. Many of the parables of Jesus were proverbs, as are many of the most memorable verses of Scripture. They are “A word fitly spoken...like apples of gold in settings of silver” (Proverbs 25:11). There are more devotions and study guides on the Proverbs than any other book of the Bible on the discoverthebible.com website. Let’s look at three of them from the previous week’s readings that may be challenging in our day.

In Day 218, the morning principle was: “God Hasn’t Changed His Mind,” and the text was: *“Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him”* (Proverbs 22:15). This proverb is not only unpopular in our day, it is, in some states, illegal. Nevertheless, when properly applied it bears great life-enhancing fruit.

The biblical “rod of correction” was not the hand of correction, but the rod (paddle) of correction. It is to be an implement of correction to impart pain (sting), but not physical injury. My mom used a short wooden spoon. It may have left a temporary red mark on my bottom, but not a bruise. It hurt enough to cause me not to disobey her good directions (it also made some very good spaghetti sauce). It is to strengthen and restore, not condemn or destroy. It is not wrathful vengeance, but caring correction. It is only to be applied for the betterment of the child. There may need to be a bit more study needed than what we cover here.

Do you here agree with God and His Word? Consider: *“He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly [early]”* (Proverbs 13:24).

What is “the rod of correction?” Consider: If a child is corrected with a spoken word, does he or she need the rod (paddle)?

What is the purpose of “the rod of correction?” Consider: *“The goodness of God leads you to repentance”* (Romans 2:4).

When and how is it to be used? Consider: *“Discipline your son, for in that there is hope”* (Proverbs 19:18 NIV).

In Day 223, the morning principle was: “Surety Is Bad Debt,” and the text was: *“Do not be one of those who shakes hands in a pledge, one of those who is surety for debts; if you have nothing with which to pay”* (Proverbs 22:26-27). In context with our verse, *surety* is a pledge or formal promise made to secure against loss, damage, or default. It is a contract (covenant), whether verbal or written, making one responsible for another, especially one who assumes responsibilities or debts in the event of default.

Is God interested in our finances? Consider that in the Bible “money” is spoken of more than heaven and hell. Solomon said, *“Money answers everything”* (Ecclesiastes 10:19).

Is there a more measurable area of stewardship than money? Consider: *“It is required in stewards that one be found faithful”* (1 Corinthians 4:2).

Have you ever cosigned for the debt of another or has anyone ever cosigned for you? If so, what has been the result? Consider: If we cosign for another’s debt, we are 100% responsible for the debt. Therefore if you are not willing to take responsibility for the debt without remorse if not paid, don’t. *“He who is surety for a stranger will suffer, but one who hates being surety is secure”* (Proverbs 11:15).

In Day 219, the morning principle was: “Take from the Rich and Give to the Poor,” and the text was: *“He who oppresses the poor to increase his riches, and he who gives to the rich, will surely come to poverty”* (Proverbs 22:16). One of the first messages that I preached was titled, “Robin Hood Is Still a Crook.” Oh, the foolishness of youth. Another message was titled, “If you want to go 55, get out of the fast lane.” Anyway, lets look at the Proverb.

John D. Rockefeller’s three simple rules for anyone who wants to become rich:

1. Go to work early.
2. Stay at work late.
3. Strike oil.

To what are we entitled from God and/or man? Consider: *“He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God”* (Micah 6:8).

Was Robin Hood a crook? Consider carefully: *“You shall not show partiality to a poor man in his dispute”* (Exodus 23:3).

Shall we not take from the rich and give to the poor? Consider: Should we not take their wisdom and counsel; and, in turn, give godly hope and guidance?

To read more about this week’s topics, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and /or study guides for any subject and read the references in Proverbs. The entire Bible is applicable forever. Nevertheless there are certain books that seem to be more applicable for everyday life. Proverbs is one of those books.

Practical Christianity

Too often, we practice a Sunday kind of Christianity. We do the church thing fairly well, but the life thing leaves a bit to be desired. We have a very good religion, but sometimes a lack of application. To me, the book of Romans is the practical Christian handbook for everyday life. Now it is not to be one or the other, but both. Yes, we need to know theology and doctrine. We likewise are to know how to live and have a good life's testimony.

In Day 225, the evening theme was: "God's Formulas Work," and the text was: "*Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another*" (Romans 12:10). In the Bible, there is an upward progression to righteousness and a downward regression to sin. That is, we are either growing or waning; there are no lengthy plateaus in God's kingdom. To say it another way, we are either growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ or we are in a state of backsliding (2 Peter 3:18; Proverbs 14:14). Therefore, if we are not practicing the simplicity of Romans 12:10, are we not at best somewhat relapsing?

How does our text define the very character of God? Consider: "*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another*" (John 13:34).

Do we not desire these characteristics from others? Consider the definition of *affectionate*: "that which is not always inherent to men. The purposeful willingness to comfort and console, hold and gently embrace."

How are we to give preference to one another? Consider the previous verse (Romans 12:9): "*Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.*"

Job 17:1-30:31
Romans 12:1-
1 Corinthians 1:31
Proverbs 23:1-16
Psalm 95:1-97:12

In Day 226, the evening theme was: "Double Debt," and the text was: "*Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law*" (Romans 13:8). Two forms of debt are to be avoided. The first is obvious—not having the ability to repay another. We are not to be financially or physically indebted to others. If we meet the obligation of an agreement, we are not in debt. The second form of debt is not being indebted against our will. That is bondage. Let this be according to your faith.

In *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis said, "Do not waste your time bothering whether you 'love' your neighbor; act as if you did. As soon as we do this, we find one of the great secrets. When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love him. If you injure someone you dislike, you will find yourself disliking him more. If you do him a good turn, you will find yourself disliking him less."

Are we indebted to God? Carefully consider, Romans 6:23.

To whom are you indebted? Consider and discuss: If I am meeting the obligation of a loan, am I in debt? If I pay my taxes when due, am I in debt? If I pay for my utilities after I use them, am I in debt? A simple definition of debt is: "Something owed."

Is anyone indebted to you; and if so, should you be willing to release them of that debt? Consider: "*If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great*" (Luke 6:34-35).

In Day 230, the evening theme was: "A Sure Foundation," and the text was: "*Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel... according to the revelation of the mystery... according to the commandment... for obedience to the faith*" (Romans 16:25-26). Every great building requires a solid foundation. Likewise, our lives must be built on solid ground. A foundation is that which upholds any structure, the bases for any belief

system in of all the sciences, philosophies and life. Here are three truths that comprise the foundation upon which we should stand: God as Creator, Christ as Savior, and the Bible as the eternal Word of Life.

NBA player Mark Price said, “The foundation of our marriage is our commitment to Christ. People may make fun of us or call us old fashioned, but we won’t apologize for our beliefs or our lifestyle because we feel like the only person we have to please is God.”

Has not Christ laid the foundation of not only the earth but also the universe? Consider: “*For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ*” (1 Corinthians 3:11).

Is there any greater foundation on the earth than the Word of God? Consider: “*Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit*” (Ephesians 2:19-22).

On what foundation are you building your life? Consider: “*If anyone builds on this foundation...each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it*” (1 Corinthians 3:12-13).

*To read more about this week’s topics, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and/or study guides.
Keywords: “practical,” “prudence,” “conduct,” etc. Use these devotions and study guides for not only personal devotions, but everyday applications for life. Remember, the Bible is the Manufacturer’s Handbook.*



READING

Job 31:1–Ecclesiastes 2:26
1 Corinthians 2:1–7:40
Proverbs 23:17–24:2
Psalm 98:1–102:11

The Word of God “IS” the Power of God

Many Christians, when asked, “What is the power of God?” often answer, “the Holy Spirit,” referencing Acts 1:8, “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.” Indisputably, we agree that God is all powerful: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, the apostle Luke tells us in the Acts of the Apostles that we will receive power “when” the Holy Spirit comes upon us. Note, he did not say that we would receive the power of the Holy Spirit, but that the living Holy Spirit of God equips us to receive and understand what that power is. Simply stated, the power of God is His Word (the Bible). Therefore, from creation to the end of the age, it is and will be the Word of God that empowers His people.

In Day 232, the evening theme was: “The Power of God,” and the text was: “Your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God” (1 Corinthians 2:5). Without the power of God (His Word), our morality, understanding, and ways will at best be an arbitrary meandering through life. There will be no foundation, order, or peace in our lives.

How does God manifest His power? Consider: power is the ability to move, create, change, influence, and make a difference. Yet power can be latent (present but not evident or active). “*The Lord merely spoke, and the heavens were created. He breathed the word, and all the stars were born*” (Psalm 33 NLT).

Does He delegate His power to His children? Consider the words of the apostle Paul to the church in Rome: “*What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called*” (Romans 9:22-24).

Is the power of God available to you and me? Consider: “*I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes*” (Romans 1:16). Therefore, the power of God is the Word of God. Should we not know it?

In Day 234, the morning principle was: “Investing in the Truth,” and the text was: “*Buy the truth, and do not sell it, also wisdom and instruction and understanding*” (Proverbs 23:23). Pilate asked Jesus, “*What is truth?*” (John 18:38). Jesus said of Himself, “*I am the...truth*” (John 14:6). The apostle John begins his Gospel, “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God*” (John 1:1-2). We know that that Word was and is Jesus: “*The Word became flesh and dwelt among us*” (John 1:14).

