Treasures From The Sermon on the Mount
Volume Two
Dr. Rod Mattoon
RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OUR READERS ON THE
TREASURES FROM SCRIPTURE BOOKS
* Brother Mattoon, I am reading your book Treasures From Judges. I am completely
blessed by your writings. Your outlines are excellent and the material is above reproach;
the illustrations are well chosen. I do pray that God’s richest blessings will continue upon
you and your ministry.
Dr. Lee Roberson, Chancellor, Tennessee Temple University, Chattanooga, Tennessee

* Dr. Mattoon has given to the Christian world a very practical, powerful, and prudent
filled book. This book will serve as a text in Christian colleges and seminaries. This book
is very readable for the common person who has no background in understanding Genesis.
This book is a goldmine for Sunday School teachers and Christian workers.
**Dr. J. Arnold Fair, Pastor, Faith Baptist Church, Angola, Indiana**

* This book is filled with what the title suggests, "Treasures". It’s not only a good
commentary on Genesis, but also a great reference book on Old Testament customs and
Treasures From Judges is beautifully done. It is practical, straightforward and even
tackling some of today’s more difficult issues. Well done, Rod.
** Dr. Greg McLaughlin, Pastor, Calvary Baptist Church, Huntsville, Alabama**

* Treasures From Genesis by Dr. Rod Mattoon should be in the library of every young
preacher. The outlines are excellent and provide a valuable source for sermon
material. ** Dr. Sylvester Matthews*

* The pages of this book are packed with research and information that will feed any
pastor’s people. It is not hard to use and is very readable and useable. It is first class
in its publishing and layout. It’s structure is well thought out and the result is a book that
invites your attention. The features most helpful to me are the illustrative charts, the
alliterated outlines and the subject index in the back of the book.
** Pastor Mark Thrift, Parkwood Baptist Church, Houston, Texas**

* After perusing this volume of Genesis, I was made aware of the fact that this book is not
just a book about Genesis and how to interpret it, but it is a book filled with a treasure of
knowledge rarely found in one volume. The tools you have provided will allow anyone
studying this book to find information at his or her fingertips that will enrich his
knowledge of God’s Word and the subject at hand. The index information you printed
in the book is also easy to find and especially helpful when looking for a specific topic in
the book.

** Dr. Ron Allen**

* The books are some of the best material I’ve read and studied. They fed me. It has
been a joy and a blessing to study these books. Thanks.
*Pastor Mike Oldham, Sanford, North Carolina*
* Dear Rod. Thank you for your kind gift of *Treasures from Philippians*. I appreciate your labor and research and hard work in producing this book. Thank you also for thinking of me and sending me a copy of it. I appreciate this gesture of kindness and generosity. May God give it a broad audience and influential reading. May God’s blessings be with your ministry.

****Dr. Jack Schaap, Pastor of First Baptist Church, Hammond, Indiana****

* Your work on Genesis is not only one of the finest commentaries on that particular text, but the practical “life applications” for the believer’s walk, especially as you relate the truth to other parts of Scripture are outstanding! I urge every serious Bible student, teacher, and preacher to add this commentary to their library.

**Evangelist Dennis Erwin, Edgewood, Texas**

*I have been reading and studying through Dr. Mattoon’s Treasure series and I must say that they have truly been a blessing to me. Not only do they contain a wealth of information but they have also helped me to study the Bible in a way that I had not before. Consequently, they have helped me in my own sermon preparation. The Bible believing world has needed such resources.

**Pastor Walter Myers, Maynard, Massachusetts**

* Treasures from Genesis is delightful and refreshing reading. It is unlike any other book that I have on the subject. To anyone looking for treasures and nuggets of gold, I recommend this book to you. The scholarship is great but it is not filled with verbage. Treasures from Ruth is bread from Bethlehem’s oven. If you want to glean in Ruth, stay in this field and you will not exhaust the precious truth in this Gold mine. It is filled with handfuls of purposes for pastors and preachers. Glean in this book to feed yourself and others.

**Dr. Graydon Giles, Devon, Alberta, CANADA**

* In my library I have 34 books on Genesis. Dr. Mattoon’s wonderful work is unlike any other and in my opinion in the first five. It is filled with alliterated outlines that come from the text. The applications are pungent and perhaps best of all this book is a wealth of information on traditions and customs of Bible times that I have read no where else. I would encourage any pastor preaching from Genesis to be sure to purchase this work. Your book on Judges has great titles, wonderful insights and exposition.

** Dr. Joe Mark, Evangelist, Towanda, Illinois**

* Dear Dr. Mattoon.... Praise the Lord, you have written three more books. It sure made my day when I opened the mail and read the circular. I have all the previous books you have done and they have been such a help and a blessing to me, not only in my ministry and teaching, but also in my own devotional reading and leisure time. Thank you so much for dedicating the talent the Lord has given you in writing and may He continue to bless you in this area and use you mightily in the days to come to produce some more fine commentaries. They are a great addition to my library. I highly recommend them to other preacher friends...

Dr. Ernest Moore, Cumberland County Maranatha Baptist Church, Vineland, N.J.
Features of the Treasure from Scripture Series

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* Some books have a topical directory of entire set.
* To date, being used by 6000 preachers.
This Book is Dedicated to
Pastor Ronnie Barefield
Pastor of Unity Baptist Church
Ripley, Mississippi

We want to honor Pastor Barefield for his many years of dedication to the Lord Jesus Christ and his willingness to sacrifice and be used of God to encourage so many pastors and laymen.

Thank You Ronnie for your faithfulness to our Lord.
Thank You
Lincoln Land Baptist Church

It has been again a wonderful delight and joy to be able to bring these studies to you. They were preached at Lincoln Land Baptist Church in 2006. I want to express my gratitude and love to my wonderful church family for their love, encouragement, spiritual maturity, sacrifice, and vision in allowing me to have this ministry and letting the world share in the pulpit ministry of Lincoln Land Baptist Church and in the hours of research and preparation that go behind each message. Thousands of dollars have been spent to produce this ministry for preachers all over the world. If you ever get the chance, come and meet these wonderful Christians. They are precious people that want our church to be used of God for His glory!

Lincoln Land Baptist Church is an Independent, Fundamental Baptist Church in Springfield, Illinois, which is the capital of the great state of Illinois. This church has had a rich heritage of pastors that have fed the church on evangelistic, expository Bible preaching since it was begun in 1965. In August of 2005, we celebrated our 40\textsuperscript{th} birthday.

Since 1999, the book ministry of this church has grown beyond whatever we dreamed as over 6000 preachers are now using these books in their studies and 200 Bible colleges or institutes are using them in their curriculums or by their students in their private studies. The books are also being sent to prison libraries across the country to assist inmates with their walk with the Lord while they serve their time. We are also providing the books for soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan who have been saved and desire to learn more about the Bible. What a blessing, but what a responsibility too. For this reason, we strive to be as accurate, thorough, and practical in our research and presentation of Scripture and Christian history.

Since August of 1971, I have had a thirst to learn the Word and preach its truths. What a wonderful journey it has been to dig for delightful diamonds of truth in the Scriptures these past 36 years. I hope this 21\textsuperscript{st} book on Treasures from the Sermon on the Mount, Vol.2, will enlighten, encourage, energize and enrich you and bring you closer to our wonderful Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.
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This is the 21st book in the series. First Printing: April, 2007
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Chapter 1
How Can You be Broke When You’re Paid in Full?

Matthew 6:1-4
Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. [2] Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. [3] But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: [4] That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

As the curtain opens on the Matthew 6 section of the Sermon of the Mount, we are confronted with the issue of our motives for our actions and our rewards for service from God or from men. To the Jewish people, there were three great deeds of a spiritual life, three great pillars on which the good life was based--almsgiving, asking in prayer, and the abstinence of fasting. Jesus directs His focus on these areas, not that these things are bad. No, these are great things to do. The Lord, however, had a problem of the performance of these right actions with the wrong motives. This is what He targets in this first section of Matthew 6. He sets His scope on our motives and purpose for service.

What is the reason behind the spiritual work we do? Are we glorifying God or are we seeking the praise of people? The Bible clearly indicates that God is concerned about what is going on in our hearts.

* Proverbs 4:23- Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.
Ch. 1 How Can You Be Broke When You’re Paid in Full?

The Sermon on the Mount exposes the condition of the heart of the believer. We will see that when good things are done with the sole intention of bringing glory to the doer, they lose by far the most important part of their value. The reward for those deeds is squandered.

If people are not careful, they may be generous, pray, or fast for the wrong reasons, and thus, lose the blessings connected with those activities by exalting themselves. This is what the Lord wants us to avoid. He reveals our wretchedness in order to show our need for depending upon Him and His grace. He wants us to be blessed and used of God in a wonderful way.

Spiritual growth and victories, however, require discernment and caution. Satan loves to push us off our mountain tops. When you start growing spiritually and render great service to Christ with your life, it is very easy to start doing your acts of righteousness before men in order to be seen by them and covet their praise. Your motive for service can get distorted and leave you proud, cocky, and depleted of blessings. For these reasons, Jesus shows us in the first four verses How You Can be Broke When You’re Paid in Full.

I. THE CAUTION ABOUT OUR CHARITY 6:1

*Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.*

Jesus begins this section with words of caution...“*take heed.*” Jesus is not fooling around here. He is dead serious. Grammatically, these words are in the imperative mood in the Greek which means that this is a command, not a request or suggestion. God doesn’t give us commands to pass the time of day or for His enjoyment. They are given for good reasons.

“Take heed” is derived from the Greek word *prosecho* (pros-ekh’-o) which means “grasp and pay attention, beware, guard yourself, be addicted to or devote your thoughts.” Jesus wants us to listen up and take every possible precaution to guard against this sin of giving with the wrong motives. We are not to do this once in a while. No, the present Greek tense is used which means we are to be *continually and constantly* taking heed about our motives in giving. We are not to drop our guard in this matter. We are to pay attention today and pay attention tomorrow concerning our motives for giving.

What are alms? What is Jesus talking about? The word "alms" speaks of giving charity to those who are poor and needy. The word
"alms" is defined as "mercy or pity" and is spoken of as a donation to the poor. True almsgiving involves compassion and mercy. The Greek word, *eleemosune* (el-eh-ay-mos-oo'-nay) which is here rendered "alms," is derived from a Greek root word, *eleos*, which signifies "to have compassion or to be merciful." To the Jew almsgiving was the most sacred of all religious duties. How sacred it was may be seen from the fact that the Jews used the same word *tsedqah* both for righteousness and almsgiving. Both of these words were linked together. To give alms and to be righteous were one and the same thing. To give alms was to gain merit in the sight of God, and was even to win atonement and forgiveness for past sins according to the Jews.

Jesus is not speaking here about offerings for the church or for missionaries. Giving alms is not part of your tithes and offerings for the Lord's work, so we do not have a lesson on tithes and offering here. An alm is charity for those who are truly poor and needy.

Charity for the poor involves not only compassion and mercy, but it requires wisdom and discernment too. Our charity should not destroy the character of another or develop laziness. Our giving should not make them dependent upon us to the point they expect us to give or even demand us to give to them. This can happen, believe me I have seen this in my lifetime. Healthy people who are very capable of working, but won't, need to go without a meal or two and get motivated to get off their couch.

* 2 Thessalonians 3:10- For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

**The Lord is concerned about our motives.** The motive of an act goes far to settle its essential moral quality. Giving just to be seen and praised of men is denounced very clearly here by the Lord. Let us be clear that the Lord is not condemning giving before men but giving to be seen by men—that is, to be seen so you can be praised by men. A lot of this kind of giving goes on today. People have a variety of motives for giving.

**1. Duty-**

A man may give from a sense of duty. He may give not because he wants to give, but because he feels that giving is a duty which he cannot escape. He may feel compelled to help others and that it is his responsibility.

2. **Desire-**

A man may give out of a desire to be acknowledged and praised. He may give to get to himself the glory associated with giving. He gives "to be seen." This phrase is from the Greek word *theaomai* which means
“to be noticed.” It forms our English word “theater.” It has in mind a spectacle to be gazed at. In other words, Jesus is warning about practicing a form of righteousness whose purpose is to show off before men. Such religion is like a play; it is not real life, but acting. It does not demonstrate what is in the minds and hearts of the actors, but is simply a performance designed to make a certain impression on those who are watching.

How sad to go through life not being yourself, but always on a quest to make an impression on people who really don’t care and easily forget what we have done. If you want to impress someone, then impress God. Robert Baker said, “As I grow older, I care less what people think about me and more what God thinks of me. I expect to be with Him much longer than with you.” That’s good advice. Worry about what the Lord thinks instead of what men think. Paul tried to teach us this truth.

* 1 Thessalonians 2:4- But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.
* Galatians 1:10- For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.
* Ephesians 6:6- Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

Some folks will not give unless they are recognized. They want their deed to be seen. Recognition is important because they seek power and influence and it gives them a sense of importance and value. They want their name on a plate or perhaps a building to which they have donated millions of dollars. These types of givers want everyone to know what they have given. If no one knows about their giving, or, if there is no publicity attached to it, they will not give at all. Giving is done, not to the glory of God, but to the glory of themselves. They give, not primarily to help the poor, but to gratify their own sense of power and prestige. Their attitude is “Look at what I did. Look at me.” They may be paid in praise, but still broke.

3. Delight

Some individuals give because of the delight and joy they receive in giving to others. They love to help people. They may give simply because the overflowing love and kindness in their hearts will allow them to do nothing else. Jesus was an example to us in how to give and invest our lives in other people.

* 2 Corinthians 8:9- For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.
The Lord does not forbid us to give alms before men always, but only forbids our doing it to be seen of them, for the purpose of self-glory, and to seek men’s praises which makes us proud. To a person who is inclined to do good from a right motive and heart, it matters little whether his deed be in public or in private. Sometimes his deed will be public, but it may not be intentional. The only thing that matters is that the Lord is glorified. This is why the Lord denounces giving with the wrong motives because it does not glorify the Lord. It glorifies men.

**God is very concerned about His glory and deserves our praise.** Men who seek to glorify themselves instead of God will not receive any reward from God. Let that sink in a minute. No reward! No matter how big your gift is, you lose, and what you lose is heavenly reward. What a waste! Maclaren said, “What a poor thing it is which they seek—the praise of men, a breath, as unsubstantial and short-lived as the blast of trumpet.”

How foolish to thirst for sips of men’s praise that cannot quench the thirst of satisfaction. Wait a minute, you will not only lose heavenly reward, you may also lose virtue and character when you seek the praise of men. Seeking the praise of men can be corrupting, because many times, in order to gain the praise of men, you have to lower yourself to the standards and vices of men.

For example, two brothers had terrorized a small town for decades. They were unfaithful to their wives, abusive to their children, and dishonest in business. They were scoundrels. The younger brother died unexpectedly. The surviving brother went to the pastor of the local church. "I’d like you to conduct my brother's funeral," he said, "but it’s important to me that during the service, you tell everyone my brother was a saint." "But he was far from that," the pastor countered. The wealthy brother pulled out his checkbook. "Preacher, I’m prepared to give $100,000 to your church. All I’m asking is that you publicly state that my brother was a saint."

Well, what’s this pastor going to do? The money was a motivation to compromise in order to gain the approval and gift of the brother. Here is what happened. On the day of the funeral, the pastor began his eulogy this way, "Everyone here knows that the deceased was a wicked man, a womanizer, and a drunk. He terrorized his employees and cheated on his taxes." Then he paused. "But as evil and sinful as this man was, compared to his older brother, he was a saint!" God gave the pastor wisdom to turn the tables on the surviving deceptive brother. Beloved, God wants us to beware about seeking the approval of men for it can lead
to traps and detrimental compromises. Solomon gave us a warning about this.

* Proverbs 29:25- The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe.

Seeking the praise of men leaves you empty, it has no endurance, it eradicates character. You can be paid in full with what you want, but still be broke and empty. Let me ask, “Why do you give? What are your motives? Are you glorifying God with your life and deeds? God gives us several insights about glorifying Him and about our motives. Let’s note the insights about glorifying the Lord first.

* Glorifying God

1. Whatever we do should glorify God, not ourselves.

* 1 Corinthians 10:31- Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

Jonathan Edwards said, “Resolved: that all men should live for the glory of God. Resolved second: That whether others do or not, I will.” Is it any wonder why God did use him?

* Galatians 5:26- Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

2. Glorifying yourself can bring embarrassment and judgment.

Alice Grayson was to bake a cake for the Baptist Church ladies’ group bake sale, but she forgot to do it until the last minute. She remembered it the morning of the bake sale and after rummaging through her cabinets she found a dusty, old, angel food cake mix in the back of her kitchen cabinet and quickly made it while drying her hair, dressing, and helping her son pack up for Scout camp.

Unfortunately, when Alice took the cake from the oven, the center had dropped flat and the cake was horribly disfigured. She said, "Oh dear, there's no time to bake another cake." This cake was so important to Alice because she wanted to fit in at her new church, and in her new community of new friends. So, being inventive and not wanting anyone to think she was not the perfect woman able to handle all things at all times, or that, God forbid, she was not participating in her church's bazaar, she looked around the house for something to build up the center of the sunken cake.

Alas, Alice found what she needed in the bathroom—a roll of toilet paper. She plunked it in the center of the cake and then covered it with lots of icing. Not only did the finished product look beautiful, it looked perfect! Before she left the house to drop the cake by the church and head
for work, Alice awakened her daughter Amanda. She gave her some money and specific instructions to be at the bake sale the minute it opened at 9:30, buy that cake, and then bring it home. When the daughter arrived at the sale, she found that the attractive, perfect cake had already been sold! Uh, Oh! Now what?

Amanda grabbed her cell phone and called her mom. Alice was horrified and was beside herself. Everyone would know what she did and what would they think? “Oh, my!” she wailed. “I will be ostracized, talked about, and ridiculed. I will have to move again!” All night Alice lay awake in bed thinking about people pointing their fingers at her and talking about her behind her back.

The next day, Alice promised herself that she would try not to think about the cake and she would attend a fancy luncheon/bridal shower at the home of a friend of a friend and try to have a good time. Alice did not really want to attend because the hostess was a snob who more than once had looked down her nose at the fact that Alice was a single parent and not from the founding families of their town. Having already RSVP'd, however, she could not think of a believable excuse to stay home.

The meal was elegant, the company was definitely upper crust old South---and to Alice's horror, the CAKE she had made with the toilet roll was presented for dessert. Alice felt the blood drain from her body when she saw THE CAKE. She started to get out of her chair to rush to tell her hostess all about it, but before she could get to her feet, the Mayor's wife said, "What a beautiful cake!" Alice, who was still stunned and trying to formulate what words she would use to explain the situation, sat back in her chair when she heard the hostess, who was a prominent church member say, "Thank you, I baked it myself." Alice smiled and thought to herself, "There is a God! There IS a GOD!!!" Beloved, beware of glorifying yourself or robbing God of His glory. Lucifer and Herod found this out the hard way.

* Isaiah 14:12-15- How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! [13] For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: [14] I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. [15] Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.

* Acts 12:23- And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.
* Matthew 23:12- And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.
* Proverbs 16:18- Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.
* Daniel 5:20- But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: Nebuchadnezzar lost the glory he craved.

3. We are to shine for Christ and glorify Him.
* Matthew 5:16- Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

4. We are to glorify God in our body and spirit. Our body and spirit are affected by our motives. When we set out to truly glorify the Lord with our life, He will exalt us in His time. The recognition and praise that men seek is found in glorifying God, not themselves. His praise is not temporary, but eternal. Unfortunately, many folks, including some Christians, adopt the philosophy of Paul Simon of Simon and Garfunkle. He wrote the following words which depict an attitude of isolation and unconcern for others:

    Don't talk of love, I've heard the word before;
    It's sleeping in my memory of feelings that have died.
    I have no need of friendship, friendship causes pain.
    If I never loved, I never would have cried.
    *I am a rock; I am an island.*

    I have my books and my poetry to protect me.
    Shielded in my armor,
    Hiding in my room,
    Deep within my womb,
    I touch no one and no one touches me.
    *I am a rock; I am an island.*

    Maybe Paul Simon’s struggle can be summed up in the little word “I.” This is the problem with many folks. Beloved, our life does not belong to us, but to the Lord. May we use our life to glorify the Lord and touch the lives of others. We are not to live in a shell.
* 1 Corinthians 6:20- For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.

    A gem dealer was strolling the aisles at the Tucson Gem and Mineral Show when he noticed a blue-violet stone, the size and shape of a potato. He looked it over, then, as calmly as possible, asked the vendor, "You want $15 for this?" The seller, realizing the rock wasn't as pretty as others in the bin, lowered the price to $10. The stone has since been certified as
a 1,905-carat natural star sapphire, about 800 carats larger than the largest stone of its kind. It was appraised at $2.28 million. It took a lover of stones to recognize the sapphire’s worth. It took the Lover of Souls to recognize the true value of ordinary-looking people like us. We belong to the Lord. He saw value in us and knows our potential. For this reason, we should bring honor and glory to Him for anything we accomplish. Without Him, we can do nothing.

* Your Motives

What are the motives of your heart? Why do you do what you do? This is the concern of the probing eye of God. Our Lord knows that our motives are the catalyst of our choices. Our decisions, actions, words, and responses are influenced by the roots of the motives of our heart. This is why God’s choice for leadership was Moses, not Aaron. He saw weakness and jealousy in Aaron’s heart. God rejected David’s brother Eliab for the throne for He saw something wrong in his heart.

* 1 Samuel 16:7- But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.

