

Daily God Walk Life of Christ

His Ministry - 2

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All Scripture quotations are taken from the New International Version (NIV). All other translations used will be credited using these abbreviations:

(KJV) – King James Version

(NKJV) – New King James Version

(TLB) – The Living Bible

(TM) – The Message

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Who You Are As A Child Of God

Perhaps among the greatest disappointments to God has been our lack of understanding who we are. We very well know that we are sinners. Our faults, failures and limitations are glaringly before us. We have come to believe what the world has said we must be. Our environment, family, socio-economic level, and psychologists have all told us what we are and what we are to become. All of this is based upon the limited knowledge and reason of man. What follows is a gathering of scripture based ideas of what and who we are to God.

We have been held captive in a box that defines who we are as a person without God, and too often we carry that definition over into our life as a Christian. We forget that when we come to God we are “born again” and we become “new creations.” We are no longer held captive by the circumstances that have formed us into the person we have been; *Who we are is now defined by the revelation of God’s will to us.*

These next few pages contain much of what God has revealed to us concerning who we are in him as a new creation. Throughout his word he is encouraging us to believe his plan is to bless us and not to harm us and to give us a hope for tomorrow (Jeremiah 29:11).

Many followers of Christ live far below their position in Christ and they are not availing

themselves of the benefits of following him. It is time for all believers to wake up to the many gifts and benefits God offers those who will dare to believe him.

Jesus said, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has anointed me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor"(Luke 4:18-19).

Are you poor? Jesus has good news for you. Are you held in a prison of unwanted addictive behavior? Jesus has good news for you. Are you suffering from some physical malady like blindness, or debilitating disease? Jesus has good news for you. Are you oppressed by the circumstances of your life? Jesus has good news for you. Do you feel unloved and out of favor with God? Jesus has good news for you.

If any of the circumstances given above are affecting your life then the following pages offer you hope.

I encourage you to carefully read each of the "I am" confessions in the next few pages. Pray over them and meditate upon them. Memorize them.

These Scripture based confessions will open to you a new and deeper understanding of who you are in Christ. When you fully embrace them you find your life filled with righteousness, joy and peace (Romans 14:17).

Having received Christ in my heart and life through Faith, repentance and Confession- I acknowledge who I am (my identity):

1. I am His most wonderful Creation.

- ❖ **Ephesians 2:10** - For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

I am God's creation, God doesn't make any trash; I am made in his image for his glory

- ❖ **Psalm 139:13-14** - For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

The hand of the almighty has created me a unique specimen of his creative love - I will not cease to praise him for what he has done.

2. I am in Christ, and Christ is in me

- ❖ **John 14:20** - "On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you."

We have become one with Christ. If I can accept it, I am Christ to those in my world.

3. I am a Child of God.

- ❖ **John 1:12** - "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."

God has given me the right to become anything that a child of divine lineage can become.

- ❖ **1 John 3:1** - "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!"

We are both born and adopted by our Father; every promise he has given and is recorded in his word, is ours.

4. I am a living Temple of God.

- ❖ **1 Corinthians 3:16** - "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?"

Religions around the world have built temples to house their gods and God has chosen to take up residence on the inside of his people; we are not only the people of God, we are the house of God.

- ❖ **1 Corinthians 6:19** - "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own."

We made a trade. We were living in a house of decay with no eternal hope; God chose to give us a house not made by the will of man, or the hand of man, one that is eternal. As the temple of God we are blessed with eternal life.

5. I am a Partaker of His Divine Nature.

- ❖ **2 Peter 1:4** - "Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires."

As children of God we participate in the divine nature. We have been given access to the resources of divinity - to the extent that it is possible in the flesh, we have divine power.

6. I am an extremely significant as a person.

- ❖ **Ephesians 2:10** - "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus..."

All of the creative craftsmanship of God has been brought to bear in the creation of man, in his very image.

- ❖ **Psalms 139:14** - "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made..."

Not only was the hand of God evident in the original man, he watches over the formation, birth and life of every person who comes into this world; there are no insignificant no-bodies to God.

7. I am a joint-heir with Him of the Glory of the Father.

- ❖ **Romans 8:17** - "Now if we are children, then we are heirs - heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory."

In this becoming process as the children of God we are also becoming heirs and co-heirs with Christ. As we grow into the fullness of the stature of Christ God releases more of his glorious inheritance into our lives.

8. I am a new person.

- ❖ **2 Corinthians 5:17** - "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come."

Thank God I am a new creation; I am not what I want to be, neither am I what I was and I am not what I am going to be. I am a new creation that is becoming like him.

- ❖ **Ephesians 4:24** "You were taught, with regard to your former way of life: to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put

on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

The only way we can progress in this journey of becoming is to “put off” and “put on.” As we put off the old attitude, and adopt a new attitude we are becoming righteous and holy.

9. I am dead to sin.

- ❖ **Romans 6:8-11** - “Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

Just as Christ through his death defeated the hold of sin, so we through

10. I am victorious over fear.

- ❖ **2 Timothy 1:7** - “For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.”

My confidence is in the power of God and I am not intimidated by this world

11. I am full of goodness, knowledge and able to counsel.

- ❖ **Romans 15:14** - “I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another.”

God’s word rests in me, therefore it is has made me good and complete and able to counsel others.

12. I am being conformed to His image. I am a prince in life.

- ❖ **Romans 5:17** - “For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in and through the one man, Jesus Christ.”

13. I am justified by faith.

- ❖ **Romans 5:1** - “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Justified: just as if I’d not sinned. What a thought.

14. I am not ashamed of the gospel.

- ❖ **Romans 1:16** - “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile”

God's grace and power in me has taken shame and fear out of my life. I am confident in him.

15. I am born again.

- ❖ **John 3:3,5** - "I tell you the truth, unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

16. I am His Ambassador.

- ❖ **2 Corinthians 5:20** - "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God."

**17. I am an earthen vessel of God's treasure.
(II Corinthians 4:7)**

- ❖ **2 Corinthians 4:7** - "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all."

**18. I am a servant of the new covenant. (II
Corinthians 3:6)**

- ❖ **2 Corinthians 3:6** - "He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant - not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."

Day One

I Believe... Help My Unbelief

Jesus said, "Everything is possible for him who believes." Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" - Mark 9:23-24

I think this father is typical of most of us. We do believe, but we're not sure we truly believe that God will intercede in our situation. I believe God heals and I believe that God works miracles, but I am often afraid that he won't do it for me.

This sincere father was trying to be totally honest with Jesus. He was so desperate to see his son healed and set free from the demons that afflicted him that he brought him to Jesus. He believed Jesus healed because he not only had heard about it but no doubt he had himself seen Jesus heal others - but now it was different. It was his son that he needed to believe for.

The father cried out, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief." You can hear in his declaration the anguish of years dealing with a problem that he thought would never be resolved. Now there is a chance that the boy might be delivered, and all he had to do was believe.

The pressure was on. He was asking himself, "Do I really believe Jesus can heal?" His answer was yes, he had become convinced that Jesus could heal. His next question was, "Will Jesus heal my boy?" His answer to that question was not nearly as strong. He wanted to believe, and he needed to believe, but he just wasn't sure. In desperation he cried, "Help me overcome my unbelief."

When we face the situation where we believe Jesus can, but we aren't quite sure he will do it for us, then we must be as honest before God as this sincere father

was. Many times I've said "Lord, I believe you can, but I'm not sure I believe you will for me - grant me the grace of faith to believe."

God may not always answer according to our perceived need, but he will always answer according to his plan for us and the situation. Faith is often that God's will be done whatever the outcome.

Prayer: Lord, I believe; help me to overcome my unbelief. Grant me the grace to trust you whatever the outcome. Amen.

Message: God may not always answer according to our perceived need, but he will always answer according to his plan for us and the situation.

Affirmation: I believe and I am praying that God will show me where I need to trust him more completely.

Reflection: Why is it that it is easier to believe for someone else than it is to believe for our own needs? Many of us have believed for someone else, but we find it very difficult to believe for ourselves. What are some of the causes of the lack of belief for our own needs?

My Thoughts:

Day Two

*The Comparative value
of Sparrows and People*

Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. - Luke 12:6-7

To get the full impact of this passage we must remember the context in which it is placed. Jesus had just warned his followers about living double lives and fearing man above fearing God. Then he says, "Don't be afraid." How do we reconcile "fear God" with "don't be afraid?"

Jesus seems to be saying that man makes religion a difficult thing and creates fear rather than faith in the hearts of followers. The teachings of men cause us to fear men; what will they think, what will they do, how will they respond to me - these fear based questions come from a man based philosophy of life and religion.