“Truth”: in a word, “Christ.” Webster’s 1828 dictionary defines it as “conformity to fact or reality; exact accordance with that which is, or has been, or shall be. The truth of history constitutes its whole value. We rely on the truth of the scriptural prophecies.”

St. Augustine said, “When regard for truth has been broken down or even slightly weakened, all things will remain doubtful.”

Where can truth be found? Where is its greatest source? Consider: Jesus said, “*For this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice*” (John 18:37).

How can the truth be sold? Consider: “*The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field*” (Matthew 13:44).

How much “truth stock” do you hold; that is, how much Bible is in your life’s portfolio? Consider: “*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path*” (Psalm 119:105).

In Day 235, the morning principle was: “Words Without Knowledge,” and the text was: “Then the Lord answered Job...and said: “Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge?” (Job 38:1-2). Have you ever noticed that those who know the least more than often know it the loudest, as if it is said loudly enough it makes it truer? Would you agree as a Christians that “words without knowledge” would be words void of truth—mainly words void the truth of the Word of God?

John Milton wrote in *Of Education*, “The end then of learning is to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love Him, to imitate Him, to be like Him as we may the nearest, by possessing our souls of true virtue, which, being united to the heavenly grace of faith, makes up the highest perfection.”

“Knowledge: a clear and certain perception of that which exists, or of truth and fact; the perception of the connection and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy of our ideas. We can have no knowledge of that which does not exist. God has a perfect knowledge of all his works. Human knowledge is very limited, and is mostly gained by observation and experience” (Webster’s 1828 *American Dictionary of the English Language*).

Is it possible to have great Bible knowledge and be wrong? Consider: “The Lord answered Job...and said: ‘Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me’” (Job 40:4-7).

What is the source of true knowledge? Where does it align with wisdom and understanding? Of these three, which is the greatest? Consider: “Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom, and in all your getting, get understanding” (Proverbs 4:7).

Why is it that knowledge puffs up? Consider: “We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know. But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him” (1 Corinthians 8:1-3).

To read more about this week’s topics, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and/or study guides. Keywords: “word,” “truth,” “word of God,” etc. You may wish to acquire some good apologetics reading, such as *Defending Your Faith* by R. C. Sproul and *Mere Christianity* by C. S. Lewis (just about anything by Lewis is excellent).

Ecclesiastes and the Wisdom of Solomon

There are several references to “the Wisdom of Solomon” in the Scriptures. There is even an Apocryphal book titled “The Wisdom of Solomon.” Likewise, there are two references in the New Testament made by Jesus Himself to his wisdom. He amazed the Queen of Sheba: “When the queen of Sheba had seen all the wisdom of Solomon...there was no more spirit in her” (1 Kings 10:1-9). The theme of Ecclesiastes is man’s search for meaning in life. The Preacher, as he is called, experienced all that life has to offer and found that it did not satisfy. He is resolved that God alone satisfies, and He is trustworthy. All of his wisdom is summed up one verse: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all” (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

READING

Ecclesiastes 3:1–Song of Solomon 4:16
1 Corinthians 8:1–12:31
Proverbs 24:3-18
Psalm 102.12–104:23

In Day 239, the morning principle was: “How Is Work?” and the text was: *“What profit has the worker from that in which he labors?”* (Ecclesiastes 3:9). Solomon calls it *“vanity of vanities”* (verse 2). Work is the very thing God calls the stuff He does. By simple definition, *work* is the activity that we do for the accomplishment of a purpose.

George MacDonald stated, “No amount of wealth sets one free from the obligation to work—in a world the God of which is ever working. He who works not has not yet discovered what God made him for, and is a false note in the orchestra of the universe.”

Scripturally, what is the purpose of work? Is it merely a curse? Consider: *“Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life.... In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground”* (Genesis 3:17-19).

How do you view the work that you are required to do? Consider: *“Aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business...work with your own hands...that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing”* (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12).

For whom do you work? Consider: *“Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ”* (Colossians 3:23-24).

In Day 240, the morning principle was: “The Struggle with Riches and Wealth,” and the text was: *“As for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth..., this is the gift of God”* (Ecclesiastes 5:19). Riches and wealth are neither good nor evil. They are simply commodities for life. How they are used is what brings joy or chaos. Riches are for the most part related to financial gain; wealth, on the other hand, to happiness and security.

Founding Father Patrick Henry, in his last will and testament, wrote: “I have now disposed of all my property to my family. There is one thing more I wish I could give them and that is faith in Jesus Christ. If they had that and I had not given them one shilling, they would have been rich; and if they had not that, and I had given them all the world, they would be poor indeed.”

From where do riches and poverty come? Consider: *“The Lord makes poor and makes rich; He brings low and lifts up”* (1 Samuel 2:7).

If you had/have a choice, which would you choose? Consider: *“Give me neither poverty nor riches—feed me with the food allotted to me; lest I be full and deny You, and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’ Or lest I be poor and steal, and profane the name of my God”* (Proverbs 30:7-9).

Do you see your life as a gift of God? Consider: *“When God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work—this is a gift of God”* (Ecclesiastes 5:19 NIV). Likewise, consider: *“Every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor—it is the gift of God”* (Ecclesiastes 3:13). And consider: *“I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content”* (Philippians 4:10-13).

In Day 241, the morning principle was: “Responding to Words of Emotion,” and the text was: *“Also do not take to heart everything people say, lest you hear your servant cursing you”* (Ecclesiastes 7:21). “Emotions: the anxiety and or reflex of a surprised mind. A place in the mind where decisions are not to be made. Emotions are not to be trusted, but tested by time and reason, the Word of God, and the leading of the Holy Spirit.”

Warren Wiersbe said, “Oliver Cromwell, who took the British throne away from Charles I and established the Commonwealth, said to a friend, ‘Do not trust to the cheering, for those persons would shout as much if you and I were going to be hanged.’”

Does God ever deal with us emotionally? Consider, five times in the Scriptures we find Jesus being moved with compassion (Matthew 9:36; 14:14; 18:27; Mark 1:41; 6:34).

Are not emotions sometimes more real than reality? Consider: God is aware of our needs and our emotions. He understands when no one else does. He cares when all are uncaring. *“His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness”* (Lamentations 3:22-23).

How do you respond to the emotions of others? How should you respond? Consider: *“Comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all”* (1 Thessalonians 5:14-15).

To read more about this week's topics, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and/or study guides. Keywords: “wisdom” and “patience.” Study Solomon. Reread the short book of Ecclesiastes.

The Attributes of Biblical Love

We often confuse many things for love: infatuation, admiration, passion, lust, and a myriad of other emotions. We use terms such as falling in love, heartfelt love, true love, etc. We attempt to express love with flowery words and facades. We say such things as “I love you with all of my heart.” We demand expressions of love, such as valentines, flowers, and gifts. We treat love as if it were caught like a mystical disease. We desire a romanticized love instead of a rightfully applied love. Love is not something we fall into, but something that we grow into. Of the previous week’s readings, let’s focus on 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 NIV:

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.”

Consider and discuss these attributes of true Biblical love.

Love is:

Patient	Keeps no record of wrongs
Kind	Does not delight in evil
Does not envy	Rejoices with the truth
Does not boast	Always protects
Is not proud	Always trusts
Is not rude	Always hopes
Is not self-seeking	Always preserves
Is not easily angered	Never fails

Also consider: “*God is love*” (1 John 4:8, 16). If God is love, we can say, “God is patient, kind...never fails, etc.” Philippians 2:5 likewise tells us that our attitudes should be the same as those of Christ Jesus. Therefore, we are to place our names here and say “ IS patient, kind... never fails.”

*To read more about this week’s topics, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and/or study guides for these attributes. I highly recommend reading C. S. Lewis’s *The Four Loves*. His talks were originally broadcast on BBC radio and the audio of the *Four Love* talks are still available.*

READING

Song of Solomon 5:1–
Isaiah 10:34
1 Corinthians 13:1–
2 Corinthians 1:24
Proverbs 24:19–25:1
Psalm 104:24–106:5

A Greater Hope

The apostle Paul said to the church at Corinth, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable" (1 Corinthians 15:19). Basically, I believe he is saying that if all of our hope as Christians is for a better life on earth, "what a pity." Speaking to the church at Corinth, quoting the prophet Isaiah, he says, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Corinthians 2:9, most likely quoting the Septuagint of Isaiah 64:4). Again he says to the church in Rome, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

In *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis said wrote: "God's work in our lives can be painful, but His ultimate goal is to transform us into something better. Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on. You knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently He starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of—throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage, but He is building up a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself."

In Day 254, the evening theme was: "We Have a Different Hope," and the text was: *"Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech" (2 Corinthians 3:12)*. G. K. Chesterton said, "Hope means hoping when things are hopeless, or it is no virtue at all. As long as matters are really hopeful, hope is mere flattery or platitude; it is only when everything is hopeless that hope begins to be a strength."

"Hope" is one of three Christian virtues (faith, hope, and love, 1 Corinthians 13:13). Hope is expecting good from God by faith.

Of the three Christian virtues, knowing that the greatest is love, where do you place hope? Consider: *"Hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Romans 5:5)*.