The challenge of Christ for us is to keep our motives right and to shun anything that will rob God of the glory that belongs only to Him. As a pastor, do you seek God’s glory in the ministry or the glory of other preachers or denominational leaders? Who are you really trying to impress? I mention this because many preachers get caught in pastoral politics. They scratch the back of other preachers or leaders to get big meetings, speaking engagements, or recommendations to pastor larger churches. I never cease to be amazed at the worship of preachers among preachers. Men seem to be exalted more than the Lord Jesus Christ in some circles that I have observed. I don’t get it. Brethren, let’s get back to exalting the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, the man who died on the cross. Remember Him? Let’s do this in all things, in all meetings, instead of magnifying men with big churches or national ministries. As my father would say, “They put their pants on the same way you do.” They are no better than you. If you are faithful to Christ and glorify Him, you are just as important as the guy with a big ministry. God is looking at your motives and will reward you when you honor Him. The Bible reveals several insights about our motives that we should note.
1. Our Motives will be Revealed.
* 1 Corinthians 4:5- Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.
* Ecclesiastes 12:14- For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.
* Romans 2:16 - In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.
* Hebrews 4:13- Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

2. Our Motives can be kept Right. Seek to please the Lord and glorify Him with your life, not yourself. The priority of Jesus’ life was to glorify God the Father.
* Philippians 2:5-8... Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: [6] Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: [7] But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: [8] And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.
* Matthew 6:33- But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. It was William Carey, the founder of modern missions, who said, "Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God."
* John 4:34- Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.
* John 17:4 - I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.
* Acts 20:24 - But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.
* Philippians 3:13-14... Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Someone printed these words under a tranquil scene on a calendar: "Today is the tomorrow we worried about yesterday." We do spend a lot of time worrying about tomorrow. We may spend so much time worrying
about tomorrow that we miss the opportunities of today. God wants us to not be distracted by failures or victories of the past, but to use the opportunities of today to honor Him. The purpose of our lives in glorifying the Lord will help us to keep our motives right and our life on track.

3. Our Motives may be Refuted or Resisted.

* Job 1:9-11... Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? [10] Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. [11] But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.

Job refuted this challenge by his response to his trials. The motives of his heart surfaced in the actions of his life. We are to live our lives in such a way, that when we are falsely accused or our motives are refuted, our life will speak louder than the slander of our critics. Notice what Peter said.

* 1 Peter 3:16- Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. You are to keep our conscience clear so that if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. THE CAUSE OF THE HYPOCRITE 6:2

Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

The Lord continues to explain to us why a person can be broke when they are paid in full. He continues to give us instructions on what not to do when we are giving to the poor, by directing our attention to the giving of hypocrites. In essence, He is saying, “Don’t do what these guys do.” What did they do? Jesus explained that the hypocrites sounded a trumpet in the synagogues or streets when they were giving to the poor. What is this all about? Let’s look at the meaning of the sound of trumpets and the meaning of the word “hypocrite.”

The wrong way to give is to blow your own horn, which is precisely what Jesus was saying if He was using symbolic language. There is old evidence that during this period, the Jewish priests blew trumpets in the
Ch. 1 How Can You Be Broke When You’re Paid in Full?

Temple when they collected funds for some special need. This phrase “sound a trumpet” may also be a reference to the thirteen trumpet-shaped collection chests in the Temple that noisily announced contributions that people tossed into them. Men who wanted glory from their giving would throw their coins down into these trumpet chests in order to make a lot of noise and be noticed.

We must note, however, that Jesus mentioned the synagogues and streets, not the Temple. It is most likely Jesus referred to the blowing of trumpets in the streets that announced fasts that included alms-giving. It is very likely that this was literally practiced among the Pharisees, who seemed to live on public praise, and were excessively self-righteous and vain.

It is interesting to note that there is a custom in the East similar to this. The derveshes carry horns with them, which they frequently blow, when any thing is given to them, in honor of the donor. It is not impossible that some of the poor Jews who begged alms might have been furnished with some kind of horn, like the Persian derveshes, who were a sort of religious beggar. These hypocrites might have been inclined to confine their charitable giving to those that they knew would pay them this honor. A. T. Robertson pointed out that a missionary told him that in India the Hindu priests did indeed sound a literal trumpet in order to get a crowd when they were about to give alms or do some other religious deed.

The word “hypocrite” is derived from the Greek word *hypokrites* (*hoop-ok-ree-tace’*). It means to be an actor or pretender, playing the part of another. It was used of actors who acted out parts in plays on the stage. Such play acting was seen during times of mourning. In New Testament times some people made their living as professional mourners, who were paid to weep, wail, and tear their garments at funerals and on other occasions of sadness. It is said that some mourners were careful to tear their clothing at a seam, so that the material could easily be sewn back together for the next “mourning” opportunity. Both the professional mourners and those who hired them were hypocrites, hiring and being hired to put on a display of mourning that was entirely fake.

This word "hypocrite" accurately describes professional mourners, but also those who do their almsgiving or any other deed for the praise of men. They want more praise than their deeds merit. Hypocrites are acting the part of another, for they are trying to act the part of one who has done a great deal more than they are actually doing. Furthermore, in their almsgiving, they are acting the part of one who is concerned about the
poor, but in reality they are not interested in the poor at all. Instead, they are interested only in the praise of men. Their efforts to appear interested in the poor are nothing but play-acting. Their almsgiving is mostly a staged act. They are hypocrites and phonies. We always need to be on guard of this ever-present problem of becoming a hypocrite.

**The hypocrite has his reward.** He is paid in full, but is broke and has nothing. This is a devastating comment. It may not appear that way to the casual reader, but the examination of the language will make it plain that it is a devastating comment. The word "have" comes from the Greek word *apecho* (*ap-ekh'-o*). The language of Jesus here is emphatic or decisive. *Apecho* is a technical term for commercial transactions and means to "receive a sum in full and give a receipt for it." Men's praise is all the reward that hypocritical or glory-givers will receive.

**When you think about it, you will find that they were not giving but buying, and they got what they paid for...the praise of men.** It is possible to be the most generous Christian around, both in the amount and proportion you give, and yet have no reward, except what you immediately receive. You can be paid in full, but really have nothing. The reward that hypocritical almsgivers will get is the reward of cheap, human praise which they are seeking by doing their good works for self-glory. There is no heavenly reward for them. There is no reward in the future. That momentary praise of men is their entire reward. They have been paid in full, but have nothing and have no reward to look forward to in eternity. That is a tragedy.

**Your spiritual sight is dim if you clutch for the fleeting rewards of earth and let the rewards of Heaven slip through your fingers like sand from a beautiful beach.** An Aesop's fable tells of a wolf who wanted to have a sheep for his dinner and decided to disguise himself as a lamb and follow the flock into the fold. While the wolf waited until the sheep went to sleep, the shepherd decided he would have mutton for his own meal. In the dark he picked out what he thought was the largest, fattest sheep, but after he had killed the animal, he discovered it was a wolf. What that shepherd did inadvertently to a wolf in sheep's clothing, God does intentionally. The Lord judges hypocrisy.
III. THE CONCEALMENT OF OUR GIVING 6:3-4a

But when thou dost alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: [4] That thine alms may be in secret: ...

Jesus has told us what not to do when it comes to charitable giving. Now He tells us what we should do. Our Lord uses an extreme, absurd illustration to emphasize the intense privacy that should be present when we give to help others. The left hand is not to know what the right hand is doing. What is this all about?

The right hand is the one we normally use in giving because most of us are right-handed. Thus, when we give, our giving must be so hidden that the left hand does not even see what is happening. The idea is, we are not to tell others of our giving and we are not to make a big deal of it to ourselves. It is to be done in secret. In many cases, works of charity must be hidden from even our nearest relatives, who, if they knew, would hinder us from doing what God has given us power and inclination to perform. We must go even farther and conceal them as far as is possible from ourselves, by not thinking of them, or eyeing them with self-satisfaction or fodder for future boasting.

The idea of not letting the left hand know what the right hand does pictures secrecy. The best way to avoid hypocrisy is to let no other people know when we give. In Jesus’ time it is said that there was a special, out-of-the-way place in the Temple where shy, humble Jews could leave their gifts without being noticed. Another place nearby was provided for the shy poor, who did not want to be seen asking for help. Here they would come and take what they needed. The name of the place was the Chamber of the Silent. People gave and people were helped, but no one knew the identities of either group. Thus, a person could give in secret to the poor.

The fact that we are to do our good deeds in "secret" does not mean that they are never to be done in a more public way. We can carry this to the extreme, of course. Some of our works cannot help but be seen of men. True righteousness cannot be kept entirely secret, and should not be. God is going to bless those who love and help others with the right motives.

* Psalm 106:3- Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times.

Jesus' point here was that we should not draw attention to ourselves when we give. Christ says that we are to shun public attention and also personal attention. Our almsgiving (as well as any other good
works) need to be done with better motives than to impress people. Beloved, we do not need people's attention to get God's attention, and God's attention is all that we need. Do not worry about how many know about your charitable gifts or other good work. It only matters that God knows, and He knows all we do whether it be done in public or in private.

Some folks may see a contradiction here with a previous verse in the Sermon on the Mount which says, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). There is, however, no contradiction. The discrepancy is only imaginary. This earlier text in the Sermon on the Mount simply tells us to live a godly life unashamedly before men for the glory of God. It condemns those who would conceal from others that they are a Christian and who would not live the Christian life before others.

The question is not whether or not our good works should be seen by others, but whether they are done for that end. When they are done "in such a way" that attention and glory are focused on our "Father who is in heaven" rather than on ourselves, God is pleased, but if they are done to be noticed by men, they are done self-righteously and hypocritically, and are rejected by God. The difference is in purpose and motivation. When what we do is done in the right spirit and for the right purpose, it will almost inevitably be done in the right way.

The text about charitable giving to the poor in Matthew 6 is speaking of an entirely different situation than Matthew 5:16. Matthew chapter six is condemning the glorifying of self. In Matthew 5:16, Jesus is dealing with cowardice, whereas in Matthew 6, He is dealing with hypocrisy. A. B. Bruce gives the helpful explanation, "We are to show when tempted to hide and hide when tempted to show." The overall principle in both texts is that we are to live a life that seeks to glorify God. In the one case it is accomplished by faithfully living a godly life in public and in the other case it is by not seeking personal glory in public. The Christian is to live his life in such a way that when men look at him, and see the quality of his life, will glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. How does this happen?

When a good work has been done, we should dismiss it from our minds and not congratulate ourselves upon it. We are to put it behind us and press on to what is yet before us. We must not within ourselves take notice too much of the good works that we do. We must not applaud and admire ourselves and say, "Wow, look at what I did." We are not to keep track of our personal deeds so later we can boast to others about
them or become puffed up over them. Do not give yourself merit marks or Brownie points. What you should do is forget your goodness, follow God, do what needs to be done today and forget about yesterday’s accomplishments.

Charles Spurgeon and his wife, according to a story in The Chaplain magazine, would sell, but refused to give away, the eggs their chickens laid. Even close relatives were told, "You may have them if you pay for them." As a result some people labeled the Spurgeons as greedy and grasping people. They accepted the criticisms without defending themselves, and only after Mrs. Spurgeon died was the full story revealed. All the profits from the sale of eggs went to support two elderly widows. Because the Spurgeons were willing to let their left hand not know what the right hand was doing and keep their giving secret, they endured their attacks and criticisms in silence.

Whether the person we help is grateful or ungrateful, it should not matter as far as our own purpose is concerned. If he is ungrateful, we are sorry for his sake, not for our own sake. Why? We gave for the purpose of glorifying God and not ourselves. In fact, the ungratefulness of others that we help will be a test of our motives. If we find ourselves getting bitter or upset, then it may indicate our motives were not for God’s glory. If we can still rejoice, in spite of the ungratefulness of others, then our motive was truly for the glory of God and we rejoice in the fact that He is honored and pleased. If we will go ahead and give in secret, we won’t have to worry about the gratefulness of others at all, because they will not know whom to thank except the Lord. Wha la! Our goal, if our motive is pure, is reached. God is glorified, and guess what? He will bless your generosity and pure motives.

* Proverbs 11:25- The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.
* Ecclesiastes 11:1- Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days. Let me add that when others do things for you, be sure to express gratefulness to them.

* Principles for Giving with the Right Motives

1. Start Your Giving by Giving Yourself to the Lord

Before you give anything to the Lord, make sure you have given yourself to Him. When the Lord has you, He has everything else. There is no longer a tug of war between you and God’s will for your life.

* 2 Corinthians 8:5- And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.
David Livingstone, before he had thought of being a missionary himself, devoted to foreign missions all his wages except so much as was required for his frugal needs. Many businessmen today turn over the major portions of their profits to the Lord's work. Have you ever noticed that those folks that give the most are often those that do the most for the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not as though they permit their money to do the work while they sit idly by. No, no, these are those who first give of themselves to the Lord, and then of their substance.

When candy manufacturer John S. Huyler started out in business, he took Jacob's pledge: "...of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee" (Gen. 28:22). Going to the bank, he opened a special account which he initialed "M.P." Into that fund he regularly entered a proportionate amount of his income. When anyone asked what the strange label meant, they were told that it stood for "My Partner." As he kept God uppermost in his mind in all his transactions, his industry grew at a phenomenal rate, and each week the "Lord's treasury" received increasingly large sums. His gifts to worthy causes and private individuals amazed his business associates. These contributions were always accompanied with the request that the donor should not receive any thanks or glory for his actions. He asked each recipient to offer praise to God alone, for he said, "After all, the money isn't mine; it's the Lord's!" Is it any wonder why John Huyler was so greatly blessed.

* Romans 12:1 ... I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

2. The Sacrifice of Giving

Genuine giving is to be sacrificial. The degree of sacrifice is an indication of the importance of the recipient of the gift. Worship is worth ship. When we worship Christ, we are indicating His value and importance to us. Our sacrificial giving is tangible evidence of His worth, His importance to us. In fact, David refused to give to the Lord that which cost him nothing.

* 2 Samuel 24:24- And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.

Generosity is not measured by the size of the gift itself, but by its size in comparison to what is possessed. God's main focus is not on what is in the offering plate, but what is not in the plate. In her book, Today's Good Word, Ethel B. Sutton tells of a young British soldier who was
blinded in battle. He was an accomplished musician and spent much of his
time in the hospital playing the piano for the wounded. He always put his
heart into his playing, hoping the music would encourage the men.

One day when he finished a number, someone clapped energetically.
The soldier asked, "Who are you?" He was astonished when the man
replied, "I am your king!" The king had come to encourage those who had
been wounded for their country. Without realizing it, this young man had
been using his talent to entertain the king.

Peter says, "Each has received a gift." It may not seem like much
when compared with what others may possess, but utilize it "in serving
one another." When it is used, we may be sure there is always an audience
of at least one--our Lord. Do what you can. You may not get much
attention. You may not win an award--you may not be mentioned in the
bulletin, but God notices it.

In fact, when Jesus was teaching in the temple, He went and sat
opposite of the treasury and watched the people as they contributed their
money. There was one who caught the eye of Jesus but she wasn't noticed
by anyone else. The reason, her gift was too small, but in the eyes of
Jesus, it was bigger than all the others. The widow who gave "two small
copper coins" to the Temple treasury gave more than all the many rich
people who were putting in large sums because they all put in out of their
surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to
live on. The Lord was impressed with what she had left. She had
nothing. She gave it all. When you use your gift faithfully--whether it
is an encouraging word, a pat on the back, visiting the lonely, generous
giving of money, making a phone call, providing transportation--whatever
it may be, remember, you're doing it for the King.

* Mark 12:41-44... And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld
how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich
cast in much. [42] And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw
in two mites, which make a farthing. [43] And he called unto him his
disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor
widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:
[44] For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did
cast in all that she had, even all her living.

3. The Standard and Situation of Giving

A person who is not generous when he is poor, will not be generous
if he becomes rich. He might then give a larger amount, but he will not
give a larger proportion. God looks at the proportion of our giving. When
we are faithful stewards of the small gifts and blessings that He entrusts
us with, He may bless us with greater blessings and gifts.

* Luke 16:10- *He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.*

It is extremely important to teach your kids to give generously to the Lord with whatever small amounts of money they get, because the attitudes and patterns they develop as children are likely to be the ones they follow when they are grown. They will develop a philosophy in the area of giving. Beloved, giving is not a matter of how much money one has but of how much love and care is in the heart. If there is no love or concern in the heart, there will be little or no generosity no matter how much wealth a person possesses.

4. Smart Sense in Giving

To those who are not faithful and show wisdom with mundane things such as money and other possessions, the Lord will not entrust things that are of far greater value.

* Luke 16:11-12... *If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? [12] And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?*

Many young men have dropped out of seminary because they could not handle money, and the Lord did not want them in His ministry. Others have begun in the ministry but later dropped out for the same reason. Still others remain in the ministry but produce little fruit because God will not commit the care of eternal souls to them when they cannot even manage their own finances.

5. Self-Determined Giving

Giving is to be personally planned or determined. It is not to be done under pressure, compulsion or reluctantly. Those who beg or arm-twist people to give are in error, no matter what the purpose or cause for the gift. It is never right, to do wrong, in order to do right. There are three kinds of givers -- the flint, the sponge and the honeycomb. To get anything out of a flint you must hammer it. And then you get only chips and sparks. To get water out of a sponge you must squeeze it, and the more you use pressure, the more you will get. The honeycomb, however, just overflows with its own sweetness. Which kind of giver are you?

* 2 Corinthians 9:7- *Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.*

Giving with glad and generous hearts has a way of routing out the tough old miser within us. Even the poor need to know that they can give.
Just the very act of letting go of money, or some other treasure, does something within us. It destroys the demon of greed.

* 2 Corinthians 8:1-2 ... Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; [2] How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

Righteous giving is done from a righteous and generous heart. The Macedonian Christians gave abundantly out of their deep financial poverty because spiritually, they were rich in love for Jesus Christ.

6. The Signals of Stress and Straits of Others

We are to give in response to the needs of others. In fact, we are responsible to be aware and alert to the needs of other people, looking for opportunities to be of help to them. The early Christians in Jerusalem shared their resources without hesitation or reservation. Many of their fellow believers had become destitute when they trusted in Christ and were ostracized from their families and lost employment because of their faith in Christ. Years later, Paul collected money from the Galatian churches to help meet the great needs that continued to exist among the saints in Jerusalem and that had been intensified by famine.

There have always been charlatans who manufacture needs and play on the sympathy of others. There have always been professional beggars, who are able to work, but would rather not. A Christian has no responsibility to support such people and should take reasonable care to determine if and when a real need exists before giving his money. If a person is healthy and can work, but is unwilling to work, then he shouldn’t eat and our money should not be used to encourage his laziness. Where a real need does exist, our obligation to help meet that need also exists.

* 2 Thessalonians 3:10- For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

7. The Source and Sowing of our Giving

We are to give from our heart. When we do this we are investing with God who clearly sees what is going on in our heart. When our giving is sincere and from the heart, we tend to be more generous. When we give, we will reap what we have sown.

August H. Francke, the well-known German preacher of the 17th century, founded an orphanage to take care of the homeless children who roamed the streets of Halle. One day when he desperately needed funds to carry on his work, a destitute Christian widow came to his door begging for one gold ducat. Because of his financial situation, he politely
but regretfully refused. Disheartened, the woman sat down and began to weep. Moved by her tears, Francke asked her to wait while he went to his room to pray about the matter. Seeking God's guidance, he felt that the Holy Spirit wanted him to grant the request. Trusting the Lord to meet his own pressing needs, he gave her the money.

Two mornings later he received a warm letter of thanks from the widow saying that because of his generosity she had asked the Lord to shower the orphanage with gifts. That same day he received 12 ducats from a rich lady and two from a friend in Sweden. He thought he had been amply rewarded, but shortly afterward he was informed that Prince Lodewyk Van Wurtenburg had died, and in his will, had directed that 500 gold pieces be given to the orphanage! Francke wept in gratitude. In sacrificially providing for that needy saint, he had not been impoverished, but enriched. He sowed bountifully, and reaped bountifully.

* 2 Corinthians 9:6- But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

* Luke 6:38- Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

IV. THE CLEAR & CONSPICUOUS REWARD  6:4b

"... and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly."

The Bible makes it clear that the Lord is a good score keeper. God is faithful to reward His own for their righteous conduct.

* Hebrews 6:10 - For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

You do not have to do your good deeds in public for God to see and know about them. He sees in secret as well as in public. Rest assured God knows all about your righteous acts and service and will reward you personally as a loving Father. We value especially gifts or rewards that are given to us by famous people and by people in high positions, but to receive a reward from the Lord "Himself" is the ultimate gift. These rewards coming from God mean they will be the best rewards anyone can obtain.
God is not cheap and does not give cheap rewards. No rewards are so valuable, so lasting, so satisfying as His reward. The rewards of the Lord will not ruin your character as many rewards of men do. Men's rewards are often very detrimental to your character. In fact, people sell their character to get recognition from mankind, but God's rewards only help a person's character. These rewards from God may come in this life or in the next life, but rest assured, they will come for, He keeps His promises. In this life, the Christian can enjoy several rewards.

1. The Reward of Satisfaction

The first of the Christian rewards is satisfaction. The doing of what is right and being obedient to the Lord Jesus Christ always brings satisfaction. It may well be that, if a man does the right thing, and obeys Jesus Christ, he may lose his fortune, popularity, position, or prestige. He may end up being rejected, abandoned, and alone, but he will still possess that inner satisfaction that comes from doing the will of God. It is a satisfaction which no money on earth can buy. There is also a satisfaction that comes from seeing God use you to bless others. It is the satisfaction of knowing the purpose of your life and fulfilling that purpose.

2. The Reward of Greater Service and Responsibility

The second reward of the Christian life is the opportunity to do more work and have greater responsibility. It is the paradox of the Christian idea of reward that a task well done does not bring rest, comfort, and ease. It brings still greater demands and still more strenuous endeavors. In the parable of the talents the reward of the faithful servants was still greater responsibility (Matt 25:14-30).

When a teacher gets a really brilliant and able scholar, he does not exempt him from work. He gives him harder work than is given to anyone else. The brilliant young musician is given, not easier, but harder music to master. The Christian reward is the reverse of the world's reward. The world's reward would be an easier time. The reward of the Christian is that God lays still more and more upon a man to do for Him and for his fellow-men. The harder the work we are given to do, the greater the reward.

3. The Reward of the Serenity of Walking with God

If a man goes his own way, he drifts farther and farther from the Lord. The fellowship between him and God is broken until in the end, God becomes a grim stranger, whom he only wishes to avoid. On the other hand, if a man all his life has sought to walk with God, if he has sought to obey his Lord, if goodness has been his quest through all his
days, then all throughout his life he has been growing closer and closer to the Lord, until in the end, he passes into God's nearer presence, without fear and with radiant joy—and that is the greatest reward of all. Eternal rewards are the greatest, best, lasting, and most satisfying rewards. The rewards of men are nothing in comparison to God's rewards. Strive for His rewards and forget about what men can offer you. Live your life to glorify God lest you be paid in full and find yourself broke.
Chapter 2
Critical Concepts in Communicating with God

Matthew 6:5-8

God not only wants our motives to be right when we give, but also when we pray. These both are important responsibilities of the Christian life. They are key areas of warfare against Satanic forces. If Satan can corrupt these areas in the life of the Christian, he can weaken the believer and thus, weaken the church. In this next section of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus deals with the issue of our prayer life. He instructs us in what not to do when we pray and then what we should do. We will focus on hypocritical praying, hidden and holy praying, heathen praying, and help from Heaven.