The Message clarifies the point Jesus was making:

Don't be bluffed into silence or insincerity by the threats of religious bullies. True, they can kill you, but then what can they do? There's nothing they can do to your soul, your core being. Save your fear for God, who holds your entire life - body and soul - in his hands.

What's the price of two or three pet canaries? Some loose change, right? But God never overlooks a single one. And he pays even greater attention to you, down to the last detail - even numbering the hairs on your head! So don't be intimidated by all

this bully talk. You're worth more than a million canaries.

If we are to fear it should not be man we fear, but our fear should be more of a caution that warns us how much God cares for us so that we will not miss what he is offering. Jesus did not come to perpetuate a fear based religion; Jesus came to establish a faith based relationship with God himself. If we fear God in the way that we fear man we have missed the point of kingdom relationship through faith in Christ.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the confidence to reach past my fear of man and grant me grace to trust you. Help me to understand that you do not see me as men see me. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Our fear should be more of a caution that warns us how much God cares for us so that we will not miss what he is offering.

Affirmation: I am learning to fear God rather than man because man cannot affect my eternal destiny but God can.

Reflection: Ask yourself, "Who do I fear?" How important is peer approval to you? What about the circumstances of life? Does the thought of losing your job cause anxiety? Some people fear that some disease will come upon them. What do you fear? Jesus tells us to consider the sparrow.

My Thoughts:

Day Three

Riches and Greed

Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” Jesus replied, “Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?” Then he said to them, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”

- Luke 12:13-15

The apostle James asks the question, “What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don’t get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want” (James 4:1-2). James was saying that greed destroys our peace and the peace of those around us and drives us to serious sins.

Jesus could see that greed had produced envy and strife between brothers and he was addressing that issue in this passage. He was still addressing this problem of greed when he gave us the parable of the man that Jesus called “fool!” Read Luke’s record:

And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, “What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.” Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.”

“But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’”

“This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God.”

- Luke 12:16-21

We must find the balance between being wise stewards and being self-sufficient. God has given us wisdom to be prepared for the future, but he has also declared that when we seek him and his kingdom first he will take care of the rest.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace to discern between greed and prudence and the wisdom to choose prudence. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: We must find the balance between being wise stewards and being self-sufficient. God has given us wisdom to be prepared for the future, but he has also declared that when we seek him and his kingdom first he will take care of the rest.

Affirmation: My goal is to make God my source and to be a wise manager of all that he places in my life.

Reflection: I have thought much about this passage and I have wondered if the message was, "Don't accumulate wealth," or "Don't put your confidence in wealth." Which do you think it is? How does one find a balance between being a wise manager of God's blessing and being self-sufficient?

My Thoughts:

Day Four

*Pagans Are Out For Self:
Don't You Go There*

Do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. – Luke 12:29-31

Jesus was doing a follow-up on the story of the rich fool. In verses 22-23 he says to his disciples, “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes.”

The message seems to be that when we make things our security we will wind up disappointed, but when we find our security in him through faith we discover that God’s grace is certainly sufficient.

A few verses earlier Jesus used the example of the care God has for the sparrows to demonstrate our value to him. In this passage he uses the ravens as an example of how God feeds them (v24). In verses 27-28 he uses the example of the field lilies and the beauty with which God has clothed them. Then he asks, “If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you.”

A factor that should be a distinction between the believer and the unbeliever is that whatever circumstances life brings the believer he knows that God is in control and that he does indeed work all things for our ultimate benefit (Romans 8:28). The unbeliever can only hope for what he can achieve on his own and face the uncertainties of life with hope only in himself.

Those of us who have taken God at his word and who have received his grace (favor) through faith in Christ, have discovered that we can trust him. We are not promised that God will deliver us from every uncomfortable or difficult circumstance of life, but he has promised that he will go through them with us and that as we continue in faith he opens the doors of heaven to us.

God's best is held in reserve for those who trust him and him alone.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace to continue trusting you. Help me not to look at things as the answer for my longing. Amen.

Message: A distinction between the believer and the unbeliever is that whatever circumstances life brings the believer he knows that God is in control and that he does indeed work all things for our ultimate benefit (Romans 8:28).

Affirmation: I am concerned about my life and my future, but I am not worried because I know that God has my future in his hands and he has my best interest at heart.

Reflection: How stressful it must be to face life with hope only in ourselves. Many today face that very thing. Unfortunately, there are believers in Christ who have not yet fully trusted him for their daily life. Give some thought to how you can trust God in your daily life.

My Thoughts:

Day Five

Do Not Be Afraid, Little Flock

Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. - Luke 12:32-34

Some heard the message of surrendering to God all that they were and all that they had. And some were offended by his way of refuting their philosophies. The throng which gathered around him was mixed, but there were enough angry men among them to cause concern in those who were believing what he was saying.

Discerning the atmosphere of anger and the tension that was building around them Jesus speaks to the believers, "Do not be afraid, little flock." When it seems all the forces of hell are being released upon us and we feel like a sparrow caught in a storm with lightning flashing, thunder rolling, and rain pelting on us, then we remember that Jesus is watching over even the sparrows and says. "Do not be afraid, flock of little ones."

I know a man that God had blessed to make millions of dollars. He invested in a company that was growing and multiplying his money. He took all that he had and invested it in that company. In just a short time that company went bankrupt and his millions were gone. What did he do? He continued to trust God because his security was not in his riches but in the God who gives and takes according to his own purposes.

This man knew that God had given him the kingdom and that the kingdoms of this world, financial

kingdoms, political kingdoms, and all other kingdoms, would fall before the Lord God but the kingdom of God is forever and ever.

His worldly wealth has not been restored but it is evident that his treasure in heaven has increased. God has given him a ministry of teaching people to be set free from strongholds in their life and many thousands are getting free. What a treasure.

Prayer: Lord, help me not to look with envy at the wealth of the world, grant me the grace to build treasure in your kingdom. Amen.

Message: The kingdoms of this world, financial kingdoms, political kingdoms, and all other kingdoms, will fall before the Lord God, but the kingdom of God is forever and ever.

Affirmation: I hold my possessions loosely because my hope is not in them and they are not my treasure. My treasure is in heaven where it cannot be destroyed or stolen.

Reflection: Was Jesus really telling people to sell all that they have and give to the poor? And, how can we provide, "purses for ourselves that will not wear out?" How can we live out this instruction from Jesus in our daily walk?

My Thoughts:

Day Six

Be Prepared to Serve

Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him.

- Luke 12:35-36

As a young person I was a Boy Scout. The motto of the Boy Scouts is, "Be Prepared." This organization is a very good place for boys and young men to learn character and preparedness to face life. The troop leaders are taught not only to teach boys that they should be prepared, but the structure of the system is designed to actually prepare boys for life.

A young person in the Boy Scouts earns respect through earning merit badges. A merit badge is awarded to the boys who achieve certain objectives and among them are acts that show courtesy and respect for others, especially the elderly and people in need.

Jesus is talking about the same concept in this passage. He is challenging his followers to be prepared for service at all times. He speaks of keeping our lamps burning as a metaphor to staying alert ready for the opportunity to do the works of service we have been called to do.

Some see being prepared for the coming of the master as applying to personal holiness and righteousness, and there is an application there, but the primary application is that when the master returns he is to find us not only prepared, but he is to find us serving.

It is interesting that Jesus had just spoken of the desire of a persons' heart is reflected by where he invests himself, and he follows that with, "Be dressed and ready

to serve.” Yes, we are called to be prepared, but we are also expected to be serving.

For many of us it is time to say, “I am dressed, My lamp is burning, how can I serve?” In response to that I can only say, look around you. Are there single parents who need a little help? Are there elderly who need someone to mow their lawn? Are there sick who need visiting? How about that single mother with a difficult teen, have you thought about taking the youngster fishing? Are you ready to serve?

Prayer: Lord, help me to be as enthusiastic about serving as I am about getting prepared to serve. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: When the master returns he is to find us not only prepared, but he is to find us serving.

Affirmation: I have prepared myself to serve through prayer and reading God's word. Now I am ready to serve.

Reflection: In the devotion there is a comparison of the boy scout serving to earn a merit badge and a person serving in the kingdom. What are some of the similarities between the Boy Scout who serves to get the merit badge and the follower of Christ who serves? What are some of the differences?

My Thoughts:

Day Seven

Be Prepared for His Coming

If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour that you do not expect him.”

- Luke 12:39-40

I'll never forget the feeling of returning home one night to find my front door ajar. As I walked into the living room and began to look around I felt as if I had been personally violated. There were many things missing, some of them were irreplaceable. I felt as if something had been taken from me that could never be replaced.

If I had known that my house would be broken into that night I would have been home. I would have been prepared for the thief when he arrived.