Can you imagine life without hope? Consider the story in Acts 27:19-22: *"All hope that we would be saved was finally given up."*

In whom and for what do you hope? Consider: *"If I have made gold my hope...I would have denied God who is above" (Job 31:24-28)*.

In Day 255, the evening theme was: "I Will Not Lose Heart," and the text was: *"We do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day" (2 Corinthians 4:16)*. To lose heart is simply to lose hope, to give up, to quit. *"Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!" (Ezekiel 37:11.)*

What should we do when we begin to lose heart? Consider: *"Men always ought to pray and not lose heart" (Luke 18:1)*.

What should we realize when we begin to lose heart? Consider: *"We have received mercy, we do not lose heart" (2 Corinthians 4:1)*.

What shall we gain, if we do not lose heart? Consider: *"Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart" (Galatians 6:9)*.

In Day 256, the evening theme was: "We Cannot Imagine," and the text was: *"For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Corinthians 5:1)*.



READING

Isaiah 11:1-24:23

2 Corinthians 2:1-8:24

Proverbs 25:3-17

Psalms 106:6-107:22

“I can only imagine what it will be like, when I walk by Your side...
I can only imagine, what my eyes will see, when Your face is before me!
I can only imagine. I can only imagine.
I can only imagine, when that day comes, when I find myself standing in the Son!
I can only imagine, when all I will do, is forever, forever worship You!
I can only imagine! I can only imagine!
Surrounded by Your glory, what will my heart feel?
Will I dance for you, Jesus? Or in awe of You, be still?
Will I stand in Your presence, or to my knees will I fall?
Will I sing ‘Hallelujah!’? Will I be able to speak at all?
I can only imagine! I can only imagine!”

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Does heaven have or need houses? Consider: *“In My Father’s house are many mansions”*
(John 14:2).

What do you think heaven will be like? Consider: *“As it is written: ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.’ But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit”* (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Will the greater hope have old memories? *“Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind”* (Isaiah 65:17).

To read more about this week’s topics, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and /or study guides.
Keywords: “hope,” “heaven,” “lose heart,” “imagine.”

The Gift of God

The grace of God that brings salvation is not earned and cannot be purchased. If it were, it would not be a gift, it would be a loan. But it is a gift, and the gift of God is irrevocable (Romans 11:28). We are not saved on credit. We have been redeemed, and the payment was made in full. There are no foreclosures in God's Kingdom. Therefore there is no greater thing for us to do than to be thankful for His indescribable gift. We are thankful when we are filled with the joy of His presence. We demonstrate our thankfulness by walking in obedience to His Word and leading of His Spirit. There is no room for doubts, fears, or worldly sorrows. When these things haunt you, think about His goodness, His grace, and His mercy. Think about His promises, His love, and His kindness. Think about His indescribable gift.

READING

Isaiah 25:1-38:22

2 Corinthians 9:1-

Galatians 1:24

Proverbs 25:18-26:1

Psalms 107:23-109:20

In Day 260, the morning principle was: "Righteousness Can Only Be Imparted," and the text was: "Let grace be shown to the wicked, yet he will not learn righteousness..." (Isaiah 26:10). When we were without Christ, all of us were wicked. The Scripture are clear: "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10). "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Therefore, redeeming righteousness cannot be learned; it can only be imparted. It is for this reason that many theologians and church leaders have historically twisted and manipulated the goodness of God. They have a self-learned righteousness (self-righteousness) and not the righteousness that comes through Christ and Christ alone.

Thomas Jefferson said, "Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just."

Can anyone ever attain righteousness without coming to the saving knowledge of Christ? Consider Romans 3:10.

Have you not known very good, honest people of high integrity?

Consider: "All our righteousnesses (plural) are like filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6).

As Christians, are we righteous because of what we do or because of who we are in Christ? Consider: "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

In Day 260, the evening theme was: "Think about His Indescribable Gift," and the text was: "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" (2 Corinthians 9:15). First Corinthians 2:9 defines indescribable so very well: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." If you have never heard S. M. Lockridge's message, "That's My King," listen to www.youtube.com/watch?v=yzqTFNfeDnE.

Thomas A. Kempis (1379-1471), author of *The Imitation of Christ*, said, "A wise lover values not so much the gift of the lover as the love of the giver."

Are the gifts of God revocable? Consider Romans 11:29.

Are gifts earned? Consider Romans 5:15-18.

Have you received the indescribable gift? "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

In Day 266, the evening theme was: "Which Way Are You Turning?" and the text was: "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel" (Galatians 1:6). The apostle goes on to say, "You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?" (Galatians 5:7). He likewise warns the church at Ephesus, "We should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting"

(Ephesians 4:14). It began in the garden: *“The serpent deceived me, and I ate”* (Genesis 3:13). We are deceived into self-righteousness, thus turning away from the gift of righteousness.

Next to pride, what caused Lucifer’s fall? *“And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day”* (Jude 6).

Why do some turn away from the love of God? Consider: *“The turning away of the simple will slay them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them”* (Proverbs 1:32).

How do some turn away from the love of God? Consider: *“How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning...”* (Isaiah 14:12-15).

To read more about this week’s topics, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and/or study guides for these attributes. This week, as you read the book of Galatians, watch for God’s great grace, imparted righteousness, and tender mercy.

Knowing Who and Where We Are in Christ

“The Lord God called to Adam and said to him, ‘Where are you?’ So he said, ‘I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid’” (Genesis 3:9-10). If God asks, “Where are you?” inevitably we are not where we are supposed to be. When we understand who we are in Christ, we will know where we are with Him—that is, we will know where we stand and that He loves us. This is our hope. This is our faith. “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (1 Corinthians 13:12-13). We are the beloved.

READING

Isaiah 39:1–52:15

Galatians 2:1–

Ephesians 2:22

Proverbs 26:2-16

Psalms 109:21–112:10

In Day 269, the evening theme was: “Abba, Father,” and the text was: “*Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, ‘Abba, Father!’*” (Galatians 4:6). I was thirteen years old when my father died in an airplane crash, and forty-seven when my stepfather unexpectedly died. Each time, my world crumbled. These godly men were my heroes. Nevertheless, I recovered—not by the sheer passing of time, but by the grace and mercy of my heavenly Father. I wasn’t orphaned; I was adopted. I wasn’t forsaken; I was graced.

“Abba: the confident and tender reference of a loving, blessed child for his or her father.”

Of all the expressions of love God could show, why has He chosen that of a Father? Spend a little time here and consider how the deceiver has diminished the world’s view of fathers in our day.

How do you see yourself in your relationship to God? Does it not depend on how we see or understand the Fatherhood of God?

Are you an obedient, loving son or daughter? Can we be so toward our heavenly Father if we fail to honor our earthly fathers? Consider the most repeated of the commandments, “*Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise: that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth*” (Ephesians 6:2-3).

In Day 270, the evening theme was: “There Was a Time,” and the text was: “*You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?*” (Galatians 5:7). Was there a time where you were closer to the Lord than you are now? Was there a time when you prayed more, read your Bible more, and were more involved in the fellowship of your church family? If so, what happened?

Joseph Stowell, president of Moody Bible Institute, wrote *Fan the Flame* and said, “The Greeks had a race in their Olympic games that was unique. The winner was not the runner who finished first. It was the runner who finished with his torch still lit.”

“Race.” As is life, a race is an event with a beginning and an ending. Only those who finish get the crown.

Is the race of the Christian life a sprint or a marathon? Consider: “*Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith*” (Hebrews 12:1-2).

Are you in the race? Consider: “*Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it*” (1 Corinthians 9:24).

Did you once run well, but now are on the sidelines? Consider: “*Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty*” (1 Corinthians 9:24-26).

In Day 273, the evening theme was: “The Full Counsel of God’s Word,” and the text was: *“By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them”* (Ephesians 2:8-10). Here is not only who we are in Christ, but also how we stand in Christ.

Singer Steven Curtis Chapman and his pastor Scotty Smith wrote in *Speechless: Living in Awe of God’s Disruptive Grace*, “In the gospel, we discover we are far worse off than we thought, and far more loved than we ever dreamed.”

Does God bless the works of man? Consider the words of Jesus when He said, *“Work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work”* (John 9:4).

Can we work our way to heaven? Consider: *“A man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ”* (Galatians 2:16).

Are we saved for good works, or do our works save us? Consider God’s friend Abraham, *“If Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt”* (Romans 4:1-4).

To read more about this week’s topics, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and/or study guides.

Keywords: “sons,” “daughters,” and “God the Father,” “race,” “run,” etc.

Isaiah 53: The Archeological Text That Silenced the Critics

These twelve verses of Scripture are considered by the majority of biblical scholars to be the most important of the Messianic text. Here we have the Gospel in one chapter. There has not been a more studied ancient manuscript. Without doubt, its accuracy is impeccable. We would be amiss if we did not stop and ponder this scriptural gem. Written 500 years before the birth of Christ, it depicts His mission and suffering exquisitely. Please read the entire chapter and discuss.

Let's look at each verse and some of the New Testament fulfillment of the prophecy:

READING

Isaiah 53:1-66:24

Ephesians 3:1-

Philippians 2:30

Proverbs 26:17-28

Psalms 113:1-116:4

Verse 1. *Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? Consider: "Although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him, that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke: 'Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?'"* (John 12:37-38).