I. HYPOCRITICAL PRAYING 6:5

And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

One area where many Christians struggle is in their prayer life. Why? One reason is because of the severe Satanic opposition they encounter when they pray. From what we know in the Bible, Jesus’ two most intense times of spiritual opposition were during His forty days of solitude in the wilderness and during His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night He was betrayed and arrested. On both occasions He was alone praying to His Father. It was in the most private and holy place of communion that Satan presented his strongest temptations before the Son of God.
Another key reason why Christians struggle to pray is because prayer is the language of dependence and many Christians tend to be independent of the Lord, doing their own thing, running their own lives without any guidance or direction from the Lord at all. The Lord is not a priority in their lives or an important factor in the choices and decisions that they make day by day. Some feel that the Lord will not give them any direction in the first place, so why pray? What good will it accomplish?

The pattern of independence and self-will that was laid out for us by Adam and Eve continues to be followed today. Independence of the Lord was the first curse, and continues to be the great curse of mankind. In the beginning, Satan said, "Eat this fruit and you shall then be as God," and it has been downhill ever since. If mankind has proved anything, it is the fact that man is not God. In most cases, men are fools because of their rejection and denial of the Lord.

When D. L. Moody was conducting evangelistic meetings, he frequently faced hecklers who were in violent disagreement with him. In the final service of one campaign, an usher handed the famous preacher a note as he entered the auditorium. It was actually from an atheist who had been giving Mr. Moody a great deal of trouble. The evangelist, however, supposed that it was an announcement, so he quieted the large audience and prepared to read it. Opening the folded piece of paper he found scrawled in large print only one word: "Fool!" The colorful preacher was equal to the occasion. Said Moody, "I have just been handed a memo which contains the single word -- 'Fool'. This is most unusual. I've often heard of those who have written letters and forgotten to sign their names, but this is the first time I've ever heard of anyone who signed his name and then forgot to write the letter!" Taking advantage of the unique situation, Moody promptly changed his sermon text to Psalm 14:1. *Psalm 14:1 - The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.*

Jesus tells us, "When you DO decide to pray, don't pray like hypocrites." A hypocrite was a stage-player, who acted under a mask, impersonating a character different from his own. He was a counterfeit, being different from what he really was in his real life. What was demonstrated on the outside was not the same as on the inside.

The Lord knows what is going on in your heart and therefore, He knows your motive in religious activities. The problem with hypocrites is they only prayed for the applause of men, not for any other purpose. They wanted to be known as pious or religious people, even though they
really were not. The praying of hypocrites reveals that they are more interested in their reputation than in their character. They are more interested in the praise of man than in the praise of God. Prayer that focuses on self is always hypocritical, because, by definition, the focus of every prayer should be on God.

**Hypocrites hate rejection.** They thrive on being accepted by the crowd and are willing to pay any price to have approval. In fact, on the French Riviera, it is such an important status symbol to have a balcony on an apartment, that it is quite common to see balconies painted on the walls of apartment buildings. People even paint wet laundry hanging on a clothesline, just to give a touch of reality. All of this is done in order to be accepted.

Why do hypocrites pay any price for praise or acceptance? They may have suffered the pain of rejection earlier in their lives or may have not had much approval or praise as they were growing up. Some folks may have had a bad reputation when they were younger and want people to think they are good without being good. Others are addicted to praise and approval. They can’t live without it. The reasons for hypocritical behavior are many. Nevertheless, hypocrites think nothing of deceiving others by their hypocrisy.

The biggest victim is the hypocrite himself, for he has deceived himself into thinking his behavior is appropriate or will have merit with the Lord. It doesn’t. This is what the Lord was condemning because He alone is to be glorified, not ourselves. God condemns hypocritical praying because He knows that seeking praise inflates our pride, creating further spiritual problems in our lives. Praying, for self-glory or without sincerity, is a waste of time for the Lord is not fooled by our phoniness.

*Matthew 15:8 - This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.*

**Jesus described the praying of hypocrites.** They loved to be seen of men praying, usually in very public places like synagogues and on street corners where many people gathered. The street corners were a normal place for prayer, because devout Jews would stop wherever they were at the appointed hour for prayer, even if they were walking down the street or visiting at the corner. The appointed hours were at nine in the morning, noon, and three in the afternoon, perfect times for people who wanted to be seen praying because these were busy times of the day.

Pompous hypocrites would gather at busy street corners at these times to be seen praying. It is interesting to note that the word used here for street is not the same as that in verse 2, *rhume {hroo'-may},* which
refers to a narrow street. The Greek word used here is *plateia* {plat-i'-ah} and refers to a wide, major street, and thus refers to a major street corner where a crowd was most likely to be. The implied fault here is that the hypocrites loved to pray where they would have the largest audience. This is why they gathered at the wide streets.

There was nothing wrong with praying at a major intersection if that was where you happened to be at the time for prayer, but something was very wrong if you planned to be there at prayer time for the specific purpose of praying where the most people could see you. The real evil of those hypocritical worshipers, whether in the synagogues or on the street corners, was the desire to display themselves in order to be seen of men.

**Is it OK to pray in public?** Yes, Jesus is not condemning public prayer in this passage. Some overly zealous believers have used these warnings of Jesus as a reason to renounce all public prayer, but the Lord taught no such thing. He Himself often prayed in the presence of His disciples, and in public, as when He blessed food before feeding the multitudes. After Peter and John were arrested, questioned, and then released by the Sanhedrin, shortly after Pentecost, the whole group of their companions rejoiced and “lifted their voices to God with one accord.”

* Luke 11:1- *And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.*

* Matthew 14:19- *And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.*

* Acts 4:24- *And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:*

Christ was not condemning praying in the synagogue or on the street corners. What Christ condemned here was praying for self-glory and recognition or praying in public simply to be seen and praised of men. It is interesting to note also that both Hindoos and Mohammedans love to pray in the most public places, at the landing places of rivers, in the public streets, on the roofs of the covered boats, without the least endeavor to conceal their outside devotion, that they may be seen of men. When I was in Cairo, Egypt in 1982, at three in the afternoon, hundreds of men prayed to Allah in the Cairo train station. There was no effort to pray in private at all.
Ritualistic praying was a problem in Jesus’ time and still exists today. The ritual prayers could be given with three basic attitudes: 
tenderness, indifference, or pride. Those Jews whose hearts were right, used 
the times of prayer to worship and glorify God. They thought about the 
words and sincerely believed what they prayed. Others went through the 
words mechanically, mumbling the syllables as fast as possible in order 
to finish. Folks, like the scribes and Pharisees, recited the prayers 
meticulously, making sure to enunciate every word and syllable properly. 
Three times a day they had a ready-made opportunity to parade their 
piousness among the people in crowded places.

Jesus makes it very clear again that those who seek the praise of 
men by their religious deeds, whether it is by giving or praying, these 
folks HAVE their reward. Again, this word “have” is from the Greek 
word *apecho* (ap-ekh’-o) which means “to be paid in full and given a 
receipt.” In other words, the transaction is over or complete. You are 
paid with no other payment coming. If you live for this life, you get the 
burdens or rewards of this life. If you live for eternity and the glory of 
God, you will go to your reward, for this is the closing promise of the 
Lord Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

* Revelation 22:12- And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with 
me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

If you are struggling with hypocrisy in your life because of a need 
for acceptance or because of rejection in the past, there are several things 
you can do. Here are a few.

1. Give your need for acceptance to the Lord.

* Philippians 3:7-10. But what things were gain to me, those I counted 
loss for Christ. [8] Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the 
excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have 
suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win 
Christ, [9] And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, 
which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the 
righteousness which is of God by faith: [10] That I may know him, and 
the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being 
made conformable unto his death;

2. Realize fulfillment, acceptance, and satisfaction are found in 
Christ.

*Colossians 2:9-10... For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead 
bodily. [10] And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all 
principality and power:
3. Seek God’s acceptance and approval, not men’s.
* Colossians 3:1-4... If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. [2] Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. [3] For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. [4] When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

4. Learn to deny selfish desires in your choices or decisions.
* Luke 9:23- And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

Hypocrisy, whether in giving, praying, loving, or in anything else, will leave you empty. It will hurt you and others who trust or follow your example or leadership. It cannot be concealed. What is in your heart will eventually come to the surface.

When Howard Carter and his associates found the tomb of King Tutankhamen, they opened up his casket and found another one within it. They opened up the second casket, which was covered with gold leaf, and found a third casket within. Inside the third casket was a fourth made of pure gold. The Pharaoh’s body was in this fourth casket, wrapped in gold cloth, with a gold face mask. When the body was unwrapped, however, it was leathery and shriveled. Beloved, whether we are trying to hypocritically cloak a dead spiritual life, or something else in caskets of gold to impress others, the beauty of the exterior does not change the corruption on the interior. God is not fooled by our glitter, glammer, or gold.

* 1 Samuel 16:7- But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.

II. HIDDEN AND HOLY PRAYING 6:6

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

Jesus instructs us now in how to pray, where to pray, and whom we should pray. We ought to pay close attention since He is the one we are praying to. We need to find out what pleases Him, don’t you think? The phrase “when you pray” implies great latitude. The Savior does not specify the times when we should pray in secret. No prescribed time or occasion is given by the Lord because He wants our prayer time
to be voluntary. We are to come to Him as often as we want to. An attempt to specify the times when this should be done would tend to make religion formal and heartless. Mohammed undertook to regulate this, and the consequence is a cold and formal prostration at the appointed hours of prayer all over the land where his religion has spread.

We should pray all throughout the day, whether it is in the morning, noon, or night. We should pray when we are beset with strong temptations. So the Lord Jesus prayed in the garden of Gethsemane, and so we should pray when we are tempted.

We should pray in times of trial, trouble, stress, embarrassment, and perplexity. Such times occur in every man's life, and it is then a privilege and a duty to go to God and seek His direction. In the most difficult and embarrassing times of the American revolution, Washington was seen to retire daily to a grove in the vicinity of the camp at Valley Forge. Curiosity led a man to observe him on one occasion, and the father of his country was seen on his knees supplicating the God of Hosts in prayer. Who can tell how much the liberty of this nation is owed to the answers of the secret prayers of Washington?

We should also pray when we are tugged by the Holy Spirit to pray. Psalm 34:15- The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.
Isaiah 65:24- And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.

Jesus instructs us to enter our closet and then close the door to pray. What is this all about? The closet or taneion (inner room) could be any sort of small room or chamber, even a storage closet. Such rooms were often secret and used to store valued possessions for protection. The idea is that of going to the most private place available. Every Jewish house had a place for secret devotion. The roofs of their houses were flat places for walking, conversation, and meditation, in the cool of the evening. Over the porch, or entrance of the house, was, however, a small room of the size of the porch, raised a story above the rest of the house, expressly appropriated for the place of retirement. It was here, in secrecy and solitude, that the pious Jew might offer his prayers, unseen by any but the Lord. This is the place commonly mentioned in the New Testament as the upper room, or the place for secret prayer.

The meaning of Jesus' statement is that there should be some place where we may be alone with God. There should be some place to which we may resort, where no ear will hear us but His ear, and no eye can see us but His eye. The Savior had all the difficulties which we have, yet He
lived in the practice of secret prayer. To be alone, He rose up "a great while before day," and went into a solitary place and prayed.

Jesus makes it very clear whom we should be praying to. It is not Allah, Mohammed, or the Virgin Mary. The Bible does not in any place teach us to pray to Mary, to the saints, to the patriarchs, or to anyone else. Such teaching is unscriptural. If you are praying to anyone or anything other than the Lord, you are praying in vain.

The story goes that one time when Bill Moyers was a special assistant to President Lyndon B. Johnson, he was asked to say grace before a meal in the family quarters of the White House. As Moyers began praying softly, the President interrupted him with "Speak up, Bill! Speak up!" The former minister from east Texas stopped in mid-sentence and without looking up replied steadily, "I wasn't addressing you, Mr. President." We are to pray to the Lord. When we pray to Him in secret, He will reward us openly.

A. T. Pierson relates the following story: "Some years ago in the great State of Minnesota, the Granary of the West, there came a scourge of grasshoppers that threatened to destroy the whole wheat crop. The Governor, who was a very devout Christian, called upon the people to observe a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer for the removal of the plague. Secular papers laughed this action to scorn, and scouted the idea of an appeal to God.

Spring came, the wheat appeared and the grasshopper with it, and then the secular press said, 'What is the result of your day of prayer?' But after a little while as the grasshoppers grew, there came a parasite that not merely made the grasshopper impotent to destroy the wheat, but also impotent to propagate itself. From that day, there has been no scourge of grasshoppers in the State of Minnesota." God rewarded the Governor's faith and courage to depend upon the Lord in prayer. He did not take the problem to Washington, he took it to Heaven. Amen!

III. HEATHEN PRAYING 6:7

But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

When we pray, we are not to pray like the heathen who use vain repetitions and long prayers. The problem here is not repeating one's prayers but "vain" repeating. It is not necessarily wrong to repeat a prayer or a request. Jesus did it in the Garden of Gethsemane.
* Matthew 26:44- And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

So it is not repetition in itself that is condemned here, rather it is "vain" repetition that is condemned. The words translated "vain repetitions" are from the Greek word *battologeo* (*bat-tol-o-gē'-o*) which means "to speak foolishly, babble, meaningless jabber, much talk without content, repeating the same thing over and over again." It is a very rare word, apart from writings dependent on the New Testament. It may be derived from the Aramaic word *battal* ("idle," "useless") or some other Semitic word. Jesus is not condemning prayer any more than He is condemning almsgiving, or fasting, nor is He forbidding all long prayers or all repetition. He himself prayed at length.

* Luke 6:12- And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

His point is that his disciples should avoid meaningless, repetitive prayers offered under the misconception that mere length will make prayers effective. The Jews had picked up the practice from the Gentiles, who believed that the value of prayer was largely a matter of quantity. The longer the prayer, the better. They concluded they would be heard for their many words. Those who prayed to pagan gods thought their deities first had to be aroused, then cajoled, intimidated, and badgered into listening and answering—just as the prophets of Baal did on Mt. Carmel.

* 1 Kings 18:26-29... And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made. [27] And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked. [28] And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them. [29] And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.

In the New Testament we see a similar practice. Aroused against Paul and his companions by Demetrius and other silversmiths of Ephesus, a great crowd began chanting, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" and continued incessantly for two hours (Acts 19:24-34). Many Buddhists today spin wheels containing written prayers, believing that each turn of
the wheel sends that prayer to their god. Roman Catholics light prayer 
candles in the belief that their requests will continue to ascend 
repetitiously to God as long as the candle is lit. Rosaries are used to count 
off repeated prayers of Hail Mary and Our Father, the rosary itself 
coming to Catholicism from Buddhism by way of the Spanish Muslims 
during the Middle Ages. Certain charismatic groups in our own day repeat 
the same words or phrases over and over until the speaking degenerates 
to unintelligible confusion. God condemns this kind of activity in the 
church. The confusion of the “tongues” movement is condemned by 
Scripture for God is not the author of confusion at all and is not impressed 
by babbling prayers.

The reason the heathen repeat their prayers is because they 
think it will improve their chances of being heard by God, but all of 
this is great nonsense. This repetition will not impress anyone, especially 
God. Are you not annoyed when your child repeats the same request or 
demand over and over? I’m not for it is very annoying! I don’t believe 
God is impressed either with our insincere repetitions. We do not talk 
that way among ourselves, and we certainly should not talk that way to 
God. There is no intelligence in such prayers. It is simply rote repetition, 
repeating of chants over and over again. Instead of improving your 
chances of God hearing the prayer, it cancels out your praying. "Vain" 
repetitions is not what interests God in your praying. God is interested in 
our sincere, heart-felt prayers according to His will.

* John 14:13- And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, 
that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

The Lord is interested in the prayers of those who honor Him and 
easternly seek Him.

* James 5:16- Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for 
another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous 
man availeth much.

Consider this: The Lord’s Prayer contains 56 words; the Gettysburg 
Address, 266; the Ten Commandments, 297; the Declaration of 
Independence, 300; and a recent U.S. government order setting the price 
of cabbage, 26,91 words. It’s not how long we talk, it’s what we sincerely 
say that is so important. Repeating the same words over and over like a 
magic incantation is no way to ensure that God will hear your prayer.

It's not wrong to come to God many times with the same requests. 
Jesus encouraged persistent prayer, but He condemned the shallow 
repetition of words that are not offered with a sincere heart. We can never 
pray too much if our prayers are honest and sincere. So before you start
to pray, make sure you mean what you say. God is not impressed with mere, empty words, but with the genuine outcry of a needy heart. Never use a gallon of words to express a spoonful of thought. John Bunyan put it this way, “In prayer it is better to have a heart without words than words without heart.”

* Ecclesiastes 5:2- Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.

IV. HELP FROM HEAVEN  6:8

* Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

Many have questioned the meaning of the statement “your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.”

* Luke 12:30- For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.

* Isaiah 65:24 - And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.

“Then why should we pray if the Lord already knows what we need?” they ask. Many are the religious fatalists who use a verse like this to say we need not pray at all, but this verse does not say that. Some believe that prayer is useless because God is in control and is going to do what He wants to do and we have no say in the matter. I don’t find that in Scripture. God has, in many places in Scripture, exhorted man to pray and get a hold of God. Why would we be challenged to pray if it was useless to do so. It doesn’t make sense.

The fact that God knows what we need before we ask is not something that should stop our praying, but is that which is to encourage our praying. Divine omniscience is not an excuse for delinquency in prayer. Rather, it is an encouragement to pray. When we pray, we are speaking with a person who knows what is going on, who knows our problem and situation, who knows and understands us better than anyone else, and who has the solution to our needs.

Prayer is not conquering God’s reluctance to answer, but laying hold of His willingness to help us! Prayer, in the life of the true believer, is an act of total confidence and assurance in the plan and purpose of God who is ever cognizant, ever knowing of our needs. We do not need to pray lengthy, vain prayers because Jesus’ disciples do not need to inform
their omniscient Father of their needs in prayer. He already knows what they are.

Why pray then? It is the basis of our communicating with God. Prayer is not designed to inform God, but to give man a sight of his own weakness; to humble his heart, to excite his desire, to inflame his faith, to animate his hope, to raise his soul from earth to Heaven, and to put him in mind that God is God. More than changing things, prayer changes people. Essentially we pray for the same reasons children speak to their parents. We are to share our concerns, to have fellowship, to obtain help, and to express our gratitude to the Lord. Prayer keeps our heart soft, tender, and at peace. This is how it changes us. In prayer, we acknowledge our need and dependence upon the Lord. We also pray because God does things in answer to prayer that He would not have done otherwise.

In his book, Say It With Love, Howard Hendricks recorded this true story about answered prayer: We had a lovely couple in Dallas a number of years ago. He sold his business at a loss, went into vocational Christian work, and things got rather rough. There were four kids in the family. One night at family worship, Timmy, the youngest boy, said, "Daddy, do you think Jesus would mind if I asked Him for a shirt?" "Well, no, of course not. Let's write that down in our prayer request book, Mother." So she wrote down "shirt for Timmy" and she added "size seven."

You can be sure that every day Timmy saw to it that they prayed for the shirt. After several weeks, one Saturday the mother received a telephone call from a clothier in downtown Dallas, a Christian businessman. "I've just finished my July clearance sale and knowing that you have four boys it occurred to me that you might use something we have left. Could you use some boy's shirts?" She said, "What size?" "Size seven." "How many do you have?" she asked hesitantly. He said, "Twelve." Many of us might have taken the shirts, stuffed them in the bureau drawer, and made some casual comment to the child. Not this wise set of parents.

That night, as expected, Timmy said, "Don't forget, Mommy, let's pray for the shirt." Mommy said, "We don't have to pray for the shirt, Timmy," "How come?" "The Lord has answered your prayer." "He has?" "Right." So, as previously arranged, brother Tommy goes out and gets one shirt, brings it in, and puts it down on the table. Little Timmy's eyes are like saucers. Tommy goes out and gets another shirt and brings it in. Out -- back, out -- back, until he piles 12 shirts on the table, and Timmy thinks God is going into the shirt business. But you know, there
is a little kid in Dallas today by the name of Timothy who believes there is a God in Heaven interested enough in his needs to provide little boys with shirts. Thank God, He answers our prayers.

If you can't sleep at night, don't count sheep, talk to the Shepherd.
Chapter 3

A Pattern for Praying

Matthew 6:9-13

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. [10] Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. [11] Give us this day our daily bread. [12] And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. [13] And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

We now embark in a study of one of the most wonderful, well-known prayers in the Bible. It is a prayer that people have been known to pray when they are scared to death, on the verge of death, or are suffering a death of a loved one. This prayer is known familiarly as "The Lord's Prayer," but "The Disciples' Prayer" or "The Pattern for Prayer" would be a more accurate title.

If there is a prayer we could rightly call the "Lord's Prayer," it would be the prayer of Christ found in John 17. The prayer before us cannot be truly called "The Lord's Prayer," for it has parts in it which could not possibly be a prayer of our Lord. As an example, "Forgive us our debts" (Matthew 6:12), which Luke has as "forgive us our sins" (Luke 11:4), cannot be prayed by the Lord Jesus Christ, for He had nothing of which to be forgiven. He was sinless and perfect. He had absolutely no need of asking forgiveness. This prayer can only be called "The Lord's Prayer" from the standpoint that the "Lord" gave us this prayer to pray. It is a model or example of how to pray.

At the disciples' request (Luke 11:1), Jesus provided it for them as a pattern for prayer. Jesus did not give this prayer to us to be memorized and recited a given number of times. It is not a set group of words to repeat. It is fine to recite it, as we recite many parts of Scripture. It is certainly fine to memorize it and to rehearse it in our minds and meditate
upon it in our hearts, but it is not so much a prayer in itself as it is a skeleton which believers are to flesh out with their own words of praise, their own words of adoration, their own petitions, and so on. It is not a substitute for our own prayers, but a guide for them.