That is exactly what Jesus is talking about. He is talking about being on duty and being prepared. Now, I don't know why he used a negative situation, a thief coming unexpectedly, to demonstrate a positive point, being prepared for the unexpected visit of the master, but we get the idea nonetheless.

For 2000 years preachers have been telling the church, “Be prepared he's coming soon,” and for 2000 years people have gone through periods of diligent preparation mixed with times of giving in to the temptation to live for this life alone.

Ecclesiastes 9:12 warns, “No man knows when his hour will come: As fish are caught in a cruel net, or birds are taken in a snare, so men are trapped by evil times that fall unexpectedly upon them.”

Not to change the subject, but this demonstrates the point: I have been on many diets to lose weight. I am usually a long way from my ideal weight. I can see the joy of being at that weight, but it is so far into the future. The problem is that so much delicious food is before me now that the hope of reaching my ideal weight becomes very dim and I sacrifice long term benefits for short term pleasure.

Jesus wasn't talking about a diet - he was talking about eternity.

Prayer: Lord, help me not to lose sight of your coming. Grant me the grace to live for eternity and not just for today. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: "No man knows when his hour will come: As fish are caught in a cruel net, or birds are taken in a snare, so men are trapped by evil times that fall unexpectedly upon them." - Ecclesiastes 9:12

Affirmation: My Lord is coming back, but I do not know just when, so I am careful to live in a state of readiness for his return.

Reflection: Can you remember a time when you were surprised by an event that could have been tragic, but, because you were prepared it turned out well? This devotion points out the fact that Jesus is returning. Give some thought to what you would do if you knew he was returning today - then live the rest of your life that way.

My Thoughts:

Day Eight

The Faithful and Wise Steward

Then Peter said unto him, “Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?” And the Lord said, “Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath. - Luke 12:41-44 (KJV)

Sometimes it just seems that there is no end to serving. Once one task is finished then another one looms ahead of us. If we’re not being pressed by the life that is unfolding around us we are being challenged by life in the kingdom of God. It is in these stressful times that the faithful steward shines.

We don’t often use the word steward anymore and we may have lost some of its meaning through lack of use. A steward is one who has been given the responsibility to manage certain resources, or manage a certain property or possession of another.

Perhaps you have heard “steward” or “stewardess” used in reference to the person on an airplane whose job it is to see that the passengers are fed and made comfortable. It is their job to distribute the food and drinks as well as to hand out pillows or blankets to passengers.

Jesus is using the term here in reference to serving in the kingdom of God. The lesson is that faithful stewards, or managers of certain resources, will perform their duties even when the boss isn’t around. This wise manager of resources knows that even when the boss isn’t there his performance is being evaluated.

The person who serves well is not only given greater responsibility, but is also given greater rewards. In this lesson on faithful stewardship Jesus promises that the faithful servant will be so respected by the owner of the business that he will be made the chief executive officer.

God is looking for men and women whom he can trust to serve him well even when no one seems to notice. Are you a faithful steward?

Prayer: Lord, grant me the integrity to serve as well when I am not being watched as I do when I am being watched. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: A steward is one who has been given the responsibility to manage certain resources, or manage a certain property or possession of another. This wise manager of resources knows that even when the boss isn't there his performance is being evaluated.

Affirmation: When I received Christ I was given certain gifts to use in service to him. I am committed to being a wise steward of the gifts and responsibilities God has given me.

Reflection: Give some thought to the way servants, or as we call them today, employees, think about their masters, or employers. Don't those words, "servant" and "master" raise different ideas than "employee" and "employer"? Why is that?

My Thoughts:

Day Nine

The Unfaithful Foolish Servant

Suppose the servant says to himself, “My master is taking a long time in coming,” and he then begins to beat the menservants and maidservants and to eat and drink and get drunk. The master of that servant will come on a day when does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers. – Luke 12:45-46

The example of the faithful servant who served well even when the master wasn't there is contrasted by the unfaithful servant who takes advantage of the master's absence to seek his own pleasure. This servant will be dealt with very severely by the master.

In the first example the wise steward used the resources of his master to care for the other members of the staff. He fed them and gave them their salary and treated them with respect. The opposite is true of the unfaithful steward.

Very few of us would be guilty of actually physically assaulting others in the kingdom, or even those in the world around us, but are we guilty of neglecting the needs of those around us?

The unfaithful steward was guilty of two egregious offences. First, he abused those for whom he had been given the responsibility of serving. Second, he used for himself the resources that he had been given to use for others. He had been given much, which he used unwisely, and he was being required to give account for what he had been given.

We who are people of faith and who have received the grace of God, have been given much. We have been given the responsibility of sharing the gifts God has

given us. We are not just to rejoice in the salvation we have received, but we are to do all in our power to see that others partake of the same gift.

When the Lord returns will he find us eating the spiritual manna and drinking the spiritual wine while there are others who are hungry for what we have but who have never had the opportunity to enjoy it?

Prayer: OK God, I'm convicted. I find myself basking in the glory when I should be serving in the kingdom. Help me to change that. Amen.

Message: We have been given the responsibility of sharing the gifts God has given us. We are not just to rejoice in the salvation we have received, but we are to do all in our power to see that others partake of the same gift.

Affirmation: I am committed to sharing the gifts and blessings God has given me with others who are in need of those blessings.

Reflection: We have been given a wealth of resources by our Lord. Some have been given a wealth of talent and others have been given wealth of physical resources. It is how we use those talents and resources that reflects our character.

My Thoughts:

Day Ten

Jesus Is the Great Divide

Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you but division. From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. They will be divided father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother. - Luke 12:51-53

Up to the time of Christ all that religion had offered man was a performance based relationship with God. Jesus came preaching another kind of relationship with God. He didn't talk about shining the outside of the cup - his message was about cleaning up the inside.

Religious people did not understand his message because their orientation was around performance. They believed that if they performed in a certain lifestyle manner and performed certain religious rituals they were accepted before God. Jesus taught them that performance did not earn the favor of God.

The thing that angered religious leaders in Jesus' day was that he taught the people that their laws and rules of conduct were of no value if the heart continued to be corrupt and full of evil. Because he didn't require his disciples to be hypocrites and pretend that they were perfect by obeying the traditions he was accused of heresy and blasphemy.

So, he became the great divide. Those who would see the truth of his teaching and realize the value of being in right relationship with God through faith in Christ, would be on one side of the divide and the rest of the religious world would be on the other side.

His message is so profoundly simple that those of us who are used to complex formulas have trouble

surrendering to it. Everything in our life is about performance. Our job, our family and our relationships, are all based on how we prove ourselves. Our faith in God is based on how we allow him to prove himself to us, just the opposite of the human way.

Which side of the divide do you stand on? Are you still trying to work out your relationship with God with complex formulas of religious performance, or are you surrendered to the simple concept of faith?

Prayer: Thank you Lord for the faith we have in Christ and the hope you have given us. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: Our job, our family and our relationships, are all based on how we prove ourselves. Our faith in God is based on how we allow him to prove himself to us, just the opposite of the human way.

Affirmation: I do not serve to become approved by God. I am approved through faith in Christ and I serve him out of gratefulness for what he has done for me.

Reflection: Can you think of ways that some people today are religious performers but do not demonstrate that they have been transformed? This devotion is about being transformed by the power of God rather than conforming to a religious system. Can you see the difference?

My Thoughts:

Day Eleven

Seed That Falls on the Path

A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up...Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. - Mark 4:1-20

It will always be a mystery to me why people who are living in the most adverse circumstances will hear the message of Christ and say, "That's not for me." Most of us have known people like that, maybe in our own family. In fact, before some of us finally surrendered we were that person.

It's as if an imp from hell was on their shoulder refuting everything they hear about the kingdom of God. As he plucks the seeds of the word one by one from the mind and heart of the person he is saying, "You don't want that, they just want to control your life." Another good one is, "They're lying - they are all hypocrites." One of my favorites is, "They just want your money."

Unfortunately Satan plucks the seed from far too many hearts before the seed has a chance to take root, but that doesn't relieve the farmer (that's you and I who sow the seed of the word of God) from the job of sowing the seed. Today seed is sown from a tractor that drops the seed into neatly placed rows and spreads the seed evenly in only the good ground, but in the day Jesus gave this example farmers simply went to the field with a sack of seed and spread it out over the field a handful at a time with the seed falling on all kinds of soil.

As we share the word of God and the power of Christ to transform lives we are sowing seeds. We should sow

generously, without reservation because the field that is hard ground today may at some time in the future be soil that is prepared to receive the word.

The parable is not about being careful where we sow the seed, it is about sowing the seed and let God worry about where it falls. It is wise however to look for good soil to sow into.