Verse 2. *For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. Consider: "Pilate said to them, 'Behold the Man!'"* (John 19:5).

Verse 3. *He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Consider: "They spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head. And when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified"* (Matthew 27:30-31).

Verse 4. *Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. Consider: "Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed"* (1 Peter 2:24).

Verse 5. *But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. Consider: "Who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification"* (Romans 4:25).

Verse 6. *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. Consider: "Then they all forsook Him and fled"* (Mark 14:50).

Verse 7. *He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth. Consider: "He kept silent and answered nothing"* (Mark 14:61).

Verse 8. *He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken. Consider: "Having arrested Him, they led Him and brought Him into the high priest's house"* (Luke 22:54).

Verse 9. *And they made His grave with the wicked—but with the rich at His death, because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth. Consider: "Joseph of Arimathea... asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him permission.... Then they took the body of Jesus... there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid"* (John 19:38-42).

Verse 10. *Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. Consider: "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him"* (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Verse 11. *He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities. Consider: "He whom God raised up saw no corruption. Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins"* (Acts 13:37-38).

Verse 12. *Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. Consider: "To each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore He says, 'When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men'"* (Ephesians 4:7-8).

To read more about this week's topic, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and/or study guides for references to Isaiah chapter 53. For an in-depth study of the significance of the text, do a little research about the Great Isaiah scroll of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Tomorrow

*Jesus said, "Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble" (Matthew 6:31-34). Tomorrow is filled with deadlines and dreams, hopes and fears. There is little more fickle in life than tomorrow. Little did we know that on the morning of Tuesday, September 11, 2001, how life would change. Here is what we can know for certain about tomorrow—it will not take God by surprise. He will not be off-guard. Maybe tomorrow we will awaken and find the clouds rolled back like a scroll (Revelation 6:14). Corrie ten Boom (1892–1983), author of *The Hiding Place*, said "Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God."*

In Day 281, the morning principle was: "Have Faith in God for Tomorrow," and the text was: "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth" (Proverbs 27:1). Have you ever noticed how many people make promises about tomorrow, and that tomorrow never turns into today? Tomorrow solves all procrastinations.

"Tomorrow." A day that has no guarantee. It is unseen and unknown. Its forecast can change and its coming is not promised.

Does God want us to ignore tomorrow? Consider: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:19-21).

What is the difference in boasting about tomorrow and planning for it? Consider: "Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit'; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.

Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.' But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil" (James 4:13-16).

In Day 281, the evening theme was: "I Press On," and the text was: "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on" (Philippians 3:12). The greatest way to prepare for tomorrow is to press on today. To do so, we must leave yesterday. Too many lives are vague nostalgic memories of yesterdays. "Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14).

Can we press on to perfection in this life? Consider: "To the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect" (Hebrews 12:23).

Are we called to press on to a perfect life? Consider: "You shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).

How do you press on? Consider the phrase "I press on," "I am not discouraged, but encouraged," "I keep up the chase."

In Day 282, the evening theme was: "What Do You Think?" and the text was: "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, . . . noble, . . . just, . . . pure, . . . lovely, . . . of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things" (Philippians 4:8). I know of no better way to prepare for not only today, but also tomorrow. The Scripture tells us, as we think in our hearts, so are we (Proverbs 23:7).

"Meditate: to dwell on any thing in thought; to contemplate; to study; to turn or revolve any subject in the mind; appropriately but not exclusively used of pious contemplation, or a consideration of the great truths of religion" (Noah Webster's 1828 Dictionary).

READING

Jeremiah 1:1–14:22
Philippians 3:1–
1 Thessalonians 1:10
Proverbs 27:1-9
Psalm 116:5–118:20

What do you believe God's thoughts are for your tomorrow? Consider His thought for His people: *"I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope"* (Jeremiah 29:11).

Do we have control of how and what we think? Consider: If our thoughts are based on love, *"love thinks no evil"* (1 Corinthians 13:4-5).

How do you control your thoughts, especially with regard to tomorrow?

To read more about this week's topic, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and/or study guides for words and their derivatives. Keywords: "tomorrow," "think." Consider comparing the attributes of love found in 1 Corinthians 13 and those things we are directed to think upon in Philippians 4.



READING

Jeremiah 15:1-28:17
 1 Thessalonians 2:1-
 2 Thessalonians 3:18
 Proverbs 27:10-18
 Psalm 118:21-119:40

Gifts to the Church

God has given gifts to mankind. He has gifted His children, physically and spiritually. Much of the focus in the church has been on the spiritual gifts given to individuals. The apostle Paul instructs us about them in 1 Corinthians 12, "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant..." These are gifts in the church, and they are not to be denied. However, there are also gifts to the church. Let's review those gifts given to the church as recorded Ephesians 4:11-16:

"He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love."

Apostle: one sent forth with power for the establishment of the government of God in a local New Testament church.

Prophet: one who speaks forth the mind of God. When a prophet speaks, sin is inevitably revealed.

Evangelist: one who wins/instructs others to the saving knowledge of Christ.

Pastor/teacher (synonyms of office: bishop, overseer, elder): an under-shepherd who oversees the government of the church, the welfare of the flock, and instruction in righteousness and holiness.

In Day 288, the morning principle was: "Adjusting the Heart," and the text was: *"Behold, each one follows the dictates of his own evil heart, so that no one listens to Me"* (Jeremiah 16:12). Before we can receive the gifts to the body of Christ, the heart must be ready and willing.

Joseph Stowell wrote in *Fan the Flame*, "Heart is used in Scripture as the most comprehensive term for the authentic person. It is the part of our being where we desire, deliberate, and decide. It has been described as 'the place of conscious and decisive spiritual activity,' 'the comprehensive term for a person as a whole; his feelings, desires, passions, thought, understanding and will,' and 'the center of a person.' 'The place to which God turns.'"

Does the mind have to be converted before the heart can be receptive? Consider: *"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 2:5).

What is an evil heart? Consider that the natural state of man is a heart of unbelief (Hebrews 3:12). An evil heart is therefore a hard heart.

Is unity of heart a necessity for the church of Jesus Christ to flourish? Consider: *"I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh"* (Ezekiel 11:19).

In Day 288, the evening theme was: "Gentle Strength," and the text was: *"But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children"* (1 Thessalonians 2:7). Is this not to be the way of shepherds? Here we have an analogy of the shepherd and the sheep. The good shepherd will inevitably be gentle to the sheep, but not so toward the goats. *"He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left"* (Matthew 25:32-33).

"Gentleness: the drive of the meek—which is strength under control, a gentleman, or a gentlewoman."

Is not God truly a gentle shepherd? Consider: *"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls"* (Matthew 11:29).

Is not gentleness a godly trait? Consider: *“Let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God”* (1 Peter 3:4).

Would you consider yourself to be gentle? Remember, *“By long forbearance a ruler is persuaded, and a gentle tongue breaks a bone”* (Proverbs 25:15).

In Day 293, the morning principle was: “Honoring God’s Man,” and the text was: *“This is the twenty-third year in which the word of the Lord has come to me;...but you have not listened”* (Jeremiah 25:3). There was a time when pastors were referred to as “Reverend” and were often the most honored man in the community. Even though the man may change, the office remains the same.

St. Augustine (354–430) said, “For you, I am Bishop, but with you, I am a Christian. The first is an office accepted, the second a grace received; one a danger, the other safety. If then I am gladder by far to be redeemed with you than I am to be placed over you, I shall, as the Lord commanded, be more completely your servant.”

How does God’s man become God’s man? Consider: *“You are the body of Christ, and members individually. And God has appointed these in the church...”* (1 Corinthians 12:27-28).

What is the responsibility of God’s man? Consider: *“Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood”* (Acts 20:25). *“My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment”* (James 3:1).

Is there a man of God in your life that you honor? Consider: *“Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you”* (Hebrews 13:17).

To read more about this week’s topic, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and/or study guides.
Keywords: “church,” “the Way,” “body of Christ,” “apostles,” “prophets,” “evangelists,” “pastors,” and “teachers.”

Hearing vs. Listening

We are bombarded with sounds. Noise is constant. True silence is deafening. Therefore there is a great difference in hearing and listening. Hearing is involuntary (unless hearing impaired); it just happens. Listening, on the other hand, requires a voluntary effort of concentration and processing. We can and do hear or listen with both our ears and eyes. For example, with regard to listening with your eyes: have you ever been reading and find that you have read several paragraphs or even chapters and have no idea of what you read? That is hearing with your eyes and not listening. There is likewise spiritual hearing and listening. It is a bit more complex to define. Reasoning often interferes with the decrement of hearing and listening to what the Spirit is saying.

READING

Jeremiah 29:1–42:22

1 Timothy 1:1–

2 Timothy 2:18

Proverbs 27:19–28:2

Psalms 119:41-96

In Day 295, the morning principle was: “The Good Listener,” and the text was: “*Then you will call upon Me and go pray to Me, and I will listen to you*” (Jeremiah 29:12). We speak; God hears and listens—God speaks; we hear, but do we listen? Once again, “hearing” is the perception of sound. “Listening” is the giving of attention to what we hear, attempting to understand, and if agreed, obey.