Now the Lord's Prayer is a prayer which only a disciple can pray. It is a prayer which only one who is committed to Jesus Christ can take upon his lips with any kind of meaning at all. The Lord's Prayer is specifically and definitely stated to be the disciple's prayer, and only on the lips of a true disciple of Jesus Christ has the prayer its full meaning. To put it in another way, the Lord's Prayer can only really be prayed when the man who prays it knows what he is saying, and he cannot know that until he becomes a follower of the Lord. He must first know Jesus Christ as his Savior.

In fewer than seventy words we find a masterpiece of the infinite mind of God, who alone could compress every conceivable element of true prayer into such a brief and simple form—a form that even a young child can understand, but the most mature believer cannot fully comprehend.

Every facet of the Disciples' Prayer focuses on God Almighty. Here Jesus gives a comprehensive view of all the essential elements of righteous prayer, every one of which centers on God—acknowledging His paternity, priority, program, plan, provision, pardon, protection, and preeminence. Each element is overloaded with meaning, its truths being impossible to exhaust. The wonder of this prayer is the endless waterfall of truths that are contained in its words.

Jesus gave this prayer to keep us from using vain repetitions. Jesus did not say, "Pray in these words." He said, "Pray after this manner," that is, "Use this prayer as a pattern, not as a substitute." That the prayer Jesus is about to give was not meant to be repeated as a prayer itself is clear from the context of the entire passage.

The present section is introduced with the words, "After this manner" or "Pray, then, in this way." In the account in Luke, the disciples did not ask Jesus to teach them a prayer but to teach them how to pray. Jesus had just warned His followers not to pray with "meaningless repetition" in Matthew 6:7. To then give a prayer whose primary purpose was to be recited verbatim would have been an obvious contradiction of what He just said.

Nowhere in the New Testament—gospels, Acts, or epistles—do we find an instance of any prayer being repeated by anyone or used in a repetitious, ritualistic manner by a group. Sadly, this prayer is more
often mindlessly repeated than genuinely prayed. Some have become so familiar with this prayer that it has become just a phrase of beautiful words. When it is quoted or read, it is not really prayed to the Lord at all.

The purpose of prayer is seen more in the overall thrust of these five verses than in any particular word or phrase. From beginning to end, the focus is on God, on His adoration, worthiness, and glory. The purpose of prayer is not trying to get God to agree with us or to provide for our selfish desires. Prayer is affirming God’s will, righteousness, and majesty and seeking to conform our desires and our purposes to His will and purpose for our lives. Robert Law has said, “Prayer is a mighty instrument, not for getting man’s will done in Heaven, but for getting God’s will done in earth.” God uses prayer to change us, mold us, and soften our will so that He can mold us into His image and lead us in the direction He wants us to go. Notice the important attitudes that are reflected in this prayer. From the perspective of the attitude and spirit of prayer,

* **Our** reflects Selflessness or unselfishness;
* **Father** reflects our Special Relationship with the Lord;
* **hallowed be Thy name**, reflects our Sanctity or reverence;
* **Thy kingdom come**, indicates Steadfastness, Stability and Spiritual Sight;
* **Thy will be done**, shows Submission to His will;
* **give us this day our daily bread**, our Source of provision;
* **forgive us our debts**, indicates a Sorrow for sin;
* **do not lead us into temptation**, shows Simplicity about sin or desire for purity.
* **Thine is the kingdom**, acknowledges the Supremacy, Success or triumph of God;
* **and the glory**, indicates the Sanction or praise for God;
* **forever**, shows our Solid Sureness and hope.

It is worth noting that there are no singular pronouns in this prayer; they are all plural. It begins with “OUR Father.” When we pray, we must remember that we are part of God’s worldwide family of believers. We have no right to ask for ourselves anything that would harm another member of the family. If we are praying in the will of God, the answer will be a blessing to all of God’s people in one way or another.
You cannot pray the Lord's Prayer and even once say "I."
You cannot pray the Lord's Prayer and even once say "My."
Nor can you pray the Lord's Prayer and not pray for one another.
And when you ask for daily bread, you must include your brother.
For others are included ... in each and every plea,
From the beginning to the end of it, it doesn't once say "Me."

When we scan this prayer, we find that its initial focus is
upward, with its first three requests having to do with
God's glory. The remaining three requests are for our well-being dealing
with our needs and necessities. God first, man second, that is the ideal
order of prayer. His glory comes before our wants. This pattern indicates
that disciples should have more concern for God than for themselves. We
should put His interests first in our praying as in all our living.

This is parallel to the Ten Commandments, the first four of which
have to do with God's glory and the last six with man's well-being. This
prayer in Matthew 6 is the perfect prayer. It is only when God is given
His proper place, that all other things fall into their proper places. Prayer
must never be an attempt to bend the will of God to our desires. Prayer
ought always to be an attempt to submit our wills to the will of God.

If we put God's concerns first, then we can bring our own needs.
God is concerned about our needs and knows them even before we
mention them. If this is the case, then why pray? Because prayer is the
God-appointed way to have these needs met. Prayer prepares us for the
proper use of the answer. If we know our need, and if we voice it to God,
trusting Him for His provision, then we will make better use of the answer
than if God forced it on us without our asking.

* James 4:1-3 ... From whence come wars and fightings among you?
come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? [2] Ye
lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight
and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. [3] Ye ask, and receive not,
because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

In the most amazing way this brief second part of the Lord's Prayer
takes the present (give us this day our daily bread), the past (forgive us
our debts), and the future (lead us not into temptation), the whole of
man's life, and presents them to God the Father, God the Son and God the
Holy Spirit. They are presented to the Lord in all His fulness. In the
Lord's Prayer, Jesus teaches us to bring the whole of our life, everything
we are, past, present, and future, to the Lord. Let's open the curtain now
and squeeze some wonderful truths from this passage. Notice verse 9.

I. OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD  6:9a

*After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven,*

Jesus said, “I don’t want you to pray using vain repetitions. Here is how I want you to pray. The words “pray ye” do not indicate a suggestion. Oh, no! This is a strong exhortation to pray. In fact, it is an imperative to pray. The words are very strong and emphatic in the Greek language. Grammatically "pray" is in the imperative mood which means it is a command. Praying is not optional, rather it is a command from God. This makes the matter of praying a very serious matter. Yet, how few people take praying seriously. Most folks do not pray at all and do not really value prayer unless some kind of trauma comes into their lives. In panic and desperation, they cry out to God and want everyone else to pray for them, but when the crisis passes away, they will go back to ignoring their need of prayer. They end up missing out on so many blessings that God wants to bestow upon them.

The initial words of this prayer instruct us forcefully about the direction of our prayers and address our relationship with God. We are to direct our prayer to God, not to other beings. We are never told by Christ or in the Scriptures to pray to Mary, the patriarchs, angels, dead relatives, or any other being. When we pray, we are to pray to God and none other. If we want our prayer life to be effective, pray to God. He is the only one who can help us in prayer. When we pray to God, we are tapped into the greatest power of all. Praying to lesser individuals is praying in vain.

*If you are going to pray, it is vital that you become a child of God first.* This is done by trusting Jesus Christ as your Savior. When you do this, God becomes your Heavenly Father and you are His child instead of a child of the Devil. The word "Our" reminds us that prayer is a privilege for those who are saved, not the lost, without Christ. Yes, the unredeemed are invited to pray to God, but only when they first come to Him for salvation. The only prayer promise for the unsaved person is the promise of salvation when the unsaved person comes to God in repentance of his sins. God is not "Our Father" in a beneficial praying way until we have first received His Son as our Savior. Without Christ, your father is Satan, according to the Bible.

*John 8:44- Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the
truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

* John 1:12 - But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

The term "Father" denotes a loving and close relationship with one who has our best interests at heart. Because God is our Father, we do not need to live in fear, but in the comfort of His love and concern for us. As our Father, we can boldly bring our needs before Him knowing that He loves and cares about us.

* Hebrews 4:16 - Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

* 1 Peter 5:7 - Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

Using the term "Father" was revolutionary in the time of Christ. This was something new that Jesus was teaching the disciples. The writers of the Old Testament certainly believed in the Fatherhood of God, but they saw it mainly in terms of a sovereign Creator-Father. In fact, God is only referred to as Father fourteen times in the Old Testament's thirty-nine books, and even then, rather impersonally. In those fourteen occurrences of Father, the term was always used with reference to the nation, not to individuals. In the entire Old Testament, you will not find one individual speaking of God as Father.

When we turn the pages of the New Testament, however, we find the Lord Jesus Christ addressing God only as His Father. In the Gospels, our Lord refers to God as His Father more than sixty times. God is our Father, our Abba. Addressing God as Abba (Dearest Father) is not only an indication of spiritual health, but is a mark of the authenticity of our faith. The impulse to call on God as our Father is a sign of being God's child.

* Galatians 4:6 - And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

* Romans 8:15-16... For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. [16] The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

The realization that God is your Father is one of the great and primary works of the Holy Spirit. He makes Christians realize with increasing clarity the meaning of their filial relationship with God in Christ. He keeps enhancing this "spirit of sonship" in us and is ever integrating it into our lives. Do you know that God is your Father? Do you think of Him and address Him as your "Dearest Father"? If you
cannot answer in the affirmative, it may be that He is not your spiritual Father and you need to heed the words of Scripture and come into relationship with Him through Christ. Because God is our Heavenly Father, we enjoy wonderful blessings.

* The Blessings we Enjoy when God is our Father

1. Suspicion, Shaking, or Fear can end or be Conquered.

    Pagans live in fear of their gods, but we can have peace resting in His love and care for us. While kayaking in southern England off the Isle of Wight, Mark Ashton-Smith, a 33-year-old lecturer at Cambridge University, capsized in treacherous waters. Clinging to his craft and reaching for his cell phone, Ashton-Smith's first inclination was to call his father. It didn't matter to the desperate son that his dad, Alan Pimm-Smith, was at work training British troops in Dubai 3,500 miles away. Without delay, the father relayed his son's Mayday to the Coast Guard installation nearest to his son's location. Ironically, it was less than a mile away. Within 12 minutes, a helicopter retrieved the grateful Ashton-Smith. Like this kayaker, when we are afraid or in peril, our first impulse should be to call our Father—the one we trust to help us.

* Matthew 6:33- But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

* 1 Peter 5:7 - Cast all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

2. We have Salvation, Security and Hope.

    His promises of eternal life are certain and for real because God is for real. He is our Father in Heaven and knows all of our needs. There was a time in our world during both the First and second World Wars, when men and women who served their country would go off and many times would be gone four or five years before they ever came home. The story is told that a good Marine serving his country went off to fight. When he left, his wife was expecting a child. That child was born, and that child was a beautiful little girl. Because this was a special home, the mother would never let the little girl forget about her father. Every day she talked of the girl's father and showed her daughter pictures of her father. She talked about the father's love and care for her, and about how someday her father would come home. When the little girl was 4 years old, she was playing in the front yard. A man came to the gate. She looked up. She looked into his eyes with love, and he looked into her eyes with love. Then she said, "Daddy, you're for real. Daddy, you are for real!" Beloved, we are secure in Him. He is for real and His promises are for real!
* Matthew 7:11- If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?
* John 10:29 - My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.
* Titus 1:2 - In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;

3. Our Solitude is Settled.

We are no longer alone. If we are rejected and forsaken by our family, friends, fellow believers, and the rest of the world, we know that our Heavenly Father will never leave us or forsake us.
* John 14:21- He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.
* Hebrews 13:5- Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.
* 1 Corinthians 3:16- Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

4. Submission to Him brings Steerage, Sight, and Direction.

He gives us direction and a purpose for living. Obeying Him and following His guidance brings blessing and fulfillment. Since Jesus, as God's true Son, came down from Heaven, not to do His own will, but His Father's, how much more are we, as adopted His children, to do only His will. Obedience to God is one of the supreme marks of our relationship to Him as His children.
* John 6:38- For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

5. He is our Source for Satisfaction and meeting our Needs.

All the resources of Heaven are available to us when we trust God as our heavenly Supplier. We can take our needs to Him anywhere and at any time for He does not sleep.
* Philippians 4:19- But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.
* Ephesians 1:3- Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

There is an old Roman story which tells how a Roman Emperor was enjoying a triumph. He had the privilege, which Rome gave to her great victors, of marching his troops through the streets of Rome, with all his
captured trophies and his prisoners in his train. So the Emperor was on the march with his troops. The streets were lined with cheering people. The tall legionaries lined the streets’ edges to keep the people in their places. At one point on the triumphal route there was a little platform where the Empress and her family were sitting to watch the Emperor go by in all the pride of his triumph.

On the platform with his mother there was the Emperor’s youngest little boy. As the Emperor came near, the little boy jumped off the platform, burrowed through the crowd, tried to dodge between the legs of a legioniary, and to run out on to the road to meet his father’s chariot. The legioniary stooped down and stopped him. He swung him up in his arms: "You can't do that, boy," he said. "Don't you know who that is in the chariot? That's the Emperor. You can't run out to his chariot." And the little lad laughed down. "He may be your Emperor," he said, "but he's my father." That is exactly the way the Christian feels towards God. The might, and the majesty, and the power are the might, and the majesty, and the power of the One whom Jesus taught us to call Our Father. Is He your Father?

We have looked at in the first section of this prayer pattern, our relationship with God. Now we will address the reverence for the reputation of the Lord. Notice verse nine again.

II. THE REVERENCE FOR THE REPUTATION OF THE LORD 6:9b
“.... hallowed be thy name.”

The word “hallowed” is an archaic English word used to translate a form of the Greek word which means “to make holy.” Words from the same Greek root are translated “holy, saint, sanctify, sanctification.” The word which is translated “hallowed” is a part of the Greek verb hagiazesthai. This word is associated with the adjective hagios.

Hagios is the word which is usually translated holy, but the basic meaning of hagios is “to be different or separate; to give a unique and special place to something or someone.” A thing which is hagios is different from other things. A person who is hagios is separate from other people. Sunday is hagios because it is different from the other days of the week, for it is special. It is the Lord’s day. So, then, this petition, “hallowed be thy name,” means, "Let God's name be treated differently
from all other names; let God's name be given a special position which is absolutely unique." It means, "Enable us to give to thee the unique place which thy nature and character deserve and demand."

Christians are also commanded to be holy, but our Lord is acknowledged as being holy. That is also the meaning behind "hallowed be Thy name." When we pray "hallowed be they name" we attribute to God the holiness that already is, and always has been His. To hallow God's name is to revere, honor, glorify, and obey Him as perfect. We do not need to pray that the Lord will become more holy, for He is already holy. It is the essence of His being. The name of the Lord is holy.

The essence of God's being or character is contained in the word "name." We are to hallow His NAME. In Hebrew, the name does not mean simply the name by which a person is called such as Ralph or Bill, or whatever the name may be. In Hebrew, the name means the nature, the character, the personality of the person in so far as it is known or revealed to us.

God's names revealed aspects of His being. For instance, the name Jehovah Shalom — "The Lord Our Peace" — was a name that Gideon hallowed by raising an altar to God by that name. Jehovah Jireh — "the Lord will provide" — was the name by which Abraham came to know God on Mt. Moriah when God provided a ram in place of Isaac. Jehovah Tsidkenu — "the Lord our Righteousness" — is the name by which God revealed Himself to Jeremiah during the Captivity. Other names like El Shaddai and Adonai reflect His character and relationship with us.

The name reflects the character of the person. That becomes clear when we see how the Bible writers use the expression of the word "name." The Psalmist says, "And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee:" (Ps 9:10). Quite clearly that does not mean that those who know that God is called Jehovah will trust in Him. It means that those who know what God is like, those who know the nature and the character of the Lord, will put their trust in Him. His strength, power, and dependability engender trust from us.

The Psalmist says, "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God" (Ps 20:7). Quite clearly that does not mean that in a time of difficulty the Psalmist will remember that God is called Jehovah. It means that at such a time some will put their trust in human and material aids and defenses, but the psalmist will remember the nature and the character of God. He will remember what God is like, and that memory will give him confidence, courage, and peace.
Jesus Himself gave the clearest teaching about what God’s name means, because Jesus Christ is God’s greatest name. Everything the Son of God did on earth manifested God’s name and revealed God’s nature and character. He was the God-man. As the perfect manifestation of God’s nature and glory, Jesus was the perfect manifestation of God’s name.
* John 17:6- I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.
* John 1:14- And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

* How Do We Hallow God’s Name?
1. It Commences in Your Heart
   Hallowing God’s name, like every other manifestation of righteousness, begins in the heart. We hallow His name by trusting in Him and entrust the Lord with the most valuable thing we have.... our soul. This is the first step.
   * Psalm 33:21- For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name.
   * Acts 4:12 - Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.
   * 1 Peter 3:15 - But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

2. By our Cognizance of the Lord
   When we sanctify the Lord in our hearts we will also sanctify Him in our lives. We hallow His name when we acknowledge that He exists. We cannot revere someone who does not exist or we don’t know. We must be sure of God’s existence if we are to revere and honor Him. If a person will sit down and look at God’s creation, the earth, sun, moon, stars, planets, plants, animals, or study the complexity of the human body, he must in honesty admit that there is a master designer behind creation and that designer is God Almighty.
   * Hebrews 11:6- But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

3. By our Consciousness or Awareness of His Character and Presence
   We also hallow God’s name by having true knowledge about Him.
We cannot revere a God whose character and will we do not know or care about. We must understand that He is holy, just, and loves us. Understanding the nature and character of God will enable you to understand Him and revere Him for who He is. Paul's passion in life was to really know the Lord and walk with Him.

* Philippians 3:10- That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

Acknowledging God's existence and having true knowledge about Him, however, are not enough to hallow His name. We must have a constant awareness of His presence which comes from knowing Christ as your Savior. The Holy Spirit indwells the Christian making him aware of the Lord's presence.

* Romans 8:16- The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

Spasmodic thinking of God once in a while does not hallow His name at all. You are not fooling anyone, especially God about your "dedication." To truly hallow His name is to consciously draw Him into our lives every day including our daily thoughts, words, and actions. We are to have a daily walk with God. The focus of David's life when he was right with God was upon the Lord.

* Psalm 16:8- I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

4. By Cherishing His Name and by our Cheer or Joy

We hallow His name by our love for Him and His name. Such love is demonstrated by giving the Lord that which we give no other, our worship.

* Psalm 5:11- But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee.

* Psalm 45:11 - So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.

5. By our Conformity to His Will we Hallow God's Name

The Father's name is most hallowed when we behave in conformity to His will and do not forget about Him. Reverence is knowledge plus submission. In his catechism Luther asks, "How is God's name hallowed amongst us?" and his answer was, "When both our life and doctrine are truly Christian," that is to say, when our intellectual convictions, and our practical actions, are in full submission to the will of God."
Beloved, for Christians to live in disobedience to God is to take His name in vain because we are hypocritically claiming as Lord, someone whom we do not follow as Lord. Jesus addressed this inconsistency that He saw in the lives of those who professed to follow Him. Do these verses describe you?

* Matthew 15:8- This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.
* Matthew 7:21-23... Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. [22] Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? [23] And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

6. By our Conversation we Hallow God’s Name

We are to avoid swearing or taking the name of the Lord in vain.

* Exodus 20:7 - Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

7. By Christ’s exaltation in our lives His Name is Hallowed

We are to honor the Son of God as well as the God the Father. God’s name is hallowed when the Lord Jesus Christ is exalted and honored. This is important because many people have no problem honoring the name of God because they have many concepts of who God is. When the name of Jesus Christ is honored, however, then a hornet’s nest is stirred because many do not acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God. The Lord Jesus Christ is to be honored and praised and in so doing God’s name is hallowed because Jesus is God.

* John 5:23- That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.
* Colossians 2:9- For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

* John 1:1,14 - In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [14] And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

Let me ask, “Who is the focus of your church service or sermon?” If you are the pastor, is it you or is the Lord the hero of your message? If you preach a funeral, do you glorify the deceased or do you glorify the Lord Jesus Christ?
8. By our Commitment to Bring Glory to Him we Hallow His Name

We hallow His name by bringing honor and glory to Him in all that we do and being content that He is honored even though we may suffer reproach or be put in the background. David cared not what reproach he suffered so that God’s name would not suffer. God’s reputation was more important than his own. Is it important to you?

*Psalm 69:7 - Because for thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face.*

Our commitment will be demonstrated by our worship, our sacrifice, our giving, and faithful attendance at church. The issues of worship, giving, and fellowship with dedicated believers is an important matter because it was important to the Lord. Without commitment, praying that God’s name be hallowed or reverenced would be idle, empty words.

*Psalm 96:8- Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts.*

*1 Corinthians 10:31- Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*

*Matthew 5:16 - Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

*Psalm 34:3 - O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together.*

Instead of hallowing God’s name, King Herod dishonored God’s name by assuming praise for himself that belonged only to the Lord. He was judged swiftly for such behavior.

*Acts 12:23 - And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.*

The entire Disciples' Prayer must be something that flows out of a truly committed heart. It ought to be a definition of your spirit, your attitude toward God, and what is inside you.

* I cannot say "our" if I live only for myself.
* I cannot say "Father" if I do not endeavor each day to act like His child.
* I cannot say "who art in heaven" if I am laying up no treasure there.
* I cannot say "hallowed be Thy name" if I am not striving for holiness in my own life.
* I cannot say "Thy kingdom come" if I am not doing all in my power to hasten that wonderful event or looking forward to His return.
* I cannot say "Thy will be done" if I am disobedient to His Word and doing my own will.
* I cannot say "in earth as it is in heaven" if I'll not serve Him here and now.
* I cannot say "give us this day our daily bread" if I am dishonest or seeking things by deception.
* I cannot say "forgive us our debts" if I harbor a grudge or bitterness against someone.
* I cannot say "lead us not into temptation" if I deliberately place myself in the path of temptation.
* I cannot say "deliver us from evil" if I do not put on the whole armor of God.
* I cannot say "Thine is the kingdom" if I do not give the King the loyalty due Him from a faithful subject.
* I cannot attribute to Him "the power" if I fear what men may do or make the crowd my master instead of Him.
* I cannot ascribe to Him "the glory" if I'm seeking honor only for myself, and I cannot say "forever" if the horizon of my life is bounded completely by time and matters that pertain just to this life. Are you committed to hallowing God's name in your life? Pastor John Hooper was committed.