Prayer: Lord, help me not to judge the readiness of the soil, but give me the grace to continue sowing into every soil type. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: We should sow God's word generously, without reservation because the field that is hard ground today may at some time in the future be soil that is prepared to receive the word.

Affirmation: Only seed that is sown can produce a crop and I choose to sow the seed of God's word wherever I can.

Reflection: There is hard ground, such as the soil in a path that has been packed down by many feet, and there are people who have been bruised so much their hearts have become hardened; but, just as a pathway may be plowed and the ground softened, so hearts can be softened by the work of Holy Spirit. Keep sowing, even on hard ground.

My Thoughts:

Day Twelve

Seed That Falls on Rocky Ground

Some [seed] fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. .. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched and they withered because they had no root.... Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. - Mark 4:1-20

I live in an area that is surrounded by mountains. Where I live is at the bottom of the mountains and the soil is very good, but the further up the mountain you go the rockier the soil becomes. There are some places where the soil is just a thin veneer over solid rock. Grass and some shrubs will start to grow there, then in the heat of summer they die off.

Jesus was talking about just such a condition in the hearts of some people. They are easily impressed with the word of God and the Holy Spirit moves them to take a step of faith surrendering their heart to Christ. They do that and we all rejoice at their conversion.

Then the trials come. There are the friends who keep enticing them with their old lifestyle. Temptations come and their relationship with the Lord is not deep enough or strong enough to keep them strong.

My wife and I have ministered among people with very severe life issues. Some of the people we have ministered with have never been to a church service and certainly knew nothing of the gospel. Their life has been filled with chasing one rainbow after another and they have never established any consistent pattern of life. They were rocky soil.

We have often seen people make a “quick start” to follow Jesus, but they didn’t have enough depth in their life to hold on through the hard times and they fell back into their old life habits.

You may be facing some difficult situations in your life and you feel like giving up. I want to challenge you to stay with it. Don’t give up. The only hope we have for a blessed life now and eternity in heaven is through faith in Christ.

Prayer: Lord, I sometimes feel like the rocky place. I fear, I doubt, sometimes feel like giving up. Grant me grace to persevere. Amen.

Message: You may be facing some difficult situations in your life and you feel like giving up. I want to challenge you to stay with it. Don’t give up. The only hope we have for a blessed life now and eternity in heaven is through faith in Christ.

Affirmation: I won't give up. Regardless of how hard the road, or how tempting another way may seem, I won't give up. I am not rocky soil - I am good ground and I will never give up.

Reflection: Can rocky ground become good soil? Yes it can. But it isn't easy. Look closely into your own life and see what inconsistencies are there then ask God for a plan, a way to become strengthened in those areas, then go to work.

My Thoughts:

Day Thirteen

Seed That Falls on Thorny Ground

Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain... Some people... like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. - Mark 4:1-20

This parable describes many who are called Christian. They still go through the motions, they still go to church, and as far as outward appearances go, they are “good Christians.” But their bottom line is that the world is choking the spiritual life out of them.

We are being called to surrender our citizenship in any of the world systems and to realize that we are citizens of another kingdom, another world. We are citizens of the kingdom of God and we are not to be entangled with the cares of this present world.

Our standing in the world around us should be the same as a person from another country who comes to our country on a work visa. They maintain their citizenship and loyalties to the country of their origin but they are in our country on a day to day basis doing what is necessary to complete their business, or to work on their job to support their family.

We are, of course, in this world, but we are not to be of this world and we are not to be influenced by this world. The more we are enamored by the things of this world, it's comforts, it's pleasures, and it's lifestyle, the less influence the Holy Spirit has in our life.

If you are struggling with your spiritual walk I would encourage you to take a look at the things that have influence in your life. Ask yourself how much effort and

energy you are putting into maintaining a certain lifestyle. Examine how much of your time, talent and energy you put into creature comforts, hobbies, and enjoying life. Compare that with how much you put into your relationship with God.

How does your commitment to the kingdom of God compare to your commitment to maintain the lifestyle you have become accustomed to? Think about it.

Prayer: Help me Lord not to be overwhelmed by the cares of this world but to be faithful to my citizenship in your kingdom. Amen.

Message: We are being called to surrender our citizenship in any of the world systems and to realize that we are citizens of another kingdom, another world. We are citizens of the kingdom of God and we are not to be entangled with the cares of this present world.

Affirmation: I am in this world, but I am not of this world. I maintain my citizenship in the kingdom of God and my life in this world is simply an assignment by God.

Reflection: How committed are you to being a citizen of God's kingdom? Here is a good test of your commitment: How much of your time, talent, resources and energy are given to this world's comforts and pleasures and how much is given to the work of the kingdom of God? Think about it.

My Thoughts:

Day Fourteen

Seed That Falls on Good Ground

Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times... Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop - thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown.

- Mark 4:1-20

I have family who are farmers. Most of their land is rocky and will produce a crop, but it is spotty, and not that productive; but they also have bottom land. Bottom land is the part of the land that becomes flooded when the creek rises and soil that is carried down from the higher land winds up settling in the bottom land. That land is very fertile.

In that area people know that they usually have to buy a lot of rocky soil to be able to get some bottom land. It is interesting that in the analogy Jesus is making between types of soil and types of people who hear the word of the Lord, that about 25% is good soil. I know one pastor who believes that out of every four people he sees saved he is promised by the Lord to keep one and that one will be good soil.

I don't know about that, but I have noticed that those who really get the message of the kingdom and who become productive in the way that God intends them to be, are in the minority. In fact a common rule among leaders in the church is the 80/20 rule. 80% of the work in the church is done by 20% of the people.

However you look at it, God, like the farmer, looks for good soil to sow into. To the farmer good soil is that soil which produces the most in return for his investment of resources - God is looking for the same

kind of people to invest in. He looks for people who will best fulfill the purposes of his kingdom.

Have you found yourself in one of these four types of soil we have looked at this week? Can you say, "Yes, I am the soil that produces," or will you have to confess, "I am like the seed that is choked by the cares of this world."

Will you be the good soil God desires to sow his word into?

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace to keep a focus on you and help me to plant your word deep in my spirit that I might be good soil. Amen.

Message: God, like the farmer, looks for good soil to sow into. God is looking for people who will best fulfill the purposes of his kingdom.

Affirmation: I am committed to being good soil so that the kingdom harvest will be great.

Reflection: Jesus gave the parable of four types of soil. The hard soil that doesn't receive the seed; the rocky soil without much depth; soil that is overcome by weeds; and finally, good soil which produces a bountiful harvest. The question becomes, "What kind of soil are you?" If you find yourself needing to become good soil begin to seek God for the way to become the kind of soil he can use to produce a harvest.

My Thoughts:

Why Jesus Taught With Parables

The disciples came to him and asked, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?” He replied, “The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.

- Matthew 13:10-13

If one just looks at the surface of this passage it looks like Jesus is saying that the kingdom is only for certain people. Those who have been given the secrets of the kingdom will have abundance and those who have not been given the secrets will even lose what they have.

In the next verses Jesus explains that he speaks in parables so those who are deaf and blind to the message will not be awakened and receive him. This seems counter to his purpose in coming, but in fact it was the way for his purposes to be fulfilled.

What would have happened if all Israel had accepted Jesus as Messiah and even the leaders had bowed to worship him? God would have been honor bound to receive them and the greater purpose of Christ would not be realized. And besides that there had been many anointed deliverers sent to Israel and within a few years they would fall back into the sins that had befallen them before.

Israel and the world needed an answer to the sin that seems to guide their lives. They needed to be redeemed from the inside out. For that to happen Jesus needed to go to the cross, to the grave and to the day of his resurrection. The way we would know the resurrection

life of Christ living in us was for him to die and be resurrected.

Jesus had left the throne of heaven to receive the judgment of man's sin. If he had been made king there would be no cross and there would be no empty tomb.

God knew that the only long term solution to the problem of sin was for Christ to become the ultimate and final sacrifice. Those who did not receive him are the ones who killed him thus making possible even their own redemption through his death and resurrection.

Prayer: Thank you Lord for opening the kingdom to whosoever like me. Amen.

Message: Israel and the world needed an answer to the sin that guided their lives. They needed to be redeemed from the inside out. For that to happen Jesus needed to go to the cross, to the grave and to the day of his resurrection.

Affirmation: The kingdom belongs to those who will be open to hear and believe. I have heard the message of the cross, the grave and the empty tomb, and I have committed myself to that message.

Reflection: It is a hard fact to accept, but not every hears the words of the gospel are open to receive the message of the gospel. Salvation is reserved for those who will hear and receive the message of salvation through faith in Christ.