Does God hear our prayers too or was He speaking only to Jeremiah? Jesus said: “*Ask, and it will be given to you*” (Matthew 7:7).

Do you truly believe that He hears your prayers? Jesus likewise said: “*Whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive*” (Matthew 21:22).

Have you spoken to Him lately? Consider: “*Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me*” (Psalm 50:15).

Does God speak to us in our prayers? Consider: “*Oh, that My people would listen to Me*” (Psalm 81:13).

In Day 299, the morning principle was: “In the End, the Truth Wins,” and the text was: “*Then the word of the Lord came to the prophet Jeremiah, saying...*” (Jeremiah 37:6).

Pilate asked Jesus, “*What is truth?*” (John 18:38). Jesus said of Himself, “*I am the... truth*” (John 14:6). Therefore, “truth” reveals the glory of God, the Word of God, the Son of God, and the Spirit of God. Jesus furthermore said, “*You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*” (John 8:31). However, He qualified this statement with, “*If you abide in My word.*”

A. W. Tozer, a contemporary and friend of C. S. Lewis, who called him a “20th-century prophet,” said, “The unattended garden will soon be overrun with weeds; the heart that fails to cultivate truth and root out error will shortly be a theological wilderness.”

Is all truth of God? Consider that Jesus said to His disciples: “*When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth*” (John 16:12).

When Pilate asked Jesus, “What is truth?” how would you have answered without using Christian clichés?

Is all truth true? (Forgive the philosophical jargon.) Consider things such as perception, opinion, etc. For example, you may tell someone that they are ugly (justifying it as the truth). However, is that “speaking the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15)?

In Day 301, the morning principle was: “Saying Versus Doing,” and the text was: “*Whether it is pleasing or displeasing, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God...that it may be well with us when we obey the voice of the Lord our God*” (Jeremiah 42:6). Repeatedly the Scriptures instruct, “*Hear what the Spirit says.*” Hearing the Spirit without listening is like hearing the wind. And Jesus said of the Spirit, “*The wind blows*

where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit” (John 3:8).

Are there not scriptures that appear a bit vague? Consider John 3:8.

However, are not the majority of the scriptures clear and precise and concise?
Consider: *“Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again’” (John 3:7).*

Are we not often educated beyond our obedience and guilty of hearing without listening? Consider: *“Though I [the Lord] taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not listened to receive instruction” (Jeremiah 32:33).*

To read more about this week’s topic, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and / or study guides.

Keywords: “He that has an ear,” “listen,” “hear,” etc. Listen with an ear that leans toward obedience. Learn to even submit to the Lord’s inclinations.

Knowledge, Wisdom, and Understanding

Simply stated, knowledge is the consciousness of information; wisdom is the right application of that information, and understanding is comprehension through experience or revelation. The Scripture says of these (not all inclusive): “We all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up” (1 Corinthians 8:1). “Wisdom is the principal thing” (Proverbs 4:7). “Understanding is a wellspring of life to him who has it” (Proverbs 16:22). Knowledge is the first step. Wisdom is the rungs of the ladder. Understanding is the ladder.

“Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding” (Proverbs 4:4).

In Day 303, the evening theme was: “Knowing About, or Having a Relationship With,” and the text was: *“Always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth”* (2 Timothy 3:7). Many people know about Jesus, but may not know Him. For example, you may know a lot about Abraham Lincoln, but you have never known him. It is for this reason that the apostle said, *“That I may know Him”* (Philippians 3:10). Therefore knowledge is the science of life.

“Science: in a general sense, knowledge, or certain knowledge; the comprehension or understanding of truth or facts by the mind. The science of God must be perfect” (Noah Webster’s 1828 Dictionary). Albert Einstein said, “Science without religion is lame; religion without science is blind.” The word comes from the Latin *scientia*, meaning “knowledge.”

Is science, true science, at odds with the Word of God? Consider: *“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork”* (Psalm 19:1).

Is science, true science, at odds with creation? Consider the first verse in the Scriptures: *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”* (Genesis 1:1). Which takes the greater amount of faith—randomness or order?

Is your science at odds with God? Consider the challenge of God: *“This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth”* (1 Timothy 2:3-4).

In Day 306, the morning principle was: “He Merely Spoke,” and the text was: *“He has made the earth by His power; He has established the world by His wisdom”* (Jeremiah 51:15). If by wisdom God established the world, how much more should we by wisdom establish our lives?

Where does wisdom begin? Consider this verse that covers knowledge, wisdom, and understanding: *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding”* (Proverbs 9:10).

What is the right application of wisdom? Consider: *“He who has knowledge spares his words, and a man of understanding is of a calm spirit. Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; when he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive”* (Proverbs 17:27-28).

Is wisdom the comprehension of what we know, or is it more so of what we do not know? Consider: *“Now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known”* (1 Corinthians 13:12).

In Day 304, the morning principle was: “Understanding God’s Justice,” and the text was: *“Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the Lord understand all”* (Proverbs 28:5). We live in an age when parents are educated to understand their children. That never occurred to my parents. It behooved me to understand them.

READING

Jeremiah 43:1–
Lamentations 5:22
2 Timothy 2:1–
Philemon 25
Proverbs 28:3-11
Psalm 119:97-152

Here in our text we see that not only is the fear of the Lord the beginning of wisdom, but to seek Him is to gain understanding.

Justice is the virtue that consists in giving to every one what is due.

Why do evil men not understand justice? Consider the pedigree of the evil:

“They refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up unto a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, hateful to God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, unmerciful” (Romans 1:28-31 NASB).

Therefore would you consider it to be a sin to be without understanding? Consider: *“I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand”* (Romans 7:14-15). Likewise consider the answer to the apostle’s dilemma, *“Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!”* (Romans 7:24-25).

How are we to seek the Lord that we might obtain understanding? Consider: *“Call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you”* (Jeremiah 29:12-14).

*To read more about this week’s topic, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and /or study guides.
Keywords: “knowledge,” “wisdom,” “understanding,” “the fear of the Lord,” etc.*

Let's Pray

I would imagine that more has been written about prayer than any other biblical topic. If one would remove prayer from the Bible, there wouldn't be much remaining. There are formal prayers and informal prayers. We have the great model of prayer, the Lord's Prayer (Luke 11; Matthew 6). We likewise have invocations and benedictions. We say grace over meals and bedtime prayers with our children. We pray with religious rote and passionate pleas. By all and every means, let's pray.

Oswald Chambers stated in *If You Will Ask*, "Our Lord did not say sentimental or pious things about prayer. He said practical and intensely real things."

In Day 310, the evening theme was: "Scheduled Prayer," and the text was: "Seven times a day I praise You, because of Your righteous judgments" (Psalm 119:164). Prayer in the general sense is an earnestly appealing to another; with regard to the creature to the Creator, it is a humble appeal for favor, guidance, healing, blessing, and the like.

Did you note that the psalmist said "seven times a day I praise you"? Is there a difference in praise and prayer; do they not go hand-in-hand? Consider the first line of the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your Name." Likewise consider: "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name" (Psalm 100:4).

The psalmist prayed seven times because of God's "righteous judgments." What are His righteous judgments? Consider: "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether" (Psalm 19:9).

How often do you pray? Consider setting aside seven minutes a day for focused prayer. (Many people would think that seven minutes is nothing.) Give it a try...seven minutes in a row. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication..." (Ephesians 6:18).

In Day 311, the evening theme was: "The Source of Understanding," and the text was: "Let my cry come before You, O Lord; give me understanding according to Your word" (Psalm 119:169). What a great prayer, "Give me understanding according to Your Word." It is similar to the prayer of Solomon, "Give to Your servant an understanding heart." To which the Lord answered, "Because you have asked this thing...I have done according to your words... And I have also given you what you have not asked: both riches and honor" (1 Kings 3:9-13).

As we studied last week, "understanding" is grasping, believing, trusting, and obeying Christ. By simple definition, understanding is comprehending and apprehending the precepts, ordinances, ways, and inclinations of God.

What is the source of understanding? Consider: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding" (Proverbs 9:10).

When we pray for understanding, how does it come? Consider again: "The knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." Likewise consider: "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death" (Philippians 3:10).

What is the greatest purpose of understanding, and how is it to be used? Is it not to be able to say, "I understand?" Therefore we can truly empathize.

In Day 312, the evening theme was: "Turning Distress into a Good Thing," and the text was: "In my distress I cried to the Lord, and He heard me" (Psalm 120:1). Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the great nineteenth-century English preacher said, "Good men must never expect to escape troubles; if they do, they will be disappointed, for none of their predecessors have been without them. Mark the patience of Job, remember Abraham for he had his trials.... Note well the biographies of all the patriarchs, prophets, apostles and martyrs...none of those whom God made vessels of mercy, who were not made to pass through the fire of affliction."

Martin Luther, theologian, pastor, and father of the Protestant Reformation, said, "Except under troubles, trials, and vexations, prayer cannot rightly be made. God says: 'Call on Me in time of trouble'; without trouble it is only a bald prattling, and not from the heart; 'tis a common saying: 'Need teaches to pray.'"

Ezekiel 1:1-14:23
Hebrews 1:1-7:28
Proverbs 28:12-19
Psalm 119:153-122:9

Do you think that God sometimes sends distress to get our attention? Consider: is it not pain, anguish, suffering, oppression, and the like, which causes us to pray more passionately?