During the reign of England's Mary I, known as Bloody Mary, Pastor John Hooper was imprisoned for his faith in Christ and was sentenced to die. On February 9th, 1555, at nine in the morning, John was taken to the center of the town of Gloucester. Seven thousand people were assembled in the square for it was market day. Hooper nodded cheerfully to his friends; then arriving at the stake, he removed his outer clothes while sacks of gun powder were tied to his armpits and between his legs.

As the silent crowd gazed in terror, Hooper raised his voice and asked the crowd to join him in the Lord's Prayer. The winter sky echoed with 7000 voices, "Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in Heaven." The final "Amen" was spoken, and the multitudes watched through tear-clouded eyes as a metal hoop was placed around John's chest to hold him to the stake.

The fire was set, but too much green wood had been used for the bonfire and the wind was also very strong. Instead of a quick blaze, it created a slow, torturous heat like heat from white coals on a charcoal grill. Hooper's hair burned a little and his skin swelled from the heat, but without any lethal flames. Finally, the lower part of his body began to smoulder as the executioner got the blaze going. Even when his face and
mouth were blackened, John could still be seen praying until his lips were burned away. His body was in this fire just under an hour according to Foxe’s Book of Martyrs. John hallowed the name of the Lord by his commitment to Christ, even to the point of a terrible death. May his life be a challenge to us.

We have seen thus far in the Disciple’s Prayer, our relationship to God, the reverence for the reputation of God, and now the rule or reign of the Lord.

III. THE RULE OR REIGN OF THE LORD 6:10
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

This petition, like the first petition, is an unselfish petition which also focuses on the honor and glory of God Almighty. It focuses on what is important to God, not to us. Many times our prayer requests are often selfish. We have a tendency to be self-centered rather than God-centered in our prayer requests. This portion of the Lord’s Prayer gets us down to earth, but looking toward Heaven.... “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done.”

What is the word “kingdom” talking about? The word “kingdom” comes from the Greek word ἐδείκτης [ed-ee-ktah] which deals with the right or authority to rule over a kingdom. Its main emphasis is not a reference to a geographical territory. Will Christ rule the earth one day? Oh, Yes! We are looking forward to His reign, His control, the domination of His will over the earth.

Praying for God’s kingdom to come involves several important insights and applications for our lives right now, today.

A. It Denotes or Involves His Coming
When we pray “Thy kingdom come,” we are praying for God’s rule through the enthronement of the Lord Jesus Christ which will come to pass at the end of the Tribulation when He will return and destroy the armies of the Anti-Christ and bind Satan for 1000 years. It is the coming millennial kingdom of which the Lord is speaking, not an indirect effort to create a more godly society on earth through the progressive, human-oriented work of Christians. We are praying for His glorious reign on earth to begin which means we are looking forward to the rapture of the church which is the first phase of His coming.

The word “come” translates the aorist active imperative of ἐρχομαι [er'-khom-ahhee] indicating a sudden, instantaneous coming. It is a very strong, emphatic word which can actually read, “Thy kingdom
come now!” The verb "come" refers here to a decisive time in the future when the kingdom will come once and for all — an event that will happen only once. This event is the second advent of Christ when He will return, judge the world, and set up His eternal kingdom for 1000 years.

* Matthew 24:27- For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

* Revelation 20:4 -And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

To pray “Thy kingdom come” is to pray for God’s kingdom, the kingdom over which He, and He alone, is Lord and King. He has not established this yet, but it will be one day. Isaac Watts put it this way “Jesus shall reign where ’ere the sun does its successive journeys run. His kingdom spread from shore to shore, ‘til moon shall wax and wane no more.” The Lord’s kingdom will be on earth, but it will not be a kingdom of this world or of this present world system. Jesus made this clear to Pilate. Men have thought that they would improve the world, and then Christ would come back to reign, but men have not been improving the world. Degradation, division, desperation, disease, depravity, deception, destruction, and death abound in our nations. The world may possess many new and impressive gadgets and things, but virtue is not one of them. Jesus is not referring to ushering in a utopian society by men. That’s not going to happen in a wicked world until Christ is ruling it from Jerusalem.

* John 18:36- Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

No human kingdom could dovetail with God’s kingdom, even partially. Sinful man could not be a part of a divine reign. That is why we do not advance God’s kingdom by trying to improve human society. Many good and worthy causes deserve the support of Christians, but in supporting those causes we neither build the earthly kingdom of Jesus Christ or bring it closer. Yes, we are to stand for righteousness. Yes, we are to stand for Christ, oppose sin, and be the salt of the earth, but even the best of such actions are but preserving or salty actions that help retard the corruption from men’s wickedness until the Lord returns to establish His own perfect kingdom. We are to be looking for the coming of our
King, the Lord Jesus Christ to change this world.
* 1 Thessalonians 1:10- And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

What changes will be made when the Lord arrives and rules from Jerusalem. What will it be like when Jesus rules the earth one day? Do we know anything about this time in the future? The answer is “Yes.” The Bible gives us a description of what will happen.

* The Conditions in the Millennium

1. It will be a time of REST & RECONCILIATION

   There will be peace in the world.
   * Isaiah 32:17, 18- And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places;

2. It will be a time of REJOICING

   Joy will be a characteristic of Christ’s reign.
   * Jeremiah 31:13- Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow.

3. It will be a time of REVERENCE & REVIVAL

   The Lord’s kingdom will be a holy one. Holiness will be evident in the life of Christ and glorified believers. Once a year, people from all nations will go to Jerusalem to worship the Lord Jesus Christ. The world will be united in the worship of Jesus Christ as He rules from Jerusalem. In fact, He will give Jerusalem a new name.
   * Zechariah 14:16- And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.
   * Isaiah 62:2-4 ... And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. [3] Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. [4] Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah, and thy land Beulah: for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.

4. It will be a time of RADIANCE

   There is going to be an increase of light in this age. The increase in
light will lead to an increase in productivity on the earth.
* Isaiah 60:19,20- The sun shall be no more thy light by day: neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.

God's kingdom will be a glorious kingdom. The radiance of God will fill the earth.
* Isaiah 24:23- Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.
* Isaiah 40:5- And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

5. It will be a time of Refreshing & Reviving

The Lord will comfort mankind and fulfill his every need.
* Revelation 21:4- And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.
* Isaiah 66:13 - As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you: and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.

6. It will be a time of Righteousness & Reasonableness

Perfect justice will be administered to every individual in the Lord’s kingdom.
* Isaiah 11:5- And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.
* Jeremiah 23:5- Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.
* Revelation 19:15- And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

7. It will be a time of Righteous Recommendations

Our Lord will instruct and teach us. We will learn from Him.
* Isaiah 2:3- And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

8. It will be a time of the Removal of the curse

The original curse placed upon creation will be removed. There will
be abundant productivity and the animal kingdom will be at peace.
* Isaiah 11:6-9... The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. [7] And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. [8] And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. [9] They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.
* Isaiah 65:25- The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord.

9. It will be a time of RECOVERY & RETENTION of life

Except for penal measures, sickness and death will be almost totally removed. The longevity of man will be restored as it was in pre-Flood days. The Lord's healing ministry will affect the entire world.
* Isaiah 65:20 - There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed.
* Isaiah 33:24- And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.

10. It will be a time of REPRODUCTION

The living saints will enter the Millennium in their natural bodies and will give birth to children throughout the millennial age. The population in the world will skyrocket. Those who are born will still have a sin nature and will need to be saved just like us. The earth will blossom and reproduce abundantly; the desert will blossom as a rose.
* Isaiah 35:1- The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. This is now already taking place.
* Zechariah 10:8- I will hiss for them, and gather them; for I have redeemed them: and they shall increase as they have increased.

11. It will be a time of REMOVAL of language barriers

The curse of the tower of Babel will be removed.
* Zephaniah 3:9- For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent. The word “consent” is from the Hebrew word shekem {shek-em'} and it means “shoulder to shoulder.” They will have one language so they might serve the Lord in unity, shoulder to shoulder.
The words “Thy kingdom come” not only denote the coming of the Lord, praying this prayer also demands conversion.

B. It Demands Conversion

It we are going to pray for His kingdom to come, then it is vital that He is reigning in the kingdom of our heart if we are going to be consistent. Letting Christ be the king of our lives begins by trusting in Him for your salvation from Hell, nothing else. If you want to be a part of His kingdom on earth one day, you must be born again by trusting Jesus Christ as your Savior. Repentance from your sin is mandatory.

* Matthew 18:1-4 - At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? [2] And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, [3] And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. [4] Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

* Mark 1:14-15... Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, [15] And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

The present existence of Christ’s kingdom on earth is internal right now, in the hearts and minds of those who belong to Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Praying for the kingdom to come, in this sense, is praying for the salvation of souls of men and women, boys and girls. Do you know Him?

The words “Thy kingdom come” not only denote the coming of the Lord, it not only demands conversion, but it also demands commitment.

C. It Demands Commitment

Praying, “Thy kingdom come...” also demands commitment from the person doing the praying. Once you have trusted Christ as your Savior, then yielding the throne of the kingdom of your life day by day is vital if you are going to have a passion for His coming, power for Satanic conflict, purity of character, perfection or maturity in consecration, persistence in consistency, plenty of compassion, and patience in your calamities.

“Thy kingdom come” can apply to the kingdom of our heart and our commitment to serving Him until He returns. Over and again we are challenged in Scripture to give our heart to the Lord and be committed to
living for Him.

* Proverbs 23:26- My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.
* Romans 12:1- I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.
* 1 Corinthians 15:58 - Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.
* 2 Corinthians 8:5- And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.
* Luke 9:62- And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

Praying "Thy kingdom come" does demand a depth of commitment from us, and such a commitment produces a life that makes a difference in our society and world. Kingdom power impacts our most intimate relationships with people. Lives are influenced for Christ, and some are changed. We can make a difference in our schools and neighborhoods when we are sold out to the Lord.

To pray "Thy kingdom come" is to reject the corrupt social structures of our day and to strive for a redeemed community. To pray "Thy kingdom come" is a commitment to live out the Beatitudes and the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount in an attitude of dependence upon the Lord in our life. When we pray as Jesus teaches, we will continually pray that our lives will honor and glorify our Father in Heaven and that His will be done in our lives as indicated by the phrase, "thy will be done." Lack of faithful prayer, however, inhibits His will being done. In God's wise and gracious plan, prayer is essential to the proper working of His divine will on earth. Prayer is not getting our will done in Heaven, but getting God's will done on earth.

The very fact that Jesus tells us to pray "Thy will be done on earth" indicates that God's will is not always done on earth. Not everything that happens is according to God's will. There are events that take place in the lives of people that are not a part of God's plan. Does God know about or does He know future events? Yes, but the teaching that says that God's will cannot be resisted or is always accomplished is not biblical. Why would Jesus suggest we pray "Thy will be done" if everything is already according to God's will and eternal decree. If this were so, as Calvinism teaches, there would be no need to pray in the first place because everything would already be settled.
Beloved, you are not a robot shackled to doing God’s will whether you like it or not. Without freedom to do his own will, man would not be a morally responsible being, nor could he be guilty of sin because his life would be dictated by God. God would be the one that was responsible for his actions. We know, however, this is not the case at all. Matthew 7 makes it clear that not everyone does God’s will. Men have a choice to say “Yes” or to say “No” to God and unfortunately they do say “No.”

*Matthew 7:21- Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.
*Isaiah 65:12- Therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter: because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear; but did evil before mine eyes, and did choose that wherein I delighted not.
*1 John 2:17- And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

If everything that happens is the will of God, then the unrepentance and perishing of lost sinners must be the will of God too, but the Scriptures are very clear that this is not God’s will. Thus, such conclusions are not biblical.

*Revelation 22:17- And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.
*Isaiah 45:22- Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.
*1 John 4:14 - And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.
*1 Timothy 2:4,6 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.
*2 Peter 3:9- The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.
*1 Timothy 4:10- For therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe.
*1 John 2:2 - And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.
If we were robots, shackled to the will of God whether we liked it or not, then rewards from God would be irrelevant. Rewards, however, are God’s endorsement and gifts to those who have chosen to obey the Lord. The Bible is clear that the Lord has given us a will. We can be willing or willful. He has given us the choice to obey or rebel, but each choice yields its own consequences. We must make a choice and we are the ones that are responsible for our choices.

* Joshua 24:15a- And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve;
* Isaiah 1:19- If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:
* Isaiah 1:2- Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. They chose to rebel.

Many Christians face a struggle in the battlefield of their mind between their willingness and their actions. If you have not found out already, it is one thing to be willing to do what the Lord wants, but it is another matter to rule our flesh and DO what the Lord wants. Paul spoke of this struggle.

* Romans 7:18- For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

Having a willing attitude is useless in serving Christ if we do not put our attitude into action. We are not going to win people to Christ unless we speak up and speak to them. The “doing” aspect of the Christian life cannot be neglected or else, nothing gets done....nothing gets accomplished. We do not “DO” to earn God’s love for He already loves us. We “DO” because we love Him and want others to know Him.

God wants us to serve Him and have a servant’s heart. No person, however, can truly serve unless the will of his master is prominent and dominant in his heart. Servants must be submissive to the will of the master or they are not good servants and will not perform well in service. So it is in the matter of serving the Lord Jesus Christ. Serving the Lord is doing what God tells us to do. Self-will, however, is not service but rebellion. In the garden of Gethsemane, Christ prayed during His great crisis. He faced the conflict of His will and prayed, "Not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). We can do no less. Making His will first is the primary qualification for serving the Lord.

When it comes to doing the Lord’s will, you may face several attitudes in your life or in the lives of others close to you.
* Attitudes Toward God’s Will

A. An Attitude of Resentment

A man may say, "Thy will be done," in a tone of bitter resentment. A man may feel that God is his enemy, and yet, an enemy so strong that he cannot resist. He may therefore accept God's will, but he may accept it with bitter resentment and smouldering anger. "I'll do it, but I don't want to and don't like it," is his attitude. This resentment is an indication of self-will and pride.

The great enemy of God's will is pride. Pride caused Satan to rebel against God, and pride causes unbelievers to reject God and believers to disobey Him. For God's will to be accepted and to be prayed for in sincerity and with faith, self-will must be forsaken in the power of the Holy Spirit.

B. An Attitude of Resignation

A man may say, "Thy will be done," in a tone of defeated resignation. He may say it, not because he wishes to say it, but because he has accepted the fact that he cannot possibly say anything else. He may say it because he has accepted the fact that God is too strong for him, and that it is useless to bang his head against the walls of the universe. He may say it thinking only of the power of God which has him in its grip. A man may accept the will of God for no other reason than that he has realized that he cannot do anything else.

C. An Attitude of a Reliance and Relationship of Love

A man may say, "Thy will be done," in an attitude of reliance on the Lord and a relationship of love with God. He may say it gladly and willingly, no matter what that will may be. It should be easy for the Christian to say, "Thy will be done," with love and trust, for the Christian can be secure about God's guidance of his life. He can be sure of the wisdom of God.

Sometimes when we want something built, constructed, altered, or repaired, we take it to the craftsman, whether a mechanic, builder, or doctor, and consult him about it. He makes some suggestion, and we often end up saying, "Well, do what you think best. You are the expert." Beloved, God is the expert in life, and His guidance can never lead anyone astray. The Bible lays out a blue print for us concerning the will of God for our lives.
* God’s Will for the Christian
A. It is Perceivable or known.

God wants us to know His will and Word. We can do this through prayer, Bible study, the Holy Spirit’s help, and through the counsel of our parents and godly leaders. Understand that God’s will is not going to contradict His Word. He will never lead you to do something that contradicts Scripture, especially in matters of sex, dating, marriage, business partnerships, and picking a career. It is not God’s will that you be ignorant of it.

* Romans 2:18 - And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law;
* John 7:17 - If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

B. It is Provable.

* Romans 12:2 - And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

God’s will can be proved when it lines up with Scripture, with the leading and peace of the Holy Spirit, with the counsel of godly Christians, and with our circumstances. When these factors are in unison, it is a good indication you are following God’s will.

C. It can be Performed.

A cold day in south Alabama found a group of older men sitting around a pot-bellied stove in a country store. One of the men, having experienced a great deal of physical difficulty in recent months, said: "I don't really know why the good Lord leaves me here. I'm almost deaf and I can't half see. My mind and my body also seem to be decaying as well." One of his friends answered, "Well, Sam, I guess the Lord has something else for you to do in this world." Sam thought about it few moments and then replied, "Well, I'm not going to do it!" The problem of many Christians is not the issue of what the will of God is for their lives, they just don’t want to do it. Thank God we can do His will if we are willing.

* Matthew 6:10 - Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

D. Pray for guidance and instruction to do it.

* Psalm 143:10 - Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness. God will lead and guide us if we will let Him. It is not His will for us to go through life ignoring Him and making choices without His guidance and leading.
* Psalm 37:23 - The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he
delighteth in his way.

God has a way of allowing us to be in the right place at the right time. The following true story reveals God’s guidance of our lives. Here is the story of an unknown man:

I was walking down a dimly lit street late one evening when I heard muffled screams coming from behind a clump of bushes. Alarmed, I slowed down to listen, and panicked when I realized that what I was hearing were the unmistakable sounds of a struggle; heavy grunting, frantic scuffling, and a tearing of fabric. Only yards from where I stood, a woman was being attacked.

Should I get involved? I was frightened for my own safety, and cursed myself for having suddenly decided to take a new route home that night. What if I became another statistic? Shouldn't I just run to the nearest phone and call the police? Although it seemed an eternity, the deliberations in my head had taken only seconds, but already the girl's cries were growing weaker. I knew I had to act fast. How could I walk away from this? No, I finally resolved, I could not turn my back on the fate of this unknown woman, even if it meant risking my own life. I am not a brave man, nor am I athletic. I don't know where I found the moral courage and physical strength—but once I had finally resolved to help the girl, I became strangely transformed.

I ran behind the bushes and pulled the assailant off the woman. Grappling, we fell to the ground, where we wrestled for a few minutes until the attacker jumped up and escaped. Panting hard, I scrambled upright and approached the girl, who was crouched behind a tree, sobbing. In the darkness, I could barely see her outline, but I could certainly sense her trembling shock. Not wanting to frighten her further, I first spoke to her from a distance. "Miss, it's OK," I said soothingly. "The man ran away. You're safe now." There was a long pause and then I heard words, uttered in wonder and amazement. "Daddy, is that you?" And then, from behind the tree, stepped my youngest daughter, Katherine.

Wow! What a story! Beloved, God has a way of directing our path, even though we may not realize it. May we resolve to do what is right, whatever path we trod.

E. It is a Powerful ingredient in getting your prayers answered.

* 1 John 5:14 - And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

What we need to be careful about is manipulating our wills for God's will. We end up deceiving ourselves when we do this and convince ourselves we are doing what God wants us to do when in reality
He is not leading us. For example, an overweight man decided it was time to shed some pounds. He informed his coworkers that he was going on a diet and would no longer be bringing donuts to the office. He knew it would be hard to resist stopping at the bakery on the way to work, but he committed himself to remaining strong and resisting temptation.

His coworkers were surprised one morning to see him arrive at the office with a big box of donuts. When they reminded him of his diet, he just smiled. “These are very special donuts,” he explained. “When I left for the office this morning, I knew I was going to drive by the bakery, and I wondered if maybe the Lord might want me to have some donuts today. I wasn’t sure, so I prayed, ‘Lord, if you want me to stop and buy some donuts, let there be an open parking place directly in front of the bakery.’ As you know, parking places in front of that bakery are hard to get!” One of the coworkers asked, “So the parking place was there?” The man replied, “I couldn’t believe it. It was a miracle! The eighth time around the block, there it was!” Beloved, be careful about deceiving yourself and manipulating your will for the will of God.

F. Pain and suffering may be involved in the will of God.

* 1 Peter 3:17- For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.
* 1 Peter 4:19-Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.
* 2 Corinthians 1:4- Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. The Lord may allow suffering in your life to develop future ministry with others. God can use set-backs and suffering to bring future blessing.

An ancient Chinese story is told of a farmer who had one old horse that he used for tilling his fields. One day the horse escaped into the hills and when all the farmer’s neighbors heard about it, they sympathized with the old man over his bad luck. “Bad luck? Good luck? Who knows?” said the farmer. A week later, the horse returned with a herd of wild horses from the hills and this time the neighbors congratulated the farmer on his good luck. “Good luck? Bad luck? Who knows?” said the farmer.

Then, when the farmer’s son was attempting to tame one of the wild horses, he fell off its back and broke his leg. Everyone agreed that this was very bad luck. Not the farmer, who replied, “Bad luck? Good luck? Who knows?” Some weeks later, the army marched into the village and forced every able-bodied young man to go fight in a bloody war. When
they saw that the farmer's son had a broken leg, they let him stay. Everyone was very happy at the farmer's good luck.

Many live their lives by luck when really the Lord is working His will in your life. Sometimes set-backs that we face are stepping stones to blessings in the future as the farmer amply illustrated. May the Lord help us to trust Him through good and difficult times.

G. Purity and living wisely is the will of God for us.

* Ephesians 5:15-21... See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise. [16] Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. [17] Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. [18] And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; [19] Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; [20] Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; [21] Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

* 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4: For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: It is not God's will that we be involved in sexual sins.

Jonathan Edwards stated two resolves in his life: 1) That all men should live for the glory of God. 2) That whether others do or not, I will."

H. A Pleasant, Praising attitude is the will of God.

* 1 Thessalonians 5:18- In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. It is not God's will that we be ungrateful.

Many years ago there was a movie titled, "Stars in My Crown." It told of an elderly black man who owned a little farm outside a southern town. Some very precious metal was discovered in that area, and suddenly there was pressure on him from many people to sell his land, but he would not sell. He wanted to stay exactly where he was. However, the people in the area would not take "no" for an answer. They did everything they could to make him move. They burned down his barn, shot through his house one night, and eventually threatened to hang him by sundown the next day if he did not agree to sell.

The local Methodist minister heard about the trouble and went to visit the old man. At sundown of the next day, all the leading citizens of the community came to the farm dressed in their white hoods. They were ready to hang the black gentleman if he refused to sell. The farmer came out on the porch to meet them wearing his best clothes. He said that he was ready to die and that he had asked the minister to draw up for him his
Last Will and Testament, which he wanted to have read at that time.