My Thoughts:

Day Sixteen

Bad Thought Seed Destroys Kingdom Faith

The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, the enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. - Matthew 13:24-26

I once bought a house in a new subdivision. All of the front yards had lawns that were from a company which provided lawns in rolls that were placed over the bare front yards. The effect was that the entire street had brand new lawns and looked like an established neighborhood.

Within a few months there were two things that began to happen in the lawns. First, weeds began to grow out of the lawns that had been rolled out onto the yards. The second thing to happen is that patches of the lawns began to die and no amount of watering or fertilizing would stop it.

I talked to landscapers and they told me that the cause of the weeds was that the farmer who raised the sod was not careful to keep weed seed from being carried onto his sod farm by the wind and by bird droppings. The cause of the spots which were dying was that there was insect larvae in the roots of grass and it was destroying the root system.

Our only solution was to wait until the grass had taken root in the soil and then to pull the weeds out. As for the dead spots we would cut out that place and replace it with good seed and potting soil to nourish it. It was only then that we began to have a beautiful front yard.

Jesus is relating a similar circumstance to life in the kingdom of God. The enemy of our soul will try to kill

our influence by putting people in our lives who sow false ideas and concepts and it is hard for the believers to not buy in to false ideas if they aren't diligent in their kingdom walk. The problem of insect larvae destroying the root system of the lawn is very similar to allowing thoughts and ideas that are contrary to kingdom truth to become a part of the thought process which will affect our ability to have kingdom faith.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the wisdom to discern bad thought seed and the grace to resist allowing it to take root in my mind. Amen.

Message: The enemy of our soul will try to kill our influence by putting people in our lives who sow false ideas and concepts and it is hard for the believers to not buy in to false ideas if they aren't diligent in their kingdom walk.

Affirmation: I have purposed to be diligent about guarding my mind against thoughts that are destructive to my kingdom faith and I am diligent to keep kingdom thoughts flowing through my mind.

Reflection: We must be aware of how the enemy of our soul works at putting seed thoughts into our thought processes which are damaging to our faith. What processes have you put into place to guard against this invasion?

My Thoughts:

Day Seventeen

Kingdom Mustard Seed

He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches.” - Matthew 13:31-32

Have you ever seen a full grown mustard plant? It is hard to believe that a seed so small can carry the power to grow into a plant of such great size. Like every living thing, the mustard seed has in it an incredibly complex set of DNA with all the data necessary to grow into a large bush.

The working of the kingdom of God that in every believer is compared to the potential of the mustard seed. Everyone who receives Jesus the Christ as Lord of their life is given a mustard seed portion of the kingdom of God. That small seed of the kingdom has complete in it all of the potential that is given to the kingdom of God.

There is an incredible amount of God-power invested in believers through that small kingdom seed planted in us when we become believers. If that is true, then why is that so many believers do not have any evidence of this power in their faith walk?

There is another element to this parable. It is the farmer. Jesus said, “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field.” The seed held in the hand of the farmer contains all the power of the kingdom of God, but as long as it is held in his hand there is no manifestation of power. It

must be sown into the field where it can die and new life can grow out of it.

God gives us the seed of the kingdom then calls us to sow it into the world. When we are born into His kingdom we become intrinsically entwined into kingdom seed; we cannot be separated from the seed of the kingdom. If we do not sow the kingdom seed into the world by investing ourselves in the lives of others the world will never know the power of the kingdom. Sow yourself into the field and reap the kingdom.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace to invest myself in the lives of those who don't know you that they may receive kingdom seed. Amen.

Message: God gives us the seed of the kingdom then calls us to sow it into the world. When we are born into His kingdom we become intrinsically entwined into kingdom seed; we cannot be separated from the seed of the kingdom.

Affirmation: I am kingdom seed and I am willing to be sown into the harvest.

Reflection: We are intrinsically intertwined with kingdom seed. We are both kingdom servants and kingdom seed. Our lives should be sown into the field of the world in such a way that the kingdom grows up wherever we are planted and becomes a great influence in the world around us.

My Thoughts:

Day Eighteen

Keepers of the Vineyard

Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, ‘for three years now I’ve been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?’ ‘Sir,’ the man replied, ‘leave it alone for one more year, and I’ll dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.’”- Luke 13:6-9

God didn’t call us into the kingdom so we could make a fashion statement on Sunday Morning. Just like the fig tree God expects us to accept the responsibility of service in the kingdom. If we are to take this parable at face value we are going to have to conclude that God is not happy with believers who don’t produce fruit.

This parable immediately follows Jesus talking about judgment upon those who are not repentant. In verse 5 he says, “Unless you repent, you too will all perish.” From that statement Luke continues, “Then he told this parable.” It seems obvious that this parable is given as warning to those who can’t quite get close enough to the Lord to begin producing fruit in keeping with the kind of tree they claim to be.

Another aspect of this story is the man whose responsibility it was to tend to the vineyard. He loved every tree and vine. He didn’t want to see any of them perish so he pleaded with the owner of the vineyard to give him one more year to work the soil around the tree and to fertilize to give it nourishment with the hope that the tree would respond and begin to bear fruit.

Can you see how the man who tended the vineyard is just like a pastor or spiritual leader who doesn't want any of the ones to perish that they are responsible to care for. God has put you in the heart of a pastor who prays for you and offers spiritual nourishment along with nutrients for your soul from the word of God.

God is calling us to respond to the care of our spiritual leaders.

Prayer: Lord, it's not always easy to humbly accept the care of one who watches for my soul, but help me to submit to that oversight. Amen.

Message: God has put you in the heart of a pastor who prays for you and offers spiritual nourishment along with nutrients for your soul from the word of God.

Affirmation: I know that God has appointed leaders in the kingdom to equip me to be a productive servant therefore I will pay close attention to what they are teaching.

Reflection: Two aspects of kingdom life are brought out in this parable. First is the responsibility of every kingdom member to be productive; and second is that God has appointed keepers of the vineyard to work with the trees and vines to make them productive. How does that speak to you?

My Thoughts:

Day Nineteen

The Value of the Kingdom

The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

- Matthew 13:45-46

Many 21st century Christians need to learn the meaning of these two parables. Far too many evangelistic enthusiasts have reduced the kingdom to nothing more than a fire escape that is accessed by repeating a magic formula. Simply recite a certain confession and you have your eternal merit badge making you secure for eternity.

The parables portray many aspects of the kingdom, but these two verses stand alone in portraying what the kingdom should mean to us. Whether it is a secret treasure, or a pearl of great price, the message is the same. The treasure (kingdom) cost the finder all he had in the world.

That is exactly what the kingdom of God costs those who would become its citizens. It costs all that you are and all that you have in the world. If you try to hold on to any of the world around you the kingdom of heaven is still not in your grasp.

One very wealthy young man who asked Jesus how to obtain eternal life was told that he must sell all that he had and give it to the poor. That young man walked away sad, not because of what he had, but because of what had him.

There is no such thing as citizens of convenience in the kingdom of God. Either you are seriously committed to kingdom citizenship or you have not yet become a citizen. It's just that simple.

What do you own that ties your citizenship to this world? Or the better question is "What stands between you and being sold out for God?" Jesus said, "If a man would come after me he must deny himself [and all that he has] take up his cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). Ask yourself what else you must surrender to secure the hope of citizenship in the kingdom of heaven.

Prayer: Lord, the kingdom is of the greatest value, give me a willing heart to surrender all for this treasure. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: There is no such thing as citizens of convenience in the kingdom of God. Either you are seriously committed to kingdom citizenship or you have not yet become a citizen. It's just that simple.

Affirmation: I have seen the value of the kingdom and have committed all that I have and all that I am to the purpose of being effective in kingdom service.

Reflection: Give some thought to the statement, "There is no such thing as citizens of convenience in the kingdom of God." What does that mean to you? Do you feel that a person can be in the kingdom of God and not be committed to the principles of kingdom life?

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty

End of the Age is Separation Time

Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. - Matthew 12:47-50

In the early years of my ministry I was a member of a very conservative group which had very definite ideas of what constituted the Christian lifestyle and how a Christian should look. They had a saying that kind of goes with this passage. It was, "You've got to catch the fish before you can clean them."

I've learned a few things since then and one of the things I've learned is in response to that statement. It is, "It's not our job to clean the fish." One of the faults I've found among believers is the tendency to make the judgment call of who is and who isn't a true believer. It is our job to present the gospel it isn't our job to clean fish.

Jesus told another parable of a farmer that had an enemy sow weeds in his field after he had sown wheat. Jesus said we must allow the wheat and the weeds to grow together lest we ruin the wheat. I am afraid that I have seen a lot of wheat destroyed because some zealot tried to rid the field (church) of weeds before the harvest.