When have you prayed the most fervently? Consider: *“Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the fish’s belly. And he said: ‘I cried out to the Lord because of my affliction, and He answered me’”* (Jonah 2:1-2).

Do parents hear the distressed call of a child more than a call of desire?

*To read more about this week’s topic, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and/or study guides.
Keywords: “prayer,” “supplication,” and “intercession.” Again, I challenge you to pray with focus at least seven minutes a day.*

Giving to the Poor

In The Business of Heaven, C. S. Lewis said of giving to the poor, "In the passage where the New Testament says that everyone must work, it gives as a reason 'in order that he may have something to give to those in need.' Charity—giving to the poor—is an essential part of Christian morality: in the frightening parable of the sheep and the goats it seems to be the point on which everything turns. Some people nowadays say that charity ought to be unnecessary and that instead of giving to the poor we ought to be producing a society in which there were no poor to give to. They may be quite right in saying that we ought to produce that kind of society. But if anyone thinks that, as a consequence, you can stop giving in the meantime, then he has parted company with all Christian morality."

READING

Ezekiel 15:1-28:26

Hebrews 8:1-12:29

Proverbs 28:20-26

Psalms 123:1-129:4

In Day 316, the morning principle was: "Abundance of Idleness," and the text was: "Look, this was the iniquity of...Sodom: She...had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness" (Ezekiel 16:49). Much has been said about the sins of Sodom. It is from Sodom that the word *sodomy* is derived. Nevertheless, look what the prophet Ezekiel had to say of its sins. He did not mention its sexual perversions; instead, he spoke of its pride, abundance, and idleness. Do these not reflect the pedigree of America today? Are we not proud to be Americans? Do we not have an abundance of food? Do we not have an abundance of idleness (consider the games we play, the television we watch, and the time-saving devices we own)?

"Idle: to exist in a temporal unchanging state, to plateau, the beginning of entropy." They may be those who "learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not" (1 Timothy 5:13).

What is the point of this principle in reference to giving to the poor? Consider the needs of this world: the need for clean water, nourishing food, clothing, and shelter. Remember Jesus said, "Inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me" (Matthew 25:45).

Dare we ask, "Lord, what would You have me to do?" Consider: "Then the Lord said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' So he [the apostle Paul], trembling and astonished, said, 'Lord, what do You want me to do?'" (Acts 9:5-6).

Just a thought. If you are meeting as a group, would you consider taking on a need to give to the poor and do so above and beyond your tithes and present offerings?

In Day 317, the morning principle was: "Be the Influencer," and the text was: "To show partiality is not good, because for a piece of bread a man will transgress" (Proverbs 28:21). In caring for the poor, we are not to judge the rich. "You shall not show partiality to a poor man in his dispute" (Exodus 23:3). Though it may be easier for a camel to go through an eye of a needle than a rich man to enter the kingdom of God (Matthew 19:24), both the rich and poor enter the same way: through Christ and Christ alone. Therefore we are not to show partiality to the rich or poor; we are to meet the needs of both as we are able. One may need both spiritual and physical food, the other just the spiritual.

Someone said, "My life shall touch a dozen lives before this day is done; leave countless marks for good or ill, ere sets the evening sun. This is the wish I always wish, the prayer I always pray: Lord, may my life help other lives it touches by the way."

"Partiality: prejudice, bigotry, showing favor for the sake of gain. To show partiality is to judge the merit of another."

Does God show partiality? Consider: "There is no partiality with God" (Romans 2:11).

Should we ever show partiality? Consider: "My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, 'You sit here in a good place,' and say to the poor man, 'You stand there,' or, 'Sit here at my footstool,'

have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? But you have dishonored the poor man” (James 2:1-6).

What is the difference between showing partiality and honor? Consider: *“He is not partial to princes, nor does He regard the rich more than the poor; for they are all the work of His hands” (Job 34:19).*

In Day 320, the evening theme was: “The Good Testimony of Faith,” and the text was: *“For by it [faith] the elders obtained a good testimony” (Hebrews 11:2).* There are many good people who do good deeds, but for the wrong reason. They either desire the accolades of others or they do so to feel better about themselves. Everybody likes an “at-a-boy” or “at-a-girl.” Giving does make one feel better about one’s self. Jesus said, *“It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).* These are okay. Nevertheless, our deeds and good works are to be done by faith. For only through faith do we please God (Hebrews 11:6) and obtain a good testimony.

If we give to the poor without faith, is it a sin? Consider: *“Whatever is not from faith is sin” (Romans 14:23).*

Can we have a good testimony without giving to the poor? Consider carefully what Jesus said: *“If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me” (Matthew 19:21).* Did Jesus mean: 1) to enter into poverty, 2) get free from possessions, 3) get liquid, or 4) do your business and then come follow Me?

Will the world ever be freed from poverty? Consider: *“The poor you have with you always” (John 12:7).*

To read more about this week’s topic, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and /or study guides. Keywords: “giving,” “poor,” etc. As a group, consider taking on a project of giving to the poor. There are several great organizations, such as World Help at www.worldhelp.net



READING

Ezekiel 29:1-42:20

Hebrews 13:1-

1 Peter 1:25

Proverbs 28:27-29:6

Psalm 129:5-133:3

Patience

I once defined patience as the ability to accept delay. The problem was that I accepted it, but did not like it (with an attitude). Therefore, I have found that patience is the ability to remain the same in all situations. Like all good things, we would never learn patience without being tested. God knows the things we can handle and the things in which we need to grow. It is these areas that we are to be tried and tested, not that we might fail the test, but that we would be able to endure when various trials come. And they will come. We most likely will not enjoy the testing. Nevertheless, we can make a choice to count it all joy when these trials come. Therefore, the next time you are put through it, rejoice and be exceedingly glad because you are growing in patience. Likewise as our patience increases so does our faith. Patience and faith feed off of each other and produce Christlikeness.

“Patience: the suffering of afflictions, pain, toil, calamity, provocation or other evil, with a calm, unruffled temper; endurance without murmuring or fretfulness. Patience may spring from constitutional fortitude, from a kind of heroic pride, or from Christian submission to the divine will” (Noah Webster’s 1828 dictionary).

In Day 323, the evening theme was: “Contentment Versus Satisfaction,” and the text was: *“Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you’”* (Hebrews 13:5). Someone wisely said, “Be content with what you have, never with what you are.”

“Satisfied” is temporal fulfillment (eating and drinking, amusement, sex, etc). “Contentment” is a peaceful mind (righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit).

Are you satisfied with life? Consider: *“All the labor of man is for his mouth, and yet the soul is not satisfied”* (Ecclesiastes 6:7).

Are you content with life? Consider: *“Having food and clothing, with these we shall be content”* (1 Timothy 6:8).

Can we be content without being satisfied? Consider: *“Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”* (Philippians 4:11-13).

In Day 324, the evening theme was: “The Ability to Remain the Same,” and the text was: *“But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing”* (James 1:4). Patience obviously cannot be separated from faith. Does it not take patience to wait? Chuck Swindoll said it best for me in *Growing Strong*, “True patience is waiting without worrying.”

“Patience” is being constant through the good times as well as the harsh, not being tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, circumstance and trend.

Is God patient? Consider: *“May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ”* (2 Thessalonians 3:5).

Has He been patient with you? Consider: *“Whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Romans 15:4-6).

Are you patient? Should you be? Consider: *“Be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand”* (James 5:8). *“Count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing”* (James 1:2-4).

In Day 325, the evening theme was: “Faith Is Patient,” and the text was: *“I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in His word I do hope”* (Psalm 130:5). By faith and through

patience we shall obtain the promises of God. It is the spiritual law of sowing and reaping. If we live a faithful life, we shall with patience reap the fruit of that life. God requires of His saints, patience and faith. Patience is the ability to remain the same in any situation. Faith is the ability to believe, trust, and obey God and His Word. Without faith, we cannot please God, and without patience, we cannot have faith or possess our souls.

“Patience” is the ability, by faith, to wait on the Lord, to endure, have fortitude and trust.

Is impatience a sin? If so, how do you overcome it? Consider: *“Is my complaint against man? And if it were, why should I not be impatient?”* (Job 21:4). God said of Job, *“Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy”* (James 5:11 KJV).

Is not patience more than the ability to wait for good things; is it not likewise the ability to wait through the hard times of life? Consider the context of Luke 21:19, *“By your patience possess your souls.”*

Has patience increased your faith? Can you give an example?

*To read more about this week’s topic, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and/or study guides.
Keyword: “patience.” Work at “letting patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing” (James 1:4).*

Your Attitude Determines Your Altitude

Paul Nanney said, "A fundamental concept in piloting an airplane is having the proper attitude—the orientation of the airplane in relation to the horizon. When the airplane has a positive attitude, the nose pointing skyward, it gains altitude. When the nose of the airplane is pointed downward, the airplane loses altitude. The performance of the airplane is determined by its attitude." Life is very much like this. Our attitude determines in large part our performance. Do you have the proper attitude? Is your performance what it should be? Pilots ensure that they have the proper attitude by checking an instrument called the Attitude Indicator. We too have an attitude indicator—God's Word. Is it time for an attitude check?