The minister read the will, and those present realized quickly the old man was giving everything to them. He willed the farm to the banker who seemed so hellbent on having it. He gave his rifle to another of the men there who had first learned to hunt with it. He gave his fishing pole to another. In fact, that old man gave everything he had to the people who were prepared to kill him. He killed them first with love and affection.

The impact was incredible. Seeing goodness given in the face of such animosity was more than any of them could tolerate. One by one, in shame, they turned away, and the entire lynching mob disappeared. The minister's grandson had watched everything from a distance, and as everyone departed, he ran up to his grandfather and asked, "What kind of will was that, Granddaddy?" The old preacher answered, "That, my son, was the will of God."

This man was able to forgive because he had been forgiven by his Father in Heaven and he in turn could then pass on and share the gift of forgiveness in any circumstance of life. This man was able to forgive because he was close to the heart and mind of God and his life was filled with praise for the Lord.

I. It is Proof of your salvation.
* Matthew 12:50- For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

J. The Preservation & Protection of believer’s souls is God’s will.
* John 6:39,40- And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

K. The Perishing of lost souls is not His will.
* 2 Peter 3:9- The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. God desires that all men be saved, but unless they put their faith in Jesus Christ, they will spend eternity in Hell.

L. Our Plans are to be made in light of God’s will.

A young man went into a church and started praying. He was so anxious to find God's will for his life that he took a piece of paper and wrote down all the things that he was going to do for God. Then he started to pray that God might reveal to him whether these promises were
acceptable to Him. The Spirit of God spoke to his heart and said, "This is not the way I want you to find My will. All I want of you is for you to sign your name and leave the paper blank for Me to fill." This terrifies many Christians. They fear what the Lord may ask of them or where He will lead them. Nevertheless, we are to plan our lives with His direction.

* James 4:15- For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

* Psalm 32:8- I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.

Psalm 143:10- Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness.

Our questions should be, "Lord what is your will concerning marriage, children, a purchase of an item, where to live, where to go to church, what job should I take, who should I help or speak to about the Lord, etc.?" Make your plans in light of His will.

M. The Pain & Putting to death of Christ was God’s will.

* Galatians 1:4 - Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:

N. The Performance of His will is to be done with all our heart.

* 1 Peter 5:2- Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

*Ephesians 6:5-8... Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart. as unto Christ; [6] Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; [7] With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: [8] Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. Are you committed to doing God’s will or your own will?

A young, new preacher was walking with an older, more seasoned preacher in the garden one day and feeling a bit insecure about what God had for him to do. He was seeking counsel from the older preacher. The older preacher walked up to a rosebush and handed the young preacher a rosebud and told him to open it without tearing off any petals. The young preacher looked in disbelief at the older preacher and was trying to figure out what a rosebud could possibly have to do with his wanting to know the WILL OF GOD for his life and for his ministry. Because of his high respect for the older preacher, he proceeded to TRY to unfold the rose, while keeping every petal intact. It wasn't long before he
realized how impossible it was to do. Noticing the younger preacher's inability to unfold the rosebud while keeping it intact, the older preacher began to recite the following poem.

**UNFOLDING THE ROSEBUD.**

*It is only a tiny rosebud, a flower of GOD's design;*

*But I cannot unfold the petals, with these clumsy hands of mine.*

*The secret of unfolding flowers, is not known to such as I.*

*GOD opens this flower so sweetly, when in my hands they fade and die.*

*If I cannot unfold a rosebud, this flower of GOD's design,*

*Then how can I think I have wisdom, to unfold this life of mine?*

*So I'll trust in Him for His leading, each moment of every day.*

*I will look to Him for His guidance, each step of the pilgrim way.*

*The pathway that lies before me, only my Heavenly Father knows.*

*I'll trust Him to unfold the moments, just as He unfolds the rose.*

So far in our study of the Lord's Prayer or Disciple's Prayer, we have examined first, our relationship with God. Second, we looked at the reverence for the reputation of the Lord. We have just finished looking at the rule and reign of the Lord. Now we are going to take our spiritual magnifying glasses and examine the resources of the Lord.

**IV. THE RESOURCES OF THE LORD  6:11**

_Give us this day our daily bread._

We will now begin to consider the last three petitions, which turn from praying for God's glory to praying for ourselves. How does one properly pray for oneself? That is a good question. The answer as we see it, in the Lord's Prayer, does away with some commonly held pious presuppositions that we are not to do this. This model prayer frees us to pray naturally from the heart, making our needs known to the Lord. He is interested in us and wants us to bring our needs to Him. We honor Him by so doing this. Let's take a look at the section, "Give us this day our daily bread" and focus our thoughts on the fact that our Lord is our resource for blessings.

**A. The Supplication and Source- "Give"**

The word "give" points to the fact that God is the source of our blessings and needs and He is the one that can meet them. Our Lord's ability to meet our needs is unlimited, uninhibited, unmatched and is unmerited by us. We do not earn His grace and gifts. He gives to us
because He can and because of His unconditional love for us.

The word “give” in this petition reminds us also of the grace of God. Anything we have is given to us because of His grace and mercy. We do not deserve anything from God, but because of His grace, He blesses us and supplies our needs. Our accomplishments, deeds, abilities, or merits are not pleaded, but His mercy is. That is the only way to ask for things from God. We are to appeal to His mercy and grace not to our merits and goodness, what we think we deserve, or what God owes us. God does not owe you anything. We will not get much if we make our appeal on that basis because our merits do not impress God. Appealing in faith to His mercy, compassion, faithfulness, and grace, however, lead to His blessings and care in one way or another. They are more than we can comprehend and compute.

* Psalm 37:4- Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

* Lamentations 3:22-23... It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassion fail not. [23] They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.

B. The Selfless Seekers—“us, our”

We must note that Jesus did not teach us to pray, "Give me my daily bread." No, He taught us to pray, "Give us our daily bread." The problem of the world is not that there is not enough to go around. In a majority of situations there is enough to spare. The problem is not the supply of life's essential needs. It is the distribution of what is available by those who selfishly hoard what God has already provided. This prayer teaches us never to be selfish in our prayers.

God wants to build a mutual care and concern between us and others through this prayer. He commands us to pray "give us," not "give me." Every time we pray this prayer from our heart, we are affirming our solidarity with others. When we pray, "Give us today our daily bread," we are also making an implicit commitment to help provide bread for needy friends.

The prayer is a stretching, broadening petition. We not only depend on God for His practical provision, we also commit ourselves to be part of God's answer for others in need. It is a prayer which we can help God to answer by giving to others who are less fortunate than we are and share our daily bread with those in need. Over and again, the Bible stresses the fact that we are to be concerned about the needs of others.

* 1 Corinthians 10:24 - Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth. We are to be concerned about the needs of others and not our
own.
* Philippians 2:4- Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

One stormy night many years ago an elderly couple entered the lobby of a small hotel and asked for a room. The clerk explained that because there were three conventions in town, the hotel was filled. "But I can't send a nice couple like you out in the rain at 1 o'clock in the morning," he said. "Would you be willing to sleep in my room?" The couple hesitated, but the clerk insisted. The next morning when the man paid his bill, he said, "You're the kind of manager who should be the boss of the best hotel in the United States. Maybe someday I'll build one for you." The clerk smiled, amused by the older man's "little joke."

A few years passed. Then one day the clerk received a letter from the elderly man, recalling that stormy night, and asking him to come to New York for a visit. A round-trip ticket was enclosed. When the clerk arrived, his host took him to the corner of 5th Avenue and 34th Street, where stood a magnificent new building. "That," explained the man, "is the hotel I have just built for you to manage." "You must be joking," said the clerk. "I most assuredly am not," came the reply. "Who -- who are you?" stammered the other. "My name is William Waldor Astor." That hotel was the original Waldorf-Astoria, and the young clerk who became its first manager was George C. Boldt.

Beloved, we reap what we sow. When we sow love and generosity toward others, we will reap it later on. This is a law of Scripture and a promised blessing.
* Luke 6:38- Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.
* Ecclesiastes 11:1- Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.
* Proverbs 11:24- There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.
* Proverbs 22:9-He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor.

C. The Schedule- "this day...daily"

The schedule of God's provision for His children is "this day" or "daily." The meaning here is simply that of regular, day-by-day supply of our needs. In commanding us to pray, "Give us today our daily bread" God is fostering in us a daily dependence upon himself. Notice what
David said in Psalm 86.

*Psalm 86:3* - Be merciful unto me, O Lord: for I cry unto thee daily.

We are to rely on the Lord one day at a time, looking to Him for our needs. He may give us vision for work He calls us to do in the future, but His provision for our needs is daily, not weekly, monthly, or yearly. See, the Lord wants to hear from us everyday, not once in a while or when we need Him. To accept the Lord's provision for the present day, without concern for our needs or welfare tomorrow, is a testimony of our contentment in His goodness and His faithfulness. That contentment, trust, and faith will wring out the worry that wanders around in our heart sometimes. If we worry, we can't trust; if we trust, we can't worry.

*Psalm 68:19* - Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation.

No other line like this one in the Lord's Prayer so sharply challenges the direction of today's world. The man on the street wants to compound his security and his independence. He prefers the security of a year's supply. He wants retirement pay that will last for the rest of his life. To be sure, there is nothing wrong with planning for future rainy days, but it is wrong to make total independence your consuming goal, especially when you want to be independent of God. The rich man in Luke made this tragic mistake. He felt he had no needs of anything or anyone. Thus, he felt he did not need God.

*Luke 12:15-21*... And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. [16] And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: [17] And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? [18] And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. [19] And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. [20] But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? [21] So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

Whether we are rich or poor, God wants us to depend upon Him "daily." He wants us all to pray for our daily needs, and He wants us to daily thank, trust, and depend upon Him. When Jesus taught His disciples to pray this petition, there is little doubt that His mind was going back to the story of the manna in the wilderness (Exo 16:1-21).
The children of Israel were starving in the wilderness, and God sent them manna, the food from Heaven, but there was one condition. They must gather only enough for their immediate needs. If they tried to gather too much, and store it up, it went bad. They had to be satisfied with enough for the day.

This petition tells us to live one day at a time. It forbids the anxious worry which is so characteristic of the life which has not learned to trust God. The emphasis here is looking by faith to the Lord every day. We do not want to depend upon God every day, but this prayer emphasizes living by faith which is a constant dependence upon God. This is what pleases the Lord.

* Hebrews 11:6- But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

* Romans 1:17- For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. Faith is a refusal to panic.

William Penn, the founder of the commonwealth of Pennsylvania, was well liked by the Indians. Once they told him he could have as much of their land as he could encompass on foot in a single day. So, early the next morning he started out and walked until late that night. When he finally went to claim his land, the Indians were greatly surprised, for they really didn't think he would take them seriously. But they kept their promise and gave him a large area which today is part of the city of Philadelphia. William Penn simply believed what they said. Should we do less with God? Beloved, when we are truly dependent upon the Lord and live by faith, we will have many of the following attitudes.

* We will be reliant upon His righteousness and His responsibility to keep His promises.

* We will be confident in His care and course for our lives, for the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.

* We will have the assurance of answered prayer and His arrival one day at His second coming.

* We will have hope in going to Heaven and in His help for daily living.

* We will be leaning on His love for us and looking for opportunities to serve Him.

* We will be trusting in His Truth in spite of our troubles, trials, trauma, or tribulations.

* We will be submissive to His scheme or will for our lives and sensitive to His leading.
* We will be humbled by our helplessness and realize without Him we can do nothing.

Have you ever noticed that the last letter of the Greek alphabet, the Omega, looks very much like a horseshoe, the time-honored symbol of good luck? Jesus said he was Alpha and Omega, the first and last. It is better to depend on the presence of Jesus Christ than to rely on the good luck of the horseshoe. Are you depending upon the Lord in your life?

D. Our Substance for Daily Living - "daily bread"

Daily bread refers to the necessities of life, food and physical needs, not its luxuries. This indicates our needs as opposed to our wants. Bread is common, not a luxury. It is ordinary, not special. Too many of our prayers are for what we do not need. They are prayed from the lusts of the flesh. Some folk complain that God does not answer their prayers. The problem is not God but is often the fact that people are praying for wants and not needs. This is a prayer for our needs, not our greed.

The request is for God to supply our needs day by day. The expression “this day [or today] our daily bread” reflects first century life in which workers received their pay daily. Asking God to provide our needs, however does not free us from the responsibility of working.

* 2 Thessalonians 3:10 – For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

God satisfies our needs partially by giving us the ability and the opportunity to earn a living. Ultimately everything comes from Him. It really does. Having to live from hand to mouth one day at a time can be a blessing if it reminds us of our total dependence on God. This is especially true since we live in a world that glorifies self-sufficiency and financial independence.

Praying for "daily bread" reminds us that we are to pray for the material as well as the spiritual. Nothing is too big or too small to be left out of our prayer life. "Give us today our daily bread" is an invitation to come to God with requests that others might call small or trivial. One of the precious realities of our Christian life is that God cares for the simple, ordinary, day-to-day things of life. Jesus taught us that even supposedly trivial matters are important to God. God wants us to bring our everyday needs to Him, even if they seem unimportant.

He does not demand that we approach Him only when we have raised ourselves to some kind of spiritual elevation above the everyday things of life.

The greatness of our God lies in His descent to meet us where we are. When we come to Him with our "little things," we do Him great
honor. It is marvelous to understand that the God who created the entire universe, who is the God of all space, time, and eternity, who is infinitely holy and completely self-sufficient, should care about supplying our physical needs and should be concerned that we receive enough food to eat, clothes to wear, and a place to rest. God obligates Himself to supply our needs.

*Philippians 4:19-* But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

*Matthew 6:33-* But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

The difficulty of interpreting this petition, "give us this day our daily bread," was increased by the fact that there was considerable doubt as to the meaning of the word *epiousios* \{ep-ee-oo'-see-os\} translated "daily." The extraordinary fact was that, until a short time ago, there was no other known occurrence of this word in the whole of Greek literature. Origen knew this, and indeed held that Matthew had invented the word. It was therefore not possible to be sure what it precisely meant, but not very long ago a papyrus fragment turned up with this word on it.

The papyrus fragment was actually a woman's shopping list and against an item on it was the word *epiousios*. It was a note to remind her to buy supplies of a certain food for the coming day. So, very simply, what this petition means is, "Give me the things we need to eat for this coming day. Help me to get the things I've got on my shopping list when I go out this morning. Give me the things we need to eat when the children come in from school, and the men folk come in from work. Grant that the table be not bare when we sit down together today." This is a simple prayer that God will supply us with the things we need for the coming day.

Linguists today also tell us the word *epiousios* \{ep-ee-oo'-see-os\} not only means "today's bread" but it can also be translated "tomorrow's bread." If this prayer is offered in the morning, it is a prayer for the needs of the day. If it is prayed in the evening, it is a prayer for the needs of the next day. The basic, primary sense is the same. "Give us today, tomorrow's bread" is a prayer for God to meet our daily physical needs. At the same time, praying for tomorrow's bread implicitly requests that God meet our needs with the bread of the ultimate tomorrow — the bread of eternity.

There is another insight we find in this part of the Lord's Prayer. This prayer for bread tells us that God cares for our bodies. We do well to remember that God is interested in our bodies. The body is the temple
of the Holy Spirit if you are a Christian.

We ask for our daily bread, which teaches us constantly to depend upon God's provision. We beg of God to give it to us, not sell it to us, nor lend it to us, but give it. The greatest of men must be beholden to the mercy of God for their daily bread. We are all dependent upon the Lord whether we realize it or want to admit it. As Christians we are to depend upon the Lord for a number of things in all aspects of our lives.

* Our Dependence Upon the Lord

What are we to depend upon the Lord for in our lives? Here is a list of ten things from Scripture.

1. Depend on the Lord for your Salvation:

In 1983, the U.S.A. issued a postage stamp commemorating the building of the first steel bridge in America. It was built across the Mississippi River at St. Louis. Many said it could not be built. They said it would never support its own weight. So James Eads, the builder, ordered fourteen locomotives to stop on the bridge at once. Then people trusted the bridge. They called it the eighth wonder of the world. The Lord Jesus Christ is the bridge between sinning man and a sinless God. We must trust Him in order to cross into Heaven.

* Matthew 8:25- And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.

* Romans 10:13- For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

2. Depend on the Lord for your Strength:

In the book Healing the Masculine Soul, Gordon Dalbey says that when Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as the Helper, he uses a Greek word, paraclete, that was an ancient warrior's term. "Greek soldiers went into battle in pairs," says Dalbey, "so when the enemy attacked, they could draw together back-to-back, covering each other's blind side. One's battle partner was the paraclete." Our Lord does not send us to fight the good fight alone. The Holy Spirit is our battle partner who covers our blind side and fights for our well being. The Lord is our source of strength for the battles that we face in our lives.

* 1 Corinthians 15:10- But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

* 2 Corinthians 12:9-10... And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore
will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong. Why is he strong? God's grace and the power of Christ are resting upon him.

*Philippians 4:13- I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

* 2 Timothy 4:17- Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.*

3. Depend on the Lord for Stability and Steadfastness:

* Romans 4:20- He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;*

*Philippians 2:13 - For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

Judy Anderson, whose husband was the West Africa Director of the World Relief Corporation, grew up as the daughter of missionaries in Zaire. As a little girl, she went to a day-long rally celebrating the one-hundredth anniversary of Christian missionaries coming to that part of Zaire. After a full day of long speeches and music, an old man came before the crowd and insisted that he be allowed to speak. He said he soon would die, and that he alone had some important information. If he did not speak, that information would go with him to his grave.

The old man explained that when Christian missionaries came a hundred years before, his people thought the missionaries were strange and their message unusual. The tribal leaders decided to test the missionaries by slowly poisoning them to death. Over a period of months and years, missionary children died one by one. Then the old man said, "It was as we watched how they died that we decided we wanted to live as Christians."

That story had gone untold for one hundred years. Those who died painful, strange deaths never knew why they were dying or what the impact of their lives and deaths would be. They stayed and were steadfast in the Lord's work because they trusted in the Lord and were dependent upon Him. God was working through them to reach others for Him.

4. Depend on the Lord for the Steerage of our Steps:

Someone said, "Attempt something so great and impossible for God that it's doomed to failure unless God be in it." We are to follow God's guidance and trust Him for whatever He has for our lives even if we don't
understand the what's and why's.
* Proverbs 20:24 - Man's goings are of the Lord; how can a man then understand his own way? God directs our steps.
* Proverbs 3:5-6... Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. [6] In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.
* Jeremiah 10:23 - O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. God has a plan for all of us. He can lead us even though we may not realize it.
* Psalm 143:10- Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness.

The Master's will, for this I pray, Whatever it may be! I do not want to miss Your best; Reveal it, Lord, to me. My own desires may lead me wrong, I must consult my God; His counsel will be justified, When all the way I've trod. O soul of mine, delight in Him! His Word discern, obey! The plan you seek to know will then unfold from day to day. We do not live our lives alone: If I am in God's will, The lives of others will be helped, His purpose to fulfill! My all, O Lord, I give to You, My body, mind and soul; May all the days that lie ahead, be under Your control.
-- Frances L. Hess --

5. Depend on the Lord for Safety and the Status of our Life:

On July 6, 1415, John Huss was taken to the place where he would be a martyr for the truth in which he believed. As he went to the stake, he was heard quoting Psalm 31:1, "In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed." We too, are to put our lives in the hands of the Lord.
* James 4:13-15 ... Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: [14] Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. [15] For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.
* 2 Corinthians 1:8-10 - For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: [9] But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: [10] Who delivered us from
so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;

Years ago a military officer and his wife were aboard a ship that was caught in a raging ocean storm. Seeing the frantic look in her eyes, the man tried unsuccessfully to allay her fears. Suddenly she grasped his sleeve and cried, "How can you be so calm?" He stepped back a few feet and drew his sword. Pointing it at her heart, he said, "Are you afraid of this?" Without hesitation she answered, "Of course not!" "Why not?" he inquired. "Because it's in your hand, and you love me too much to hurt me." To this he replied, "I know the One who holds the winds and the waters in the hollow of His hand, and He will surely care for us!" The officer was not disturbed because he had put his trust in the Lord.

6. Depend upon the Lord for your Sustenance:
* 1 Kings 17:4 - And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.
* John 3:27 - John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.
* Luke 9:3 - And he said unto them, Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece.
* Philippians 4:19 - But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.
* Matthew 4:4 - But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

7. Depend on the Lord for the Solutions to your Problems
Charles Spurgeon said, "When you have no helpers, see all your helpers in God. When you have many helpers, see God in all your helpers. When you have nothing but God, see all in God. When you have everything, see God in everything. Under all conditions, stay thy heart only on the Lord."
* 2 Chronicles 20:12 - O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee.
* Genesis 41:16 - And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.
* Mark 9:29 - And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.

8. Depend on the Lord for your Success and Spiritual Growth:
George Washington, alone, cold, and discouraged at Valley Forge,
penned these words to his favorite chaplain, Rev. Israel Evans: "It will ever be the first wish of my heart to aid your pious endeavors to inculcate a due sense of the dependence we ought to place in that all wise and powerful being on whom alone our success depends."

* 2 Corinthians 3:5- Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; Our abilities are from the Lord.

* Psalm 119:33-37... Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end. [34] Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart. [35] Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight. [36] Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness. [37] Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way.

* Romans 8:37- Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

Dr. Floyd Faust said: Early in my ministry, I met a man named Worral. He had been stricken with rheumatoid arthritis at age 15, and when I met him 30 years later, he was totally paralyzed except for one finger. He could barely speak and was totally blind, but he had a string tied to that one mobile finger that could turn on a recorder. He wrote for national magazines, authored books and led a happy and influential life from his bed. This was possible because after initial prayers brought no healing, he accepted his lot graciously and said, "Well Lord! If this is the size plot in life you've staked out for me, let's you and me together show the world what we can grow on it."

Down the path of humble acceptance, Worral achieved a happier and more useful life within the limitations of very restricted circumstances than most people ever will manage with excellent physical health. He depended upon the Lord to give him the strength and wisdom to accomplish the tasks before him and live day by day. God helped him to conquer the discouragement and depression that come from a terrible disability.

* John 15:4-5... Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. [5] I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

* 1 Corinthians 3:6- I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.
* Psalm 75:6-7... For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another.