In this passage Jesus seems to be trying to tell us that we should keep our minds on the important issues and

allow him to be the judge of who is and who isn't a part of the kingdom.

That doesn't mean we should be unwise about who is placed in positions of authority, but we must be careful that in our zeal to protect the church we destroy precious people who are in the process of becoming kingdom citizens.

Love much, serve well and be generous with grace. That is a formula to follow in living the grace filled life and in discipling others in this walk of faith.

Prayer: Lord, I tend to judge a person by what I see, but you can see much deeper than I. Grant me the grace of tolerance. Amen.

Message: Love much, serve well and be generous with grace. That is a formula to follow in living the grace filled life and in discipling others in this walk of faith.

Affirmation: I have learned to live a grace filled life by loving much, serving well and being generous with grace.

Reflection: Can you identify with the concept of feeling the need to clean the fish before they are caught? What about the question of whether we should clean the fish at all? If you could say about yourself that you love much, serve well and are generous with grace, what would you be saying?

My Thoughts:

The Kingdom is a Storehouse of Truth

He said to them, “therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.” - Matthew 13:52

We don't know if Jesus actually gave the parables of Matthew 13 in the order that they are recorded or if Matthew just grouped together a number of kingdom parables gleaned from a variety of teaching occasions. That being said there is merit to looking closely at this the last of the parables in this group.

There were certain concepts and aspects of the kingdom that Jesus wanted to impress upon his followers and he taught them in these parables of Matthew 13.

In review, chapter 13 begins, “That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. Then he told them many things in parables” (verses 1-3).

Some of the concepts Jesus was teaching:

- Keep sowing the word of God in the field of the word - some of it will land on good ground. - verses 3-23
- The enemy will always try to destroy the harvest so don't become sidetracked or discouraged, God will take care of it. - verses 24-30, 37-43
- The kingdom growth is amazing compared to human effort that goes into it. - verses 31-33

- Kingdom treasure will cost you everything. - verses 44-46
- Don't judge people, let God do that. - verses 47-50
- And finally, keep up to date with what God is doing and don't forget what he has already done. - verse 52

We are to be ever learning the truths that God is revealing as we store up the treasures of the kingdom. Past truth is valuable in understanding current truth. We must be prepared to share both the old and the new.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace to be faithful to kingdom principles while passing through this world. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: We are to be ever learning the truths that God is revealing as we store up the treasures of the kingdom. Past truth is valuable in understanding current truth. We must be prepared to share both the old and the new.

Affirmation: I have realized the value of storing up kingdom truth in my mind, therefore I spend time in God's word studying and meditating upon it's precepts.

Reflection: Give some thought to each of the parables of Matthew 13 making a point to apply each of them to some aspect of your kingdom walk.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Two

*Why Are You Afraid?
Do You Still Have No Faith?*

He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" - Mark 4:39-40

When we are tired is when we are most likely to let our frustrations be known. Being human, Jesus was tired when this event took place. He had just ministered during a long day and now had instructed the disciples to take him across the lake.

Once the boat was out on the lake, Jesus fell into a deep sleep. While he slept a storm arose with such violence that these seasoned fisherman became afraid for their lives. They shook him awake and said, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

How foolish! Didn't they know who he was? Was God going to let him drown? If he was going to survive, surely they would too. But they weren't thinking of that. They were thinking of the wind and the waves. They were thinking of how cold the water would be and how far they were from land. They were thinking they were about to die.

Just a short time ago the disciples were amazed at the miracles and awed at his wisdom as he inspired them to serve the kingdom of God. But that was before the storm. The combination of darkness, the wind, and the waves, had gotten their mind off the other events of the day and now they were concerned for their life.

I can almost see Jesus as he was awakened from a deep sleep and the rest he so desperately needed was disturbed. He was probably more than just a little

perturbed as he stood facing the storm and commanded it to be still. As the storm broke up and the waves calmed he turned to his disciples and showed his frustration, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”

I am convicted that on occasion I have been as those disciples. Trials, struggles and adverse circumstances have gotten my mind off the goodness of God and my confidence has waned as I faced things that I knew were bigger than me. Every time I turn to God in fear he responds in love, sometimes with a gentle rebuke, but always in love.

Prayer: Lord, help me to see your grace above the storms I face. Amen.

Message: Trials, struggles and adverse circumstances can get our mind off the goodness of God and our confidence can wane as we face things that we know were bigger than us. Every time we turn to God in fear he responds in love, sometimes with a gentle rebuke, but always in love.

Affirmation: I practice putting my trust in God before the trials come so that I am already trusting him when I am faced with unexpected difficulties.

Reflection: Many of us get caught up in the moment and forget who is in the boat with us. Can you remember a time when circumstances were scary and you called on Jesus?

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Three

New Wine and New Ways

No one sews a patch of un-shrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved. - Matthew 9:16-17

This new cloth and new wine passage is found in Matthew, Mark and Luke. It was spoken in response to the question by John's disciples concerning fasting. John's disciples were asking why the disciples of Jesus didn't fast, or another way of asking is, "Why don't your followers do it the way we do?"

The answer Jesus gave was in two parts. The first part dealt with the concept of celebrating with the bridegroom until the bridegroom is gone. The second part deals with the idea of a new way to do things.

In giving the parables of new cloth and new wine Jesus was trying to tell all who would hear that he was doing a new thing and if they were going to participate they had to realize that new things require new ways.

That was one of the problems the religious leaders had with Jesus. They were very happy with religion just as it was, thank you very much. Neither the priests, the Pharisees nor the Sadducees wanted anything to change; it had taken them too long to get things set the way they were.

In a prophecy about things to come Isaiah wrote, "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not

perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland” (43:18-19).

The message now is as it was then; Don’t become so attached to the way you did it yesterday that you miss what God is wanting to do today. God is doing a new thing today and much of what we see we do not understand. Some things we see stretch our theology to the point destroying the fabric itself. We need wisdom to know what to hold to and what to give up.

Prayer: Lord, I don’t want to be a hindrance to what you want to do, and I don’t want to embrace foolishness either. I need your wisdom.

Message: The message now is as it was then; Don’t become so attached to the way you did it yesterday that you miss what God is wanting to do today.

Affirmation: Yesterday was a great time, but God has something new for me today and I know that in order to get the new I must be willing to turn loose of the old.

Reflection: It is often said that God is going to do a new thing, yet, we continue to expect him to do what he has done in the past. If God is going to use new wine skins for his new wine, and if we are the wine skins, what must we do to become that new wine skin?

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Four

A Leader Risks His Reputation

One of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet, and pleaded earnestly with him, “My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.” So Jesus went with him. - Mark 5:22-24

It is interesting how tradition and protocol mean a lot to us, until we face a life threatening situation, then all caution is thrown to the wind. Jairus had probably observed Jesus from a distance and he might even have thought, “It would be good if he was indeed the Messiah, but from all I have learned he couldn’t possibly be the one.” Standing back, weighing the issues, he made no move toward Jesus until he got word that his daughter was sick and dying.

With his daughters life at stake tradition and protocol no longer seemed important. He humbly came to Jesus and in Luke’s account, “fell at Jesus’ feet, pleading with him” (8:40). Desperate times call for desperate measures.

At that moment it made no difference that Jesus did not fit into his neatly ordered picture of the Messiah. He did not care about what his peers in the synagogue thought; his daughter was dying and he had to get the attention of Jesus.

Jesus saw the desperate hoping and followed Jairus to his house. In the next few verses of this passage we learn that they arrived at the house too late. The girl had died and the mourners had already arrived. Jesus looked at Jairus, the man who had risked it all, and said, “Don’t be afraid, just believe.” Those few words spoke hope in a desperate situation.

What desperate circumstances are you facing today? What are you willing to risk to see God intervene in your circumstances? Is protocol more important than provision? Is tradition more important than transformation? Is acceptance by your peers more important than seeing God reveal himself?

We live in a desperate time and if we are to move forward into the arena in which God is moving today we must be willing to surrender all to follow him. To grow in God we must be willing to go with God.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace to be willing to follow you even when it means risking friends and influence. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: We live in a desperate time and if we are to move forward into the arena in which God is moving today we must be willing to surrender all to follow him. To grow in God we must be willing to go with God.

Affirmation: I have forsaken tradition and have lost relationships that I might follow Jesus wherever he leads and it has been worth the cost.

Reflection: How has your life been restricted by tradition, protocol and peer acceptance? How would your life change if you did not feel the pressure to conform to those things?

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Five

Jesus Made a Prayer Request

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. – Matthew 9:36-37

I remember driving through a certain area of town where I was living many years ago and seeing the people. It felt like I was looking past the broken down cars and houses with paint peeling off. I could see children playing, making do with what little they had, and I was moved with compassion for them.