In Day 330, the evening theme was: "How to Take Suffering," and the text was: *"For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God"* (1 Peter 2:20). There are few if any situations in life that will challenge our attitudes more than suffering. Oswald Chambers said it wonderfully, "Suffering is the heritage of the bad, of the penitent, and of the Son of God. Each one ends in the cross. The bad thief is crucified, the penitent thief is crucified, and the Son of God is crucified. By these signs we know the widespread heritage of suffering."

Here's a question that has been asked throughout history: why does God allow suffering? Consider for discussion: the patriarchs, the disciples, the early church and the countless martyrs.

Is suffering a good thing? Consider: *"The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us"* (Romans 8:16-18).

Ezekiel 43:1–Daniel 8:27
1 Peter 2:1–2 Peter 3:18
Proverbs 29:7-14
Psalm 134:1–137:6

Have you suffered; are you suffering? Are you able to see it as good? Consider: *"All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution"* (2 Timothy 3:12). *"If anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter"* (1 Peter 4:15-16). *"Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray"* (James 5:13).

In Day 331, the evening theme was: "Acquiring the Good Life," and the text was: *"He who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit"* (1 Peter 3:10). The attitude of our lips often determines the altitude of our character. "The good life" in our modern-day vernacular is an attitude of a high standard of living; for the believer, it is to be an attitude of a godly standard of living.

Mary Knowles said in the *Christian Reader*, "Eat little at night, open windows, and look for the good in things and people. You will no longer be sad, or bored, or ill."

What is your attitude toward the standard of your life...what should it be? Consider: *"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 2:5 NIV).

What is the difference in an attitude of loving life and loving this world? Consider: *"Who is the man who desires life, and loves many days, that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit. Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it"* (Psalm 34:12-14).

How do I change my attitude about my life? Consider this repeated in all four Gospels' admonition: *"He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor"* (John 12:25-26; Matthew 10:38; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23).

In Day 336, the evening theme was: "Are You Preparing?" and the text was: *"Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace"* (2 Peter 3:14). Our attitudes for the future will determine our altitude today. Knowing that my

future holds eternal life in the paradise of God—where there is no sorrow, tears, or anguish—makes my today more than bearable. I have found that my preparations for tomorrow's altitude depend on my attitude today. When I look through the dim mirror of the temporal knowing of the eternal, my attitude changes.

Thomas Shepard (1605–1649), the great New England Puritan, said, "Preparation is a work of grace."

Does your attitude reflect that God has prepared an altitude for you? Consider: *"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know"* (John 14:2-4).

Is a good attitude required in preparation for eternal life? Consider again: *"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus...made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant...He humbled himself and became obedient to death"* (Philippians 2:5-8 NIV).

Do you have an attitude of preparedness? Consider: *"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord"* (1 Corinthians 15:58). A prepared attitude is to be born again (John 3:7), have our house in order (Isaiah 38:1), and to be looking forward to the altitude of that day (Hebrews 10:25).

To read more about this week's topic, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and/or study guides.

Keywords: "attitude," "suffering." Remember, "Let this attitude be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."

Light in a Dark World

Light amazes me. You can't see it, but you see everything else by it. It moves and bounces at amazing speed. It can be intense or subtle. It is a complex science or a simple metaphor. Of all creation, light is the most astonishing to me. Yet, no matter how much knowledge, scientific advancement, or scholarship this world may have, it remains in metaphoric darkness without the light of the Gospel of Christ. Daniel says it this way, "Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever" (Daniel 12:3).

As we review this week's readings, consider: "Who" is the light of the world? Jesus said, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12; 9:5). Yet He likewise says to you and me, "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-16).

In Day 337, the evening theme was: "Sight Without Vision," and the text was: "This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). If Christ is the light of the world, and we likewise are the light of the world, is the world blind or in darkness? If blind, it may have an excuse for its darkness. If the people of the world have sight and cannot see, we have no excuse for their walking in darkness. Obviously, the light is not shining.

"Sight" is revealed by light. If there is no light, there can be no sight. It takes light to have sight, vision, and understanding. So, is the world without Christ because of blindness or lack of light? Consider: "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin" (John 15:22).

READING

Daniel 9:1–Hosea 10:15

1 John 1:1–3 John 14

Proverbs 29:15-21

Psalms 127:7–139:16

Are there more ways to see than by way of visual sight? Consider the words of famed deaf and blind writer, educator and activist, Helen Keller: "The most pathetic person in the world is someone who has sight, but has no vision."

What do you see? What do others see by your light? Consider: "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, 'We see.' Therefore your sin remains" (John 9:41). Likewise, walk in the light of the sun and the Son. And remember, "This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all."

In Day 339, the evening theme was: "Don't Tell Me, Show Me," and the text was: "My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18). C. S. Lewis said it this way in his must-read *Mere Christianity*: "Do not waste your time bothering whether you 'love' your neighbor act as if you did.... When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love him. If you injure someone you dislike, you will find yourself disliking him more. If you do him a good turn, you will find yourself disliking him less."

How do we see the love of God? Is it merely spoken (written) or demonstrated? Consider: "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

Do you more often tell or demonstrate your love for God and others? Consider: "Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers, who have borne witness of your love before the church" (3 John 5-6).

In which are you most secure? Are you a show me or tell me? Consider: "'Simon...do you love Me more than these?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Feed My lambs.' He said to him again a second time, 'Simon...do you love Me?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Tend My sheep.' He said

to him the third time, 'Simon...do you love Me?' Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, 'Do you love Me?' And he said to Him, 'Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed My sheep'" (John 21:15-17).

In Day 342, the evening theme was: "Afraid of the Dark?" and the text was: "*If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall fall on me, even the night shall be light about me'*" (Psalm 139:11). I believe it was Plato who said, "We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light."

"Darkness" is the absence of light, a metaphor for sin, the situation of the world when the light of the world is not shining. James F. Byrnes (1879–1972), U.S. secretary of state, governor of South Carolina, and Supreme Court justice, said, "Too many people are thinking of security instead of opportunity. They seem more afraid of life than death."

Why do you think God created darkness? Consider: "*God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night*" (Genesis 1:4-5).

Is there a justified fear of the dark?

Have you ever been afraid of the dark...are you still? Got any good stories? Consider when fear raises its scary head and reaches out with its shadowy talons: "Fear knocked at the door, faith answered...and nobody was there."

You Are on His Mind

I don't know who originally said it, but I find comfort in the thought, "When He was on the cross, you were on His mind." When we understand that God dwells in eternity, that is timelessness, we can begin to fathom His omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence. God is able, because "He is and was and is to come" (Revelation 1:4, 8; 4:8; 11:17). Time and space do not govern God. He is timeless. How else can He hear every prayer as if totally focused on the one praying? How can He be everywhere always? How else can He know all things at all times? Again, because He is and was and is to come.

The psalmist said it this way: *"Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me. If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall fall on me,' even the night shall be light about me; indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, but the night shines as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to You" (Psalm 139:7-12).*

In Day 344, the evening theme was: "Count the Sand," and the text was: *"How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; when I awake, I am still with You" (Psalm 139:17-18).* C. S. Lewis said in his *Broadcast Talks*, "If there is no intelligence behind the universe, then nobody designed my brain for the purpose of thinking. Thought is merely the byproduct of some atoms within my skull. But if so, how can I trust my own thinking to be true? And if I can't trust my own thinking, of course, I can't trust arguments leading to atheism and therefore have no reason to be an atheist, or anything else. Unless I believe in God, I can't believe in thought; so I can never use thought to disbelieve God."

Is God limited in any realm (physical, spiritual, metaphysical)? Consider: *"Can anyone hide himself in secret places, so I shall not see him?" says the Lord; 'Do I not fill heaven and earth?' says the Lord."* (Jeremiah 23:24).

Is mankind limited; if so, in which realms? Consider: *"Who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:15).*

How would you explain timelessness or eternity? Are they one in the same? *"Thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy" (Isaiah 57:15).*

In Day 347, the evening theme was: "The Father's Time Out," and the text was: *"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent" (Revelation 3:19).* Because we are eternally on the mind of God...as our heavenly Father, He disciplines us with either His Word or His rod.

John Newton (1725-1807), the author of countless hymns, including "Amazing Grace," said, "When people are right with God, they are apt to be hard on themselves and easy on other people. But when they are not right with God, they are easy on themselves and hard on others."

Does God discipline His children? Consider our text: *"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten."*

Why has the world shunned the rod of correction? Consider: "The rod," when used with love, compassion, and for the sake of correction, is a device that does not have to be used very often. Its appearance alone does wonders. A wooden spoon works just fine. Consider Proverbs 23:13 and Proverbs 22:15.

Were you disciplined as a child? Was it harmful or a blessing? Consider this mode of discipline: never out of anger, always out of love, never with vengeance, always with well-being.

In Day 349, the evening theme was: “Speaking to the Lord,” and the text was: *“I cry out to the Lord with my voice; with my voice to the Lord I make my supplication. I pour out my complaint before Him; I declare before Him my trouble”* (Psalm 142:1-2). He hears you because He is not relegated by time and space. He hears you as if you were the only one speaking.

David, a man after God’s own heart, said, *“My voice You shall hear in the morning”* (Psalm 5:3).