* James 1:17- Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

The greatest achievements in life are usually accomplished by people who have a singular desire that becomes the ruling passion of all they do. For example, when Bob Feller was a child, he loved to throw a ball. By the age of 5, he spent hours every day pitching through a hole in the barn wall. At 10, his father bought him all the necessary equipment and provided him with a playing field on the family farm. At 13, he pitched for a local team and averaged twenty strikeouts a game. At 17, he began playing for the Cleveland Indians. As a major leaguer he had six seasons as a twenty-game winner, three no-hit games, eleven 1-hitters, 266 wins, and he set a record of 348 strikeouts in one season. He is a member of the Baseball Hall of Fame. Bob Feller had one desire... baseball! Something of that same focusing of life can be seen in every Christian who has been used of God in a special way. When God uses us, it is because of His blessings and provision in our lives.

9. Depend upon the Lord for your Satisfaction and Serenity:

It is said that as Benjamin Franklin concluded a stirring speech on the guarantees of the Constitution, a heckler shouted, "Aw, them words don't mean nothin' at all. Where's all the happiness you say it guarantees us?" Franklin smiled and replied, "My friend, the Constitution only guarantees the American people the right to pursue happiness; you have to catch it yourself." If you will depend upon the Lord for your joy, satisfaction, and serenity, you will catch it for sure and keep it.

* Psalm 30:11-12... Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing; thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; [12] To the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.

* Ephesians 2:14- For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;

* Romans 5:1- Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

When we desire the right things, God gives us the desires of our heart. Dr. Wilfred Grenfell (1866-1940) became the personal physician for King Edward VII. Before him was a life of prosperity and luxury, but the benefits of this career held little appeal for him. He found his deepest
satisfaction in his personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

As he reflected on his place in God's service, he developed a deep desire to practice medicine in the country of Labrador. God granted that desire. Looking back, he thought of all he would have missed had he stayed in London. Riding in a Rolls Royce and living in a mansion would have been paltry substitutes for the 42 years of medical missionary work he did in Labrador. Living for Christ gave him great satisfaction, serenity, and purpose for living. It will do the same for you too.

10. Depend Upon the Lord for your Smarts or Common Sense:
* James 1:5 - If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.
* Luke 21:15 - For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.
* Proverbs 1:7-The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Are you dependent upon the Lord? May your prayer each day be, "Give us this day our daily bread."

So far in our study of the Lord’s Prayer or Disciple’s Prayer, we have examined first, our relationship with God. Second, we looked at the reverence for the reputation of the Lord. The third section was the rule and reign of the Lord. This last segment was about the resources of the Lord. We will now examine our repentance and reliance for forgiveness.

V. OUR REPENTANCE & RELIANCE FOR FORGIVENESS 6:12
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

The prayer for disciples shifts from a prayer for sustenance to a prayer for cleansing and forgiveness. The issues of humility, confession, sin, fellowship with God, seeking forgiveness and forgiving our offenders are addressed in this portion of this model prayer.

A.. Our Problem 6:12a “And forgive us our debts”

The whole town had gathered in the courthouse for the trial. The prosecuting attorney called his first witness, an elderly woman, to the stand. He approached her and asked, “Mrs. Jones, do you know me?” She responded, “Why, yes, I do know you, Mr. Williams. I’ve known you since you were a young boy. And, frankly, you’ve been a big disappointment to me. You lie, you cheat on your wife, you manipulate people and talk about them behind their backs. You think you’re a rising big shot, but you haven’t the brains to realize you will never amount to anything more than a two-bit paper pusher. Yes, I know you.”
The lawyer was stunned. Not knowing what else to do, he pointed across the room and asked, “Mrs. Jones, do you know the defense attorney?” She replied, “Why, of course I do. I’ve known Mr. Bradley since he was a youngster, too. I used to baby-sit him. And he, too, has been a real disappointment to me. He’s lazy, bigoted, and has a drinking problem. The man can’t build a normal relationship with anyone, and his law practice is one of the shoddiest in the entire state. Yes, I know him.”

At this point, the judge rapped the courtroom to silence and called both counselors to the bench. In a very quiet voice, he said with menace, “If either of you ask her if she knows me, I’ll hold you both in contempt of court!”

**Beloved, God knows us.** He knows what we think and what is going on in our hearts. He knows especially about our sinfulness. This is why we are to seek His forgiveness. In fact, the word “forgive” is from *aphiemi* {af-ee'-ay-mee} which means “to send away.”

At the dawn of this section, the Lord deals with our problem....the problem of our sinfulness. Sin is represented here under the notion of a debt, and as our sins are many, they are referred to here as “debts.” Debts are offences against God—offences which none but God can forgive or send away. God made man that he might live to glorify God, and gave him a law to live by. When God’s law is broken, men incur a sin debt. All men have broken God’s law and are guilty and the penalty of death must be paid.

* *Romans 6:23a- For the wages of sin is death; ... *

Man’s problem concerning his sin debt is he is broke. Man has nothing to pay to appease the holiness and justice of God. If his debts of sin are not forgiven, they are charged against him forever, as he is absolutely bankrupt. Forgiveness, therefore, must come from the free mercy of God in the Lord Jesus Christ. How strange is it that we cannot have the old debt canceled, without contracting a new debt, as great as the old one! While lost sinners we are in debt to God’s infinite justice. When we are forgiven by the Lord, we are in debt to God’s endless Mercy. We are debtors to the Lord as Christians and have been redeemed by His blood.

Our greatest need is forgiveness of our sins. We need forgiveness of sins for salvation because God is holy and will not tolerate sin in His presence. We need forgiveness of sins for fellowship with God. Our sin hurts our walk with Him, but there is forgiveness when we confess our faults to Him. Our sins affect our prayer life.
* 1 John 1:9 - If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

* Psalm 66:18 - If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:

“Forgive us our sins,” is to be our prayer, but what really is it? What is sin? When we look through the New Testament we find that there are five different words used to describe and define sin.

1. **Hamartia {ham-ar-tee'-ah} -**

This is the most common word used for sin. It is used in at least 151 verses in the New Testament.

* Romans 5:12- Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

Hamartia was originally a shooting word and means “a missing of the target.” To fail to hit the target was hamartia. Therefore, sin is the failure to be what we might have been and could have been. Sin misses the mark of God’s righteousness. We tend to miss the target because we get distracted, we are out of practice, or our focus gets distorted. Sometimes we get our eyes off the Lord, and put them on other things. We do not practice having a daily walk with Christ. For this reason we are admonished to keep our sights on the Lord and walk with Him. If we are going to stay close to Christ, our eyes need to be upon Him.

* Galatians 5:25- If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

* Hebrews 12:2- Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

* Philippians 3:13-14.... Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Paul forgot what was behind and did not let his failures or victories distract him. He reached forth to those things before him. The words “reaching forth” in Philippians 3:13 come from the Greek word epekeinomai {ep-ek-i'-nom-ahee} which means to stretch or strain forward. This word is used to describe a runner or a horse going hard for the tape or finish line with muscles stretched to the limit to win. It is a word that indicates a 100% effort. To keep your focus on the Lord takes total effort on our part. Paul indicates his intensity to reach his goal for Christ in verse 14, “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”
The word “press” in verse 14 is again the Greek word *dioko* which means “to intently, earnestly seek or pursue.” It is in the present tense which indicates a continuous effort. Paul pressed after the church or persecuted Christians, now he presses, he earnestly, continually pursues toward the mark of God’s high calling.

The Lord has a way of changing our goals, doesn’t He? There are two extremes of pressing: 1) I must do it all, 2) God must do it all. God wants us to be dependent upon Him for the things we cannot do for ourselves. We are to do our best and leave the rest up to God.

Paul pressed “toward the mark.” The word “toward” is the word *kata* which means “down.” Paul was saying, “I continually bear down on the mark.” This word “mark” is a very interesting word. It comes from the Greek word *skopos* {skop-os’} and forms our English word scope. The word means “the distant mark looked at, the goal or end one has in view.” This meaning can be seen as Paul talks about our race for Christ.

* 2 Timothy 4:7- I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

In Philippians 3:14, the word “mark” or “skopos” has another meaning which would add another dimension to this verse. *Skopos* can also refer to “one that watches, one that looks after things, of gods and kings, a guardian, a protector, a scout or lookout-man, a guard or watchman.” The mark that Paul was pressing toward could also be a reference to the Lord Himself. Paul was looking forward to seeing and being with Christ. He did not want to fail or miss the mark. His desire was to be and do what God wanted him to do. Is this your desire?

Charles Lamb has a picture of a man named Samuel le Grice. Le Grice was a brilliant youth who never fulfilled his promise. Lamb says that there were three stages in his career. There was a time when people said, "He will do something." There was a time when people said, "He could do something if he would." There was a time when people said, "He might have done something, if he had liked." Edwin Muir writes in his autobiography: "After a certain age all of us, good and bad, are grief stricken because of powers within us which have never been realized. In other words, we are not what we should be." That precisely is *hamartia* and that is precisely the situation in which we are all involved.

Are we as good husbands or wives as we could be? Are you as good a son or daughter as you can be or is your life characterized by ungratefulness, rebellion, hatefulness, and sneaking around behind the backs of your parents? Are we as good workmen or employers as we
could be? Are we the best Christian we can be for the Lord? Is there anyone who will dare to claim that he is all he might have been, and has done all he could have done? When we realize that sin means the failure to hit the target, the failure to be all that we might have been and could have been, then it is clear that every one of us is a sinner.

The great sorrow of all believers at the Judgment Seat of Christ will be the reality that we could have done so much more for the Lord Jesus Christ in reaching others for Him. Schindler’s cry in WW2 to the hundreds of Jewish people he protected from the Nazi’s was “I wasted so much. I could have saved more if I did this or sold that to purchase the freedom of more Jewish people.” I don’t think we will be any different when we stand before Christ. There is another word for “sin” in the New Testament.

2. Parabasis {par-ab’-as-is}

The second word for sin, used in seven verses in the New Testament, is parabasis {par-ab’-as-is} which literally means “a stepping across.” This sin is more conscious and intentional than hamartia or paraptoma, the third word we will examine in a moment. Parabasis is commonly translated “transgression.”

* 1 Timothy 2:14 - And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.

Sin is the step across the line which is drawn between right and wrong. It is going out of bounds. When we go out of bounds in a ball game, we are penalized or the play of the game ceases. When we live in sin, we too, cease to go forward or suffer the penalty or consequences for our disobedience. Do we always stay on the right side of the line which divides honesty and dishonesty, truth and deception, kindness and love from selfishness and hatred. When we think of sin in this way, there can be none who can claim always to have always remained on the right side of the dividing line. We have all transgressed His Word.

3. Paraptoma {par-ap’-to-mah}

The third word for sin is paraptoma {par-ap’-to-mah}, which means to slip across or fall. It is used in 20 New Testament verses. It is used in verse 14 and 15 of Matthew 6, and is translated “trespasses.” In the next two verses, it is translated “fault.”

* Galatians 6:1- Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.
* James 5:16- Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous
man availeth much.

*Parapton* is the kind of slip which a man might make on a slippery or an icy road. It is not so deliberate as *parabasis*, the second word we just examined. It results more from carelessness than from intentional disobedience. If we are not careful, we are swept away by some impulse or passion, which has momentarily gained control of us, and which has made us lose our self-control. The best of us can slip into sin for a moment, when we have dropped our guard, because our flesh is very powerful.

4. **Anomia** {an-om-ee'-ah}

*Anomia* means lawlessness. It is used in 13 verses of the New Testament. It is mainly translated “iniquity.”

*Matthew 7:23- And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

*Anomia* is the sin of the man who knows the right, but does the wrong. It is the sin of the man who knows the law, yet breaks the law. It is a more intentional and flagrant sin. *Anomia* is direct and open rebellion against God and His ways. The first of all the human instincts is the instinct to do what we want without any restraint. This is what this sin is about. It is the attitude that says, “I’m doing what I want to do whether you like it or not.”

5. **Opheilema** {of-i'-lay-mah}

This is the word used for “**debts**” in Matthew 6:12. It occurs in one other verse. It means “a failure to pay that which is due, a failure in duty.” There can be no man who will ever dare to claim that he has perfectly fulfilled his duty to man and to God. Such perfection does not exist among men. For this reason we are in need to pray, “Forgive us our debts, forgive us our sins.”

Confessing that we need forgiveness of sins is humbling. No one truly prays for forgiveness of sins without being humble. Many folks will not be saved because they will not admit they are sinners. Their pride keeps them from confessing their sins and acknowledging the authority of God Almighty over their lives and their souls for eternity. They refuse to acknowledge God as their judge. Their resistance will not change the fact that they will stand before God in judgment one day. Then they will acknowledge the authority of Jesus Christ, but it will be too late to be saved.

*Philippians 2:9-10 .... Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: [10] That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth,
things under the earth; [11] And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

We looked at our problem, now we will look at the proportion for forgiveness.

B. The Proportion for Forgiveness “...as we forgive our debtors.”

...For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: [15] But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.  6:12b,14-15

This second clause in the sentence does not mean that we must earn God’s forgiveness with our own forgiveness of others. Our forgiveness of others demonstrates our felt need of being forgiven by the Lord. It shows what the Lord has done in us and for us. The person who does not forgive a brother’s offenses does not appreciate how much he himself needs forgiveness in his own life. Once our eyes have been opened to see the enormity of our offense against God, the injuries which others have done to us appear, by comparison, extremely little, petty, and trifling. If, on the other hand, we have an exaggerated, blown-up view of the offenses of others, it proves that we have minimized our own faults and offenses.

The imperative here simply means that we must have a forgiving spirit if we expect to be forgiven. For the unsaved sinner, forgiveness is possible because of the blood of Christ that was shed for sinners, but forgiveness will not come to the sinner unless he asks for forgiveness and in the right spirit. A right spirit involves a forgiving spirit.

All of this is not legalism or working for salvation. The attitude of forgiveness of others demonstrates genuine repentance. No repentant person truly seeks forgiveness who does not have a forgiving spirit himself. We must not expect our prayers for forgiveness to be heard, if we pray with malice and spite in our hearts towards others. We are wasting our time. To pray in such a frame of mind is mere formality and hypocrisy. It is even worse than hypocrisy. It is as much as saying, “Dear God, do not forgive me at all.”

In fact it was Augustine who called this request "the terrible petition" because he realized that if we pray "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" with an unforgiving heart, we are actually asking God not to forgive us for our sins. The Lord is telling us to pray "Forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us." Jesus does not want anyone to misunderstand here, so he states it categorically in verses 14-15 again. In other words, He was saying, “Let me make this perfectly clear. You want me to forgive you, then you forgive others.”
* Matthew 6:14-15... For ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: [15] But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

The call to forgive is an indirect call, but it is a very strong call to forgive. In another text similar to this one, "forgive" is in the imperative mood which makes it a divine command. Forgiveness involves a change of relationship between the wronged person and the wrong-doer. It will involve restoration of a broken relationship and privileges. Forgiveness is not probation. It is complete dismissal of the charge. We are to forgive as Christ has forgiven us. When He forgives us, He does not hold any sins against us. He wipes our slate clean. We are brought back into fellowship which sin had broken

* Mark 11:25- And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

In its use in regards to forgiveness, the word translated "forgive" in our text means “the dismissal of a punishment or of a debt.” It means you no longer hold against someone a wrong they have done to you. You have dismissed the charge. The guilty party is no longer obligated to you because of a wrong they have done to you.

You are going to have times when you get mad at someone and stay heated for a while, hopefully not too long. Eventually, you cool off and forgive the person who ticked you off. The fact that you have forgiven and continue to forgive is a sign of God’s grace working in your life. There may be some who have been recently offended and are still in emotional shock and have not been able to properly respond with forgiveness yet. The point is if you are a Christian, you can and will forgive! Forgiveness is not easy. It is very difficult, in fact. One reason for the difficulty is that "our corrupt nature thirsts for retaliation." Many Christian duties are difficult to do and this duty to forgive is one of the most difficult of them all.

When someone has wronged us, the flesh gets very upset, and even though there is repentance by the offending one, the bitterness of the flesh still does not want to forgive. The difficulty of this duty emphasizes the fact that it is not easy to live a holy life. Those who would picture the Christian life as something fit only for weaklings are very ignorant of the character of Christian duties. Jesus says, "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy." It is those folks who have no desire to forgive anyone who are in soul danger. A merciless, unforgiving heart will receive neither forgiveness nor mercy from God and indicates that the person may
have never been born again in the first place.

* Matthew 18:32-35... Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: [33] Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee? [34] And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. [35] So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

Awareness of this solemn truth occasioned one of John Wesley's famous statements. Wesley was serving as a missionary to the Colonies and was having a terrible time with General Oglethorpe, who was noted for his pride and unbending nature. In a particularly prideful moment, Oglethorpe said, "I never forgive." To which Wesley replied, "Then I hope, sir, you never sin." Wesley knew that if we pride ourselves on never forgetting a wrong, if we make an unforgiving spirit a virtue, we cannot be forgiven.

Thomas Watson, the great Puritan, said, "A man can as well go to Hell for not forgiving as for not believing." Charles Spurgeon stated, "Unless you have forgiven others, you read your own death-warrant when you repeat the Lord's Prayer." In our own time C. S. Lewis wrote: “No part of His teaching is clearer and there are no exceptions to it. He doesn't say that we are to forgive other people's sins provided they are not too frightful, or provided there are extenuating circumstances, or anything of that sort. We are to forgive them all, however spiteful, however mean, however often they are repeated. If we don't, we shall be forgiven none of our own.”

Our unforgiving hearts make our prayers die on our lips. The Lord's Prayer can then be nothing more than a self-inflicted curse — a prayer of doom instead of blessing, for if we pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" with unforgiving hearts, we are asking God not to forgive us! If we say, "I will never forgive so-and-so for what he or she has done to me," and then go and take this petition on our lips, we are quite deliberately asking God not to forgive us.

So is "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" a curse upon you or a blessing? Are your most precious possessions your "grudges?" Do your pride yourself on the fact that you never forgive? If so, the chances are very good that you may have never been saved. How good of God to put it this way. This requires no elaborate reasoning process to determine whether or not we know Him — no special knowledge. All it requires is honesty. Does the state of your heart
regarding forgiveness indicate grace or not? Someone said, “To forgive is divine; to not forgive is demonic.”

So let me ask some probing questions here. **Do you need to forgive your wife or husband?** Make up your mind to do so right now. Have you been unwilling to forgive your parents for things that have happened in the past, perhaps many years ago? Promise God that you will do it. In fact, do it today! Have you forgiven that employer or neighbor or church member who wronged you? Do you have a grudge against your last church, or its pastor, deacons, or members? Forgive today! Forgiveness is not a psychological trick. It is a miracle and God can help you do it. If He commands us to forgive, He will give us the ability to do it.

* Ephesians 4:32-*And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

We have seen that true praying is a “family affair” because we are praying to “Our Father.” If the members of the family are not getting along with one another, how can they claim to have a right relationship with the Father? The emphasis in 1 John 4 is that we show our love for God by loving our brothers. When we forgive each other, we are not earning the right to prayer; for the privilege of prayer is a part of our *sonship* in Jesus Christ.

* Romans 8:15-16 ... For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. [16] The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:*

Forgiveness belongs to the matter of *fellowship.* If I am not in fellowship with God, I cannot pray effectively, but fellowship with my brother helps to determine my fellowship with God. Thus, the matter of forgiveness is important to prayer. The important thing about prayer is not simply getting an answer, but being the kind of person whom God can trust with an answer. Can the Lord trust you with His answers? Better yet, do you know how to forgive others? Many people struggle with forgiveness. We are to avoid bitterness and an unforgiving attitude at all cost because it is so destructive. It has a destructive effect upon us and those around us.

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**How Does an Unforgiving Spirit Affect Us or Others?**

1. **It Duplicates the person we are bitter toward.**

   We become like those whom we resent. One day a little boy named Julian fell down while chasing butterflies in a field of tall grass. Soon afterward, the boy’s left eye started hurting, so he was taken to a doctor. The doctor couldn’t find the source of the irritation, so he just gave the boy
some ointment and sent him home. Eventually Julian’s eye problem went away. About a year later, though, the boy started complaining of cloudy vision. His parents took him to an eye specialist, who was stunned by what he discovered. Apparently when Julian had fallen a year earlier, a tiny grass seed had implanted itself in his cornea. Slowly the seed had grown and had actually sprouted two little leaves in Julian’s eye. The seed had to be removed immediately in order to save the boy’s vision.

Anger and bitterness are like that tiny seed of grass. It has a way of festering and growing to the point where our spiritual vision is clouded, distorted, and infected and we are distracted from focusing our life on the Lord. For this reason, if we are going to see clearly, we need to remove the unforgiving attitude and change our focus from sinners to the Savior who is the epitome of perfection. This is what Leonardo da Vinci had to learn.

At the time that Leonardo da Vinci painted “The Last Supper,” he had an enemy who was a fellow painter. Da Vinci had a bitter argument with this man and despised him. When Da Vinci painted the face of Judas Iscariot at the table with Jesus, he used the face of his enemy so that it would be present for ages as the man who betrayed Jesus. He took delight while painting this picture in knowing that others would actually notice the face of his enemy on Judas. As he worked on the faces of the other disciples, he often tried to paint the face of Jesus, but couldn’t make any progress. Da Vinci felt frustrated and confused. In time he realized what was wrong. His hatred for the other painter was holding him back from finishing the face of Jesus. Only after making peace with his fellow painter and repainting the face of Judas was he able to paint the face of Jesus and complete his masterpiece.

One of the reasons the painting took four years to complete was that when Da Vinci was almost finished, a friend commented on how incredibly moving the painting was—especially the silver cup on the table. “It was brilliant, beautiful!” he said. “My eyes were immediately drawn to it.” Da Vinci got so angry that he immediately painted over the cup, blotting it out. The focus of the painting was to be Jesus, not the cup. All attention had to be drawn to Him and anything that detracted from Him had to be removed. The same truth holds for our own lives. Remove your bitterness and unforgiving spirit. It is a distraction.

2. **An Unforgiving Spirit Damages a wife**-

* Colossians 3:19- Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.
3. An Unforgiving Spirit Defiles a person-
* Hebrews 12:15- Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

4. An Unforgiving Spirit is Devilish in nature-
* James 3:14-15... But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.