Jesus must have felt that same compassion as he traveled from village to village healing every disease and preaching the good news of the kingdom of God. Our passage today says, “When he saw the crowds he was moved with compassion.” The point is he looked past the obvious and saw something that others did not see.

Looking deep into the soul of those who gathered around him Jesus saw that the people felt harassed by life. He saw that they felt helpless to change their circumstances, and he saw that they had no leader. There was no shepherd guide to lead them into a secure place.

I can almost see the pain in his face as he turns to his disciples and with a plea from a hurting heart he cries out, “Pray! Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field.”

Have you prayed that prayer? When you see your neighbors, your co-workers, the people at the supermarket, are you moved with compassion? There is

pain and brokenness all around us and we don't see it if we are always wrapped up in what we want to get done for ourselves.

Jesus is calling us to do two things. First, he is calling us to look at the people around us and to see into their soul. See the hurt and helpless person inside of them. Then he calls us to pray. Not a casual prayer but a focused and directed prayer that God will send someone to give them the good news of the kingdom - then be prepared to go.

Prayer: Lord, help me to see what you saw, be moved with compassion and to put feet to my compassion. In Jesus name.

Message: Jesus is calling us to do two things. First, he is calling us to look at the people around us and to see into their soul. See the hurt and helpless person inside of them. Then he calls us to pray. Not a casual prayer but a focused and directed prayer that God will send someone to give them the good news of the kingdom.

Affirmation: I have seen the harassed, helpless, wandering masses and I am committed to serving in the kingdom harvest.

Reflection: Jesus looked beyond the obvious and saw the depth of the hurting people around him. Do you feel the pain of those hurting people? If you don't begin to pray that the Lord will send forth laborers into the harvest.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Six

Jesus Answers His Own Prayer Request

He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. – Matthew 10:1

Chapter 9 concludes with Jesus telling his disciples to pray for laborers in the fields of the Lord. Chapter 10 begins with Jesus answering that prayer request by empowering his disciples and sending them into the harvest.

I was just 13 when I had a dream that has affected my life. It was the dream of a child. My father and I were pilots in a war that ended life on earth. We flew old biplanes from another era. I clearly remember landing the planes on a deserted airstrip and there was no one around except my father and I. I had the sense that there had been a nuclear war and that the only survivors in the world were my father and I.

Then all at once I was struck with the realization that all of these people had died and so few of them knew Jesus as their savior.

At that moment I woke up with tears on my cheeks. That night I spent much time in prayer for those who didn't know Jesus. It was probably that prayer, and others like it, that brought me to the realization that I had to do something besides just pray for people.

When we are moved with compassion for the lost God will speak to our heart and give us a mission to fulfill. Long ago a young shoe salesman attended a gospel meeting. In that meeting the speaker said, "It is yet to be seen what one man can accomplish who is totally sold out to the Lord." The young shoe salesman

answered that challenge and said to himself, "I'll be that man." That young man was Dwight L. Moody.

That was over 150 years ago and the effect of his ministry can still be felt. God is calling men and women into his fields of labor today and he is still looking for those who will accept the challenge of being totally sold out to the cause.

What could God do with you if you accepted that challenge? Are you willing to go where he leads and do what he asks?

Prayer: Father, help me to have a continuing awareness of the call of the harvest and to serve you there. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: When we are moved with compassion for the lost God will speak to our heart and give us a mission to fulfill.

Affirmation: I have seen the crowds and have been moved with compassion. I prayed the Lord to send laborers into the harvest... and he sent me.

Reflection: Over 150 years ago Dwight L Moody heard the call to be the man God could use to change his generation. Have you listened carefully to see if he might be calling you?

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Seven

The Kingdom of Heaven is Near

As you go, preach this message: The kingdom of heaven is near. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. - Matthew 10:7-8

The term, “Kingdom of God,” has a variety of meanings, depending upon the religious orientation of a person. In Judaism it means establishing God’s rule throughout the world headquartered in Jerusalem. In Islam all that is in the world is God’s and thus we are in the kingdom of God now. In Baha’i’ there is belief in a state of spirituality that one attains to through disciplined character and that state offers entrance to the kingdom of God.

Within each of these traditions there is a common thread of hope for a better future. In each religious tradition it is taught that through diligent effort one enters a state of spirituality that raises one to a level of peace and equanimity. Through human effort one attains the kingdom.

In Christianity there is also hope in kingdom reality, but the approach is much different. In our faith we understand that man cannot enter the kingdom of God by his own efforts. A disciplined life and moral character are noble traits, but alone they do not afford entry into God’s kingdom.

There is but one way that one enters God’s Kingdom. Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3, “No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born again.” We enter God’s kingdom by his grace, through faith in Jesus who is the Christ of reconciliation (Ephesians 2:8, 2

Corinthians 5:19). Apostle Peter told us there is no other way to God (Acts 4:12).

As we hear the message of the kingdom of God, it is near us, very near us. But we are not in the kingdom by hearing or by doing good; we enter the kingdom by being born of the Spirit (John 3:5).

The message of the kingdom is good news to those of us who have heard, believed and received it. We who have been born into this kingdom have been born into a living hope (1 Peter 1:3).

Prayer: Father, I thank you for leading me through the morass of religions to the sure hope that is in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Message: A disciplined life and moral character are noble traits, but alone they do not afford entry into God's kingdom. We enter God's kingdom by his grace, through faith in Jesus who is the Christ of reconciliation (Ephesians 2:8, 2 Corinthians 5:19). Apostle Peter told us there is no other way to God (Acts 4:12).

Affirmation: I have heard of the kingdom of God. I believed what I heard and I have taken the action step of putting my faith in Christ. Now the kingdom of God is within me.

Reflection: Every major religion has a teaching about how one enters God's kingdom. What is it about Christianity that is different than all the other religions?

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Eight

Invest in Worthy People

Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at his house until you leave. As you enter the home, give it your greeting. If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. – Matthew 10:11-13

Years ago Jane and I ran a transitional program for homeless families. One day a man showed up at our office wanting a place to live. The pastor of a local church had pulled up to the front of our building, dropped off the homeless man and drove away.

This pastor was typical of so many people who have been burned so much by investing in unworthy people that they have just given up trying to help the desperately needy at all. This brother had forgotten how to find worthy people in which to invest his resources.

Jesus is instructing his disciples to serve those who will receive them and don't overinvest in people who won't receive the message. He was telling them to go from village to village and from house to house with the message of hope the kingdom offered. Those who received them would be benefactor of kingdom grace; healing of sickness and deliverance from spiritual bondage would be their blessing.

I was on the way to church one day and saw a couple digging in a dumpster to find something they could sell to buy food. I stopped and asked if they wanted something to eat. They moved toward my van as I offered, "Come with me to church and afterward I'll take you to get something to eat."

You'd think I was offering them a snake. They backed up and said, "No, that's alright, we'll manage." They

were hungry, but they weren't willing to walk into the light to get food. I could have invested a lot of time and energy in trying to get them to receive the bread of life I was offering them, but they weren't ready so I moved on.

Jesus told the disciples to knock on the door and if they aren't received go to the next door and keep going until someone received them.

Prayer: Lord, grant me wisdom to discern those who will hear and the grace to offer them the kingdom. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Jesus told the disciples to knock on the door and if they aren't received go to the next door and keep going until someone received them. He was telling them to invest in worthy people.

Affirmation: I have realized that I have limited physical energy and resources so I try to be careful not to invest in those who are not ready for the change God wants to effect in their lives.

Reflection: How do we determine who is a worthy person and who is an unworthy person? Is it in how they dress, or how they look, or how they smell? Does it have something to do with their economic circumstances? It is not a science and we all make mistakes, but always be looking for that person who is hungry to find an answer and offer them the answer.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Nine

Be Wise As Snakes and Harmless As Doves

I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. - Matthew 10:16-17

I don't know if one can be wise enough to avoid the wolves, and the commission to be both shrewd and innocent almost seems to be a contradiction of terms. Yet, there it is; the disciples are being charged to be wise as serpents yet harmless as doves.

The wolves Jesus was warning of are the religious leaders who will not accept change. When they meet truth on the street these leaders first will consider whether that truth fits into their neatly structured system of theology. If the truth does fit their theological tradition then they embrace it; if it does not fit they find a way to denigrate it.

Those who would deny Jesus as the Christ because it upsets their belief system are wolves seeking to destroy those who do embrace Jesus as the Christ. Jesus warned to be on guard against these folks.

We face much of the same attitude today, except it comes from a different sort of belief system. The most common belief system in our land today is moral relativism. This system of thought is born in the stream of secular humanism which does not allow for a supreme law giver and which declares that whatever you believe is your truth.