Does God hear our voices any more clearly than our thoughts?

Is one mode of prayer better than another (where, when, and how)? Consider: When in many communist countries, I often meet with underground church leaders. We most often meet in very public places...and when we pray, we pray by way of conversation. We keep our eyes open and just continue speaking, but instead of speaking to each other, we are speaking to our heavenly Father. It is a wonderful way to pray.

Do you talk to the Lord out loud? If not, why not try it? Go for a walk with God, and as you walk, talk to Him: *“O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God”* (Psalm 84:8).

*To read more about this week’s topic, visit www.discoverthebible.com and search the devotions and / or study guides.
Keywords: “omniscience,” “omnipresence,” and “omnipotence.”*

We Can Only Imagine

The Book of Revelation is the vision given to the apostle John of Jesus and the theology related to what will happen at the end of the world. His visions were marvelous and wonderful...beyond perception. Throughout the ages, however, theologians and scholars have attempted to define his vision. The teachings are as numerous as the stars. So, by no means will we attempt to grasp what God has hidden until the time He has chosen to reveal it clearly. Nevertheless, we can imagine what heaven may be like, even though we will miss its splendor by light-years. Here's a little philosophy: I believe that this old earth has a few hidden treasures of what heaven may be like. The spiritual eye can see its veiled beauty, that which was formed in its creation. We can only imagine.

Consider the words to the song "I Can Only Imagine" by MercyMe (lyrics provided for educational purposes and personal use only): "I can only imagine what it will be like when I walk by Your side. I can only imagine what my eyes will see when Your face is before me. I can only imagine. Surrounded by Your glory, what will my heart feel? Will I dance for you Jesus or in awe of you be still? Will I stand in your presence or to my knees will I fall Will I sing hallelujah, will I be able to speak at all? I can only imagine. I can only imagine when that day comes and I find myself standing in the Son. I can only imagine... When all I will do is forever worship You."

"Now I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision refers to many days yet to come" (Daniel 10:14).

In Day 351, the evening theme was: "A Glimpse of Heaven," and the text was: *"All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God" (Revelation 7:11).* C. S. Lewis said of heaven in *The Problem of Pain*, "We are afraid that Heaven is a bribe, and that if we make it our goal we shall no longer be disinterested. It is not so. Heaven offers nothing that a mercenary soul can desire. It is safe to tell the pure in heart that they shall see God, for only the pure in heart want to."

Is heaven God's home? Consider: *"Heaven is My throne" (Isaiah 66:1; Acts 7:49). "In My Father's house are many mansions...I go to prepare a place for you...I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:2-3).*

Do we have the ability to imagine what heaven is like? Consider: *"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Corinthians 2:9). "I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: I know a man in Christ who...was caught up to the third heaven...whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words" (2 Corinthians 12:1-4).*

What is it that you know about heaven that you look forward to experiencing? Consider: *"I saw a new heaven...God Himself will be with them and...will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away. Then He who sat on the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new'" (Revelation 21:1-5).*

In Day 357, the morning principle was: "Hold On to Your Vision," the text was: *"For the vision is yet for an appointed time... Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come" (Habakkuk 2:3).* The clearest vision given to mankind is the Word of God, the Bible. We are therefore to read it, heed it, and watch it come to pass. Vision is seeing that which has not been physically manifested to the natural senses.

Michelangelo (1475–1564), sculptor, painter, and poet said, "Lord, make me see your glory in every place."

Why would God give a vision and prolong its manifestation? Consider: *"Then the Lord answered me and said... 'For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry'" (Habakkuk 2:2-3).*

Has God given you a vision, dream, or desire? Consider: *"It shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams" (Acts 2:17).*

READING

Obadiah 1–Habakkuk 3:19
Revelation 7:1–13:18
Proverbs 30:5-17
Psalm 143:7–146:10

Have you written it down? Consider: *“Then the Lord answered me and said: ‘Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it’”* (Habakkuk 2:2).

In Day 357, the evening theme was: “Sight Without Vision,” and the text was: *“The Lord opens the eyes of the blind; the Lord raises those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous”* (Psalm 146:8). Sight without vision is seeing only the temporary, the present, the tangible, and that which is perishing. If we open our physical eyes, we will see the wonders of creation; if we open your spiritual eyes, we will see the Creator.

Helen Keller (1880–1968), famed blind writer and lecturer is thought to have said, “I would rather be blind without sight than to have sight without vision.”

What do you envision for your future? Is the best yet to come? Consider: *“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him”* (1 Corinthians 2:9).

What do you envision for America? What is the hope of America? Consider: *“If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land”* (2 Chronicles 7:14).

What do you envision for the church of Jesus Christ? Consider: *“‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it’”* (Matthew 16:16-18).



READING

Zephaniah 1:1–

Malachi 4:6

Revelation 14:1–22:21

Proverbs 30:18–31:31

Psalm 147:1–150:6

Praise the Lord...Amen

The last line of the Psalter is “Praise the Lord,” and the last word of the Bible is “Amen.” Years ago, when I first began to pastor, I remember one Sunday morning at the end of the service when the crowds (the dozen or so) were leaving...little five-year-old Alex, a blond hair, blue-eyed all boy, came marching down the center aisle, heralding to his mom, “Praise the Lord... Praise the Lord, Mom!” With pride for her son’s proclamation, she asked, “Alex, why are you praising the Lord?” To which little Alex replied, “It’s over, Mom. It’s over.” Well, this is the final weekly study...Amen.

The great nineteenth-century British preacher Charles Spurgeon said of the word *amen*: “Amen solemnly confirms that which went before; and Jesus is the great Confirmer; immutable, forever is ‘the Amen’ in all His promises...Jesus is Yea and Amen in all His offices. He was a Priest to pardon and cleanse once, He is Amen as Priest still. He was a King to rule and reign for His people, and to defend them with His mighty arm, He is an Amen King, the same still. He was a Prophet of old, to foretell good things to come, His lips are most sweet, and drop with honey still—He is an Amen Prophet. He is Amen as to the merit of His blood; He is Amen as to His righteousness. That sacred robe shall remain most fair and glorious when nature shall decay. He is Amen in every single title which He bears; your Husband, never seeking a divorce; your Friend, sticking closer than a brother; your Shepherd, with you in death’s dark vale; your Help and your Deliverer; your Castle and your High Tower; the Horn of your strength, your confidence, your joy, your all in all, and your Yea and Amen in all.”

In Day 358, the evening theme was: “Praise, the Purpose of the Believer,” and the text was: “Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and praise is beautiful” (Psalm 147:1).

What does God consider to be praise? Just a thought: “Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and praise is beautiful” (Psalm 147:1).

What do you consider praise? “I will greatly praise the Lord with my mouth; yes, I will praise Him among the multitude” (Psalm 109:30).

Should we praise Him with just songs and words of adoration or with our whole life? (Sorry for the loaded question.) Noah Webster defined *praise* as “the expression of gratitude for personal favors conferred; a glorifying or extolling.” And he also said of it, “There are men who always confound the praise of goodness with the practice.” *“He has put a new song in my mouth—praise to our God; many will see it and fear, and will trust in the Lord”* (Psalm 40:3). Therefore praise Him with a song, praise Him with a shout, praise Him with a smile, praise Him with thanksgiving, let everything you do, praise the Lord.

In Day 361, the evening theme was: “He Is Worthy to Be Praised,” and the text was: “Let them praise the name of the Lord, for He commanded and they were created” (Psalm 148:5). “Praise” is acknowledging the splendor, wonder, power, glory, and majesty of the One worthy of such acclaim. All praise, whether to the Creator or the created, to talents or giftedness, is to praise the Creator, Who is blessed forever.

Is not the purpose of creation to praise God? Consider: “The mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing before you, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands” (Isaiah 55:12).

Consider the heavens, do they not glorify their Creator? Consider: “Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise Him in the heights! Praise Him, all His angels; praise Him, all His hosts! Praise Him, sun and moon; praise Him, all you stars of light! Praise Him, you heavens of heavens, and you waters above the heavens!” (Psalm 148:1-4).

Does not all of creation and every creature by nature praise the Lord? Why is it not in the nature of man to do so? How can we improve on the closing words of the final psalm, “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!” (Psalm 150:6)?

In Day 362, the evening theme was: “Praise the Lord,” and the text was: “Praise the Lord from the earth...Kings of the earth and all peoples; princes and all judges of the earth;

both young men and maidens; old men and children” (Psalm 148:7, 11-12). “Praise” is to honor, applaud, magnify, laud, and exalt: in song, word and deed, with upraised hands, voices and hearts, with joy and sacrifice, music and composition. As repeated over sixty times in the Bible, “Praise the Lord.”

Is it possible to be angry and praise the Lord? Let me rephrase: is it possible to remain angry and praise the Lord?

Does not thanksgiving and praise get us before the Lord? Consider: *“Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name”* (Psalm 100:4).

How are we to praise the Lord? *“Praise the Lord! Praise God in His sanctuary; praise Him in His mighty firmament! Praise Him for His mighty acts; praise Him according to His excellent greatness! Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet; praise Him with the lute and harp! Praise Him with the timbrel and dance; praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes! Praise Him with loud cymbals; praise Him with clashing cymbals! Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!”* (Psalm 150).