5. An Unforgiving Spirit Devastates our bones-
* Psalm 32:3- When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.
* Proverbs 15:30- The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart: and a good report maketh the bones fat.
* Proverbs 17:22- A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.
* Proverbs 14:30- A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones.
* Proverbs 12:4 - A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones.

6. An Unforgiving Spirit Demolishes our ability to love God-
* 1 John 4:20-21... If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

* How Do We Overcome Anger and Forgive Others?
1. Realize that the Lord works through the actions of those who hurt or offend you.
* Genesis 50:20- But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.
* Psalm 76:10- Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.

2. Revere the Lord for the blessing He has designed through each offense.
* 1 Thessalonians 5:18- In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

3. Recognize what character traits the Lord is trying to make into your life through the offense.

Wrong responses reveal a weakness in certain traits we need in our
life. If we are to have a spirit of Christlike forgiveness in our lives, four things are necessary that we must learn.

A. We must learn to understand.

There is always a reason why a person does something. If he is boorish, impolite, and cross-tempered, maybe he is worried or in pain. If he treats us with suspicion and dislike, maybe he has misunderstood, or has been misinformation about something we have said or done. Maybe his temperament is such that life is difficult and human relations are a problem for him. Forgiveness would be much easier for us, if we tried to understand before we allowed ourselves to condemn.

B. We must learn to forget.

So long as we brood upon a slight or an injury, there is no hope that we will forgive. We so often say, "I can't forget what so-and-so did to me," or "I will never forget how I was treated by such-and-such a person or in such-and-such a place." These are dangerous sayings, because we can in the end make it humanly impossible for us to forget. We can print the memory indelibly upon our minds.

C. We must learn to love.

We have already seen that Christian love, agape, is that unconquerable benevolence, that undefeatable good-will, which will never seek anything but the highest good of others, no matter what they do to us, and no matter how they treat us. That love can come to us only when Christ, who is that love, comes to dwell within our hearts and He cannot come unless we invite Him and yield to His control. Rosalind Goforth had to find this out for herself.

In her autobiographical book Climbing, missionary Rosalind Goforth tells of the internal rage she harbored against someone who had greatly harmed her and her husband, Jonathan. It was a serious injury which the couple would never afterward talk about, but while Jonathan seemed to easily forgive the offender, Rosalind refused to do so. For more than a year, she would not talk to nor recognize that person who lived near them on their missionary station in China. Four years passed and the matter remained unresolved and, to an extent, forgotten.

One day the Goforths were traveling by train to a religious meeting elsewhere in China. For months, Rosalind had felt a lack of power in her Christian life and ministry, and in her train compartment she bowed her head and cried to God to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Unmistakably clear came the Inner Voice. "Write to (the one toward whom I felt hatred and unforgiveness) and ask forgiveness for the way you have treated him." My whole soul cried out "Never!" Again I prayed as before, and again the
Inner Voice spoke clearly as before. Again I cried out in my heart, “Never; never. I will never forgive him!” When for the third time this was repeated, I jumped to my feet and said to myself, “I’ll give it all up, for I’ll never, never forgive.”

One day afterward, Rosalind was reading to the children from Pilgrim’s Progress. It was the passage in which a man in a cage moans, “I have grieved the Spirit, and He is gone: I have provoked God to anger, and He has left me.” Instantly a terrible conviction came upon her, and for two days and nights she felt in terrible despair. Finally, talking late at night with a fellow missionary, a young widower, she burst into sobs and told him the whole story. “But Mrs. Goforth,” he said, “are you willing to write the letter?” At length she replied, “Yes.” “Then go at once and write it.” Rosalind jumped up, ran into the house, and wrote a few lines of humble apology for her actions, without any reference to his. The joy and peace of her Christian life returned. “From that time,” Rosalind wrote in her autobiography, “I have never dared not to forgive.”

If we are to have a spirit of Christlike forgiveness in our lives, four things are necessary that we must learn. We must learn to understand, forgive, love, and lastly, to be patient.

**D. We must learn to be patient.**

God allows offenses in our lives to develop patience, long-suffering and tolerance.

* James 1:3-4...Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. [4] But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

4. **Overcoming Anger involves Reckoning that you may suffer for doing what is correct as a normal part of the Christian life.**

* Philippians 1:29- For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;
* 2 Timothy 3:12- Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.
* 2 Timothy 2:12- If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:

5. **Overcoming Anger involves Responding the right way when you are offended with the help of God’s enabling grace.**

* 1 Corinthians 15:10- But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.
* Titus 2:11-12...For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men. Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Sometimes, if we are not careful, we're like the woman who was bitten by a mad dog, and it looked as if she were going to die from rabies. The doctor told her she had better make her will. Taking her pen and paper she began to write; in fact she wrote and wrote. Finally the doctor said, "That is surely a long will you're making." She snorted, "Will nothing! I'm making a list of all the people I'm going to bite!" This is the typical attitude of people who are angry and in an unforgiving mood. God, on the other hand, instructs us to forgive our offenders or our enemies. Some forgive their enemies, but not until they are dead. God wants us to forgive them while they are still alive. Not only that, He wants us to actually love them. Ouch! That's hard to do, isn't it?
* Proverbs 24:17,18- Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumblcth: Lest the Lord see it, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him.
* Proverbs 25:21,22- If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee.
* Job 31:29,30- If I rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated me, or lifted up myself when evil found him: Neither have I suffered my mouth to sin by wishing a curse to his soul.
* Matthew 5:44 - But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;
* Romans 12:17-21 ... Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. [18] If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. [19] Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. [20] Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. [21] Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

God instructs us to invest in the life of our enemies or offenders. In so doing, it will help us to forgive them.
* Matthew 5:40 - And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also.
6. Overcoming Anger involves Relinquishing your rights to God and transferring ownership of them to Him.
* Matthew 6:33 - But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

7. Requests of prayer should be made to the Lord for the person you are bitter towards.
* Romans 12:14 - Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.

As Christians, we are to have a belief that behaves. You will find that anger and bitterness will be some of your biggest enemies. Knowing how to conquer and control these two things will help you to behave in a Christ-like manner.

We are commanded by the Lord to forgive those who offend us. Forgiveness involves the clearance of the record of those who have wronged us and not holding a grudge against them. When a man makes a mistake or wrongs us, don’t rub it in, rub it out. The word “forgiveness” comes from the Old English word forgifan which means “to pardon.” As the word “forgive” implies, to forgive requires that a person “give for” the sake of others. We are to give in and surrender our anger to the Lord.

It is out of a need for forgiveness that a person is able to forgive others. People who do not believe they need forgiveness tend to be critical, condemning, and cold with others. Folks who have been forgiven are usually first to forgive other people. When we forgive someone, we are not ignoring wrong or setting aside standards of truth, virtue, or excusing them from their responsibility for their wrong actions. Instead, we are clearing the slate and starting over again.

When we truly forgive people, we release any personal attitudes of bitterness and look for ways to invest time, energy, and thoughtfulness in our offender’s life. Forgiveness does not ignore wrongdoing, but rather acknowledges wrong and purposes to overcome it with good. If we fail to forgive, we remain angry and become bitter and we in essence are telling the Lord we do not want Him to forgive us.

8. Overcoming Anger involves Recognizing God’s Purpose for the offense.
* Is the Lord trying to get your attention?
* Jeremiah 35:14 - The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but obey their father's commandment: notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me.
* Do you need to examine yourself for faults in your own life?
* Do you need to re-evaluate your priorities?
* Do you need to conquer pride?
* Proverbs 13:10- Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom.

VI. A REQUEST FOR PURITY  6:13a

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:

The six petitions of the Lord's Prayer are structured like a ladder. The top three rungs are in Heaven, having to do with God's Fatherhood....His name. The next rung down concerns God's kingdom, the third rung involves His will. The next three rungs descend to earth as we pray for daily bread, forgiveness, and finally protection from evil. On the ladder of the Lord's Prayer we descend from the contemplation of who God is, our Father, to who we are....sinful children.

In the first three petitions of this prayer of the Lord, our soul rises directly to God; in the three following we face the hindrances of these aspirations. In the last petition we discover the solution to all these difficulties. Proper prayer includes praying for spiritual protection. This final petition has two requests. The first is negative: "And lead us not into temptation." The second is positive: "...but deliver us from the evil one."

All this goes to show, first, that no one is above falling. No one is above shelving his or her faith, family, and heritage. No one is above yielding to temptation in its multiple, variegated forms. No one! The pastor in his pressed suit and starched shirt, who appears to have it all together, is not above succumbing to temptation. None of us pastors are, regardless of our present spiritual temperature. The Sunday School teacher, the deacon, the sweet, little mother or the dedicated father are not immune to falling into sin.

Secondly, we need to know how to pray for spiritual protection for ourselves. That is what the sixth and final petition of the Lord's Prayer is all about: "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil or the evil one." There are two things we should seek here. The Direction of God and the Deliverance from Sin.

A. The Direction of God is Sought: And lead us not into temptation....

When missionary Barnabas Shaw was forbidden to preach in Cape Town, he decided not to leave the country of Africa, but to push into the interior of the nation. He bought a yoke of oxen, put his wife and his goods into a wagon and started out, resolved to settle
wherever the Lord would open the door and where he would be allowed to preach. So they journeyed for three hundred miles. Then while camping one night they discovered that a band of Hottentot natives were also camping nearby. In conversation with the leader, Shaw learned that the heathen were on their way to Cape Town to find a missionary to come to their village and teach them God’s Word. The similar meeting of Philip and the eunuch flashed through Shaw’s mind, when he realized that God had been leading him where He wanted him to go.

Beloved, if we are to be the kind of Christians that bring honor and glory to the Lord Jesus Christ, then it is vital that we seek God’s direction and His leading in our lives. Our attitude should be, “Lord lead me. Show me what you want me to do.” Is this your attitude?

* Psalm 143:10- Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness.

* Psalm 5:8 - Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face.

* Psalm 25:5- Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.

* Psalm 27:11- Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies.

* Psalm 23:2-3 ... He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. [3] He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.

Lead us not into temptation. What is this all about? What does this mean? Let’s take a close look at the word “temptation.” It comes from the Greek word **peirasmos** (**pi-ras-mos**) which carries the main meaning of “testing.” It refers not so much to solicitation to do evil or enticement to sin, as to trials that test the character of a person. God does not tempt us to do evil. God did not cause Adam and Eve to sin. He is not the author of sin. If God tempted men to sin, then His nature would not be holy.

* James 1:13-14... Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: [14] But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

**Why do we need to pray that He will not lead us into testing or temptation?** Even though God is not the instrumental cause or author of our testing, He does permit or allow us to experience temptation from the world, from the flesh, and from the devil. The Bible is clear that temptations and testings are going to come into our lives. They are
unavoidable. Times of intense temptation are going to happen. Therefore this petition is a request that the Lord minimize the occasions of our testing that may result in our sinning or giving in to our fleshly desires. It articulates the repentant disciple’s felt weakness to stand up under severe trials in view of our sinfulness.

The idea here is, "Lord, preserve me from temptation that will bring me under its sway and will cause me to fall." It is the expression of the redeemed soul that so despises and fears sin that it wants to escape all prospects of falling into it, choosing to avoid temptation rather than having to defeat temptation. We cannot help being exposed to temptation, and we are not to pray that we will be spared being tempted at all. Rather, we are to pray that we will be spared those temptations from Satan that we cannot withstand. This phrase, then, must be used in the sense of permitting. Do not allow or permit us, to be tempted to sin. Thank God, He promises that we will not be given more than we can handle.

* 1 Corinthians 10:13- There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

The Gorgons were three sisters in mythology. They were hideously ugly, with glaring eyes and serpents entwined in their hair. If anyone looked them directly in the eye, that person was turned to stone. Temptation is not ugly like the Gorgons, but we need to turn away from it and not even look at it, lest our hearts be turned cold like stone because of we have become entrenched in sinful living.

* Matthew 24:12- And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

This petition in Matthew 6:13, is also a safeguard against presumption and a false sense of security and self-sufficiency. We know that we will never have arrived spiritually, and that we will never be free of the danger of sin, until we are with the Lord. With Martin Luther we say, “We cannot help being exposed to the assaults, but we pray that we may not fall and perish under them.” As our dear Lord prayed for us in His great intercessory prayer, we want, at all costs, to be kept from the evil one.

* John 17:15- I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

The petition, “Lead us not into temptation,” does not imply that God might lead us into some evil and we should pray that He will not. Rather it is a negative way of saying we want to be led aright. It is a request to be
led in the right direction, to be righteous in our walk. I do not know of anyone who went into sin when they were honestly praying to be led in the right way. This prayer God will answer! He desires that we walk the path of purity. We need, however, to pray this prayer if we are going to succeed in walking the right path, for the right path is not an easy one upon which to walk. A petition similar to this is offered by David, Psalms 141:4.

*Psalm 141:4- Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practice wicked works with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties.*

God does allow testings in our lives in order to give us the opportunity to prove our faithfulness to Him. Job is a classic example of this fact. Satan tempted Job, but God allowed it. It is never God’s desire to lead us into evil itself. Therefore, if we resist the devil, we are promised that he will flee from us. God also allows testing and temptation to strengthen and refine our character, and to develop purity, maturity, joy, and patience in our Christian life. Conquered temptation knits the fibers of our souls into muscular cords.

*James 1:3- Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.*

*2 Corinthians 8:2- How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.*

The temptation and testing of Joseph revealed his character and purity. When we examine the trauma that Joseph went through with Potiphar’s wife, we glean a number of insights about temptation.

1. **The temptation came after a time of promotion, victory, or mountain-top experience.**

   Sometimes this is when we are most vulnerable because we emotionally feel invincible. Others may be attracted to our success and tempt us. History records the fate of two men who were condemned to die under Queen Mary. One of them boasted very loudly to his companions that he would be a man at the stake. He was so grounded in the gospel that he knew he would never deny Christ. He even said he longed for the fatal morning like a bride for her wedding. His prison companion was a poor, trembling soul who, though determined not to deny his Master, was much afraid of the fire. He said he had always been very sensitive to suffering, and he was in great dread that when he began to burn, the pain might cause him to deny the truth. He urged his friend to pray for him and spent his time weeping over his weakness and crying out to God for strength. The other man continually rebuked him and chided him for being so unbelieving and weak.

   When they both came to the stake, he who had been so bold recanted
at the sight of the fire and went back ignominiously to an apostate's life, while the poor trembling man whose prayer had been "Lead me not into temptation" stood firm as a rock, praising and magnifying God as he died a cruel death.

The proper prayer for protection is soaked with the awareness that we are profoundly weak and liable to fall. There is a danger in pride and overconfidence that assumes we are too strong to stumble or fail. Pride will deceive you into thinking this way, but such reasoning will ruin you. That is why we are admonished to watch out for pride and the attitude of invincibility which says, "I won’t get hurt. I won’t get caught. I can handle it."

* 1 Corinthians 10:12- Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.
* Proverbs 16:18- Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.
* Proverbs 29:23- A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.

2 The most powerful temptations can come when we are caught off guard or by surprise.

Stewart Anderson, in preaching on temptation, reminds us that Bobby Leach, the Englishman, startled the world by going over Niagara Falls in a barrel without suffering serious harm. Some years later he was walking down the street, slipped on an orange peeling, and was taken to the hospital with a badly fractured leg. Dr. Anderson adds: "Some great temptations, which roar around us like Niagara, may leave us unharmed. But a little, insignificant incident may cause our downfall simply because we are not looking for it." The Bible warns us that we are to walk circumspectly.

* Ephesians 5:15- See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.

This word "circumspectly" is from the Greek word *akribos* {ak-ree-boce'} which means "carefully, exactly, accurately, diligently." We are to watch out what we are doing and where we are going just like a person who would be crossing a balance beam, watching every step and move in order to not lose his balance. We need to maintain a balance in our Christian life too. Our earthly life needs to be balanced by our spiritual life. We need to maintain a walk with God. When we fail to do this, we can become ensnared by sin and not even realize the destruction that is taking place in our lives.

Observers have noted that certain kinds of ants have a passion for the
sweet, glandular substance given off by the caterpillar of a large blue butterfly. They can become so "addicted" to it that they even seek out "the supplier" and carry him to their nest with delight, but they unwittingly bring home an enemy in disguise, for the caterpillar gorges himself exclusively on ant larva. Usually such a threat to the colony would be repelled with great vigor, but the adults enjoy the tasty secretions of their "guest" so much that they are oblivious of the fact that their young are being devoured in the process. This is the same effect that sinful addictions have in our own lives.

3. Severe temptation may come from those closest to us.

Adam was tempted by his wife Eve. Job’s wife told him to curse God and die. Jezebel influenced her husband to kill Naboth. If you are not careful, those whom you work with day by day can be a great source of temptation. Women and men have become involved in an affair because their spouse was not giving them the attention and affection they needed at home. Yet, someone at work was attentive and interested in them. Love your wife. Love your husband. Don’t take them for granted. 4. Temptation comes in beautiful packages.

Potiphar’s wife may have been an attractive woman. She also happened to be one of Hell’s angels. Samson was very attracted to Delilah in spite of her attempts to destroy him. The sea lion is probably the clumsiest animal in the world. He likes to bask in the sun all day, and when he moves he is exceedingly sluggish and awkward. It has often been wondered how this animal manages to secure his favorite food, wild sea fowl. Sea gulls are so wild that it is difficult even for man to get within gunshot of one.

The sea lion seems to realize that it would be a waste of time to attempt to crawl upon the gulls as they rest upon the water and catch them unawares. So he watches until the gulls are soaring slowly through the air close to the waves. Then the seal dives into the sea and swims underneath the water for some distance from the point at which he dived, and allows merely the tip of his great nose to appear above the water. Remaining in this position, he gives his enormous body a rotary motion so that his nose describes a circle on the surface of the ocean. He does this so skillfully that to the gull his nose looks like a water bug at play. This catches the gull's eye and it at once darts down with the speed of an arrow, aiming straight for the little dot. The seal sees it coming and sinks a few inches, and as the gull strikes the water with tremendous force the seal's jaws close upward and the gull disappears. The tempting lure for the sea gull destroyed it. Satan uses the same tactic upon us. He uses attractive temptations to lure
us into destruction. Remember, sin’s sweetness soon sours.

5. Temptations come repeatedly.

An old fable says that the beautiful, swift-footed Atlanta challenged her suitors to race with her, with herself as the prize, or death as the penalty of losing. Many competed and lost their lives. Finally, a man named Hippomenes, concealing on his person three golden apples, entered the contest. As with the others, Atlanta swiftly passed him, but he threw an apple. She was startled and stopped to pick it up. He regained his position, but soon Hippomenes again saw himself gradually slipping behind. Again he threw a golden apple. Atlanta, charmed by its glitter, delayed to seize it, fell behind, but once again, as they neared the goal, she was about to pass him, and Hippomenes threw his last golden apple. Atlanta, lured by its charm, stopped again and lost the race. Hippomenes won this gorgeous women for his wife.

Satan is persistent in trying to distract us from serving Christ and destroy our lives. Jesus was tempted repeatedly by Satan himself. Rejected temptations can become more intense because sometimes, we may think about what it would have been like to satisfy our curiosity about the temptation, making it more difficult to refuse when confronted again and again. Never underestimate the power and craving of your flesh.

Our proper reaction to times of temptation is similar to Christ’s, but for us it is primarily a matter of self-distrust. When we honestly look at the power of sin and at our own weakness and sinful propensities, we shudder at the danger of temptation or even trial. The petition, “Lead us not into temptation,” is another plea for God to provide what we in ourselves do not have. It is an appeal to God to place a watch over our eyes, our ears, our mouth, our feet, and our hands— that in whatever we see, hear, or say, and in any place we go and in anything we do, He will protect us from sin.

6. Temptation may come when we are away from home.

Young people who run away from home, many times ruin their lives because they get out from under the umbrella of protection of their parents. Parents are to act as a restraining influence upon their children’s tendency to do wrong. Parents, whose job situation takes them away from home on business trips, better watch out for temptation too. The taste of sexual temptation has obliterated many marriages because the spouse could not control his or herself when away from home.

7. Temptations come at an opportune times.

No one was around in Pharaoh’s home. The chance of being caught was almost zero. Don’t be fooled by this kind of reasoning. Sin always catches up with us. If at all possible, do not put yourself in a situation
where you will be tempted. Do not make provision for your flesh to fail. We are to avoid temptation at all costs.

* Romans 13:14 - But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

* Proverbs 4:14-15. Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. [15] Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away. The prayer of our life should be, “Lord, lead me not into temptation or testing that will cause me to fall.”

B. The Deliverance of God is Sought... “but deliver us from evil.”

Our prayer should not only be “Lord lead me and strengthen me,” but also “Lord deliver and protect me from falling into sin.” Lord, deliver us from evil! The word “deliver” comes from the Greek word *rhoumai* {rhoo'-om-ahee} which means “to spare, to save or preserve.” The meaning depends on what the word “evil” means. Is this a reference to evil generally or to the evil one, Satan? When the Greek preposition *apo* (which means “from”) follows the word “deliver,” it usually refers to *deliverance from people.* When the Greek preposition *ek* (which is also translated “from”) follows the word “deliver,” it always refers to *deliverance from things.* The word *apo* is used in the Greek text so the rendering “deliver us from the evil one” is an accurate translation of the Greek text. It is a reference especially to Satan himself.

*Proper prayer for spiritual protection understands that the devil is a real person, not an impersonal cosmic force.* Satan is alive and well on planet earth. He is your enemy whether you are a Christian or not. We should pray that the Lord would deliver us from Satan’s power, his snares, arts, and his temptations. In a cursed world where we are battered by evil all around us, we confess our inadequacy to deal with evil. We confess the weakness of our flesh to resist temptations and the absolute impotency of human resources and strength to combat sin and rescue us from its clutches. Above all, we confess our need for the protection and deliverance of our loving heavenly Father. You need God’s protection and strength that come from putting your faith in Christ for your salvation. If you do not know Christ as your Savior, Satan is your father and you will be condemned to Hell for eternity with him.

* John 8:44 - Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.
If you are a Christian, Satan is out to ruin your life, your testimony, your family, your joy and fellowship with God by deceiving you into sinful living. Satan is real and Hell is real.
* Matthew 13:19- When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.
* Ephesians 6:16- Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.
* 1 John 3:12- Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherfore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.
* 1 Peter 5:8 - Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

The development of the idea of Satan in the Bible is of the greatest interest. In Hebrew the word Satan