Those who have this belief system are tolerant of what anyone else believes, as long as the other person does not believe in absolute truth which is exclusive

(meaning only those who believe that truth). That is why Christianity and Christians are held in disdain.

For those of us who believe the Bible is the exclusive guide to God we must believe Acts 4:12, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

When you embrace Jesus as the Christ and as the only way to God you must expect to be persecuted, sometimes to the point of rejection, physical assault, and for some, death. We must be shrewd and wise.

Prayer: Lord, Help me to openly share the truth of Christ and to do that in the least offensive way. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: When you embrace Jesus as the Christ and as the only way to God you must expect to be persecuted, sometimes to the point of rejection, physical assault, and for some, death. We must be shrewd and wise.

Affirmation: I have chosen to accept Jesus as the Christ of God and I am prepared to pay the price for embracing this faith, whatever that price may be.

Reflection: Even though we know Jesus to be the only way to God we must be wise in how we approach those who do not share that faith. It would be good to give some thought to how you might share Jesus to those of another faith.

My Thoughts:

Day Thirty

The Cost of Discipleship

Anyone who loves his Father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. – Matthew 10:37-39

I have been blessed in that none of my family has rejected me because of my faith in Christ, but that is not the case with many believers around the world today. We get reports regularly of people who are being severely persecuted for their faith in Christ. Families are divided, believers are beaten and some are martyred for their faith.

There is a passage in Hebrews 11 which talks about people of faith who “were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword... they wandered in deserts, and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised.”

It has been said that the grace of God is free, but it cost him every-thing. The truth is that God freely gives grace to those who believe, but it will cost believers everything as well. Oh, I don't mean that every believer must give up all of their possessions to follow Christ, but if that is what it takes then that must be done.

The picture of the path of faith has been painted in such rosy hues to attract new believers that the true path itself is not easily recognized. This walk of faith is not a stroll in the park.

There are disciplines that we must adhere to and there are lifestyle issues that we must pay attention to. I challenge you today to ask yourself the question: What am I not willing to surrender for my faith? Would it be relationships? Would it be things?

Believers who keep Christ in the closet and live like the world are not the ones Jesus was promising new life to. Those who “believe in Christ” and continue seeking their own life are in danger of losing the life that Christ offers. Whose life do you seek - yours or his?

Prayer: Lord, I know your grace is free, but it isn't cheap. Grant me the grace to seek your life and not my own life. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: It has been said that the grace of God is free, but it cost him every-thing. The truth is that God freely gives grace to those who believe, but it will cost believers everything as well.

Affirmation: I have counted the cost and still I am committed to following Jesus wherever he leads and whatever he leads me to do.

Reflection: We have been so concerned about calling people to accept Jesus as the Christ that we may not have given them a fair picture of what that means. Jesus said we must be willing to forsake family and friends to follow him. We must also take up a cross of service and commitment to follow him.

My Thoughts:

Tips On Leading A Small Group

We publish the Daily God Walk Study Guide Edition for those who want to use this devotional as a tool for leading small groups.

In the study guide edition there are four additional sections at the end of each devotion: Message, Affirmation, Reflection, and My Thoughts. below is an explanation of how to use each of them in a small group discussion.

Message: This is the message of the devotion for the day. Ask the group to express how they can see this principle in the devotion then use that to kick off the discussion.

Affirmation: The affirmation is an example of how we can begin to internalize the principle of the devotion. We can repeat the affirmation in a prayer making it personal. We can also just repeat it throughout the day while giving thought to the principle.

Reflection: These statements and questions are designed to help guide discussion and make application of the devotion in the daily life of the participant.

My Thoughts: This section is just blank lines. Encourage your group to "Journal" their thoughts on the devotion each day. By writing out the thoughts that come from the devotion and the discussion on the devotion the individuals will find that their walk of faith is enhanced.

My experience is that we usually only make it through one or two of the daily devotions at one group setting, but it is good to encourage the group to work through the principle, affirmation, reflection and my thoughts section for each daily devotion at home.

For more information on using the Daily God Walk Study Guide Edition for small groups, go online at:

www.dailygodwalk.org/small-groups

We value your comments on the Daily God Walk. It would be a blessing if you sent us an email with your comments about our program. Email us at: paul@nhmresources.org

The Temptation Prayer

A prayer to help growing followers of Christ overcome the temptations in their lives

Most of us have a primary temptation that has plagued us for many years. For too many of us that primary temptation has been our downfall and for many years we were defeated in this area.

Now we are struggling to be free, but the temptation keeps coming back to us and it becomes frustrating. We agree with Apostle Paul in Romans 7:15, "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do." Does that sound like you? If it does, the Temptation Prayer holds good news for you.

Many years ago when I was struggling with an undesirable (sinful) behavior pattern in my life I went through a period of intensive searching. I was making a moral inventory of myself and was discouraged at what I was discovering.

When I became fully aware that I couldn't be victorious over this sinful behavior pattern alone I realized that it was only through the power of God that I would ever be free.

During that time I discovered a very important passage of scripture. It was 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. The part that stood out to me was that When Paul appealed to God concerning his weakness, or "thorn

in my flesh” as he called it, God simply told him, “My grace is sufficient.”

In God’s answer to Paul he gave us tremendous insight into the process of living in victory over our addictions. In verse 9 God says, “My power is made perfect in weakness.” God is literally telling us that the weaker we are in any area, the stronger he becomes in us and if we will rely upon his strength he will give us his power to overcome.

In gaining an understanding of this process God gave me a prayer that has been vital in my restoration process and has helped many people that have used it in their own restoration. I call it the temptation prayer. It provides a format for praying when we are being tempted in the area of our primary weakness. Here is the prayer:

The Temptation Prayer

Father God, I come to you in weakness today. I am being tempted by _____. I cannot tell you that I desire you above this thing, but I desire this thing. If I did not desire it I would not be tempted, because James wrote, “Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed” (James 1:14).

I now make a conscious decision of my will to surrender this evil desire to you. Your Word says, “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). Even though my desire is for evil, my decision is to submit to you. I know surrender my will to you.

I ask you to take this evil desire from me. James also wrote, “You have not because you ask not”

(James 4:2). I am asking that you take this desire from me.

You have said, "Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and the door will be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7). Just know I am asking, seeking and knocking at your door. Receive me into your presence and take this desire from me in Jesus name.

Now I praise and thank you for answering my prayer. Paul told us "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving present your request to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7). Therefore I am giving you praise and thanksgiving for what you are doing for me this very minute.

Father God, I am thankful for your help. Thank you for answering this prayer. Thank you for receiving me. Thank you for the peace I am feeling just now. Thank you for caring friends and family. I give you praise for all things, in Jesus name, amen.

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Pray this prayer as often as you need, many times an hour if necessary. You will find that the more consistently you apply this prayer in your times of temptation that the times of temptation will become less frequent.

It is not essential that you use the exact wording given in this pamphlet, but it is important that you keep the essential elements. Let's take a closer look at the prayer.

Examining The Temptation Prayer

Notice in the prayer that every point carries with it a passage from the scripture. It is vitally important to commit passages of scripture to memory so that you can use them in prayer and in your daily life as you grow in the grace of God.

Joshua began to realize the value of God's word when the Lord gave him this instruction; "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful" (Joshua 1:8).

"I come to you in weakness"—we are acknowledging our inability to overcome this temptation alone. (God's power is made perfect in weakness)

"I cannot tell you that I desire you above this thing, but I desire this thing"—This is being honest with God. We honestly do not desire him when we are tempted. We may know that we should desire him, but we must confess that we desire the object of our temptation at that moment.

"I now make a conscious decision of my will to surrender this evil desire to you"—This vital step is important because we are making a conscious decision to surrender our will over to God. This step is absolutely necessary if we are to live in victory over our undesirable behaviors.

"I ask you to take it from me"—This part of the prayer implies that you have already become willing to have God remove this desire. Though you want it, you have, by a choice of the will, decided to surrender it to God. This is simply the asking part.

God waits for you to ask so he can do what he does so well.

“You have said”—When Jesus was tempted by the devil in the wilderness (Matthew 4) he said repeatedly, “It is written...” When we bring our petitions to God with his word it not only restates his promises, but it shows our commitment to him and his word.

“Now I praise and thank you for answering my prayer”—As we begin to praise God for his goodness and mercy His spirit begins to bring our hearts back to him. All at once we realize that the thing we desire *is him*, and that the other thing is not a temptation now.

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The purpose of this prayer is to give you a tool to help you in your Christian walk. If you would like more information or if you desire encouragement or fellowship, feel free to contact us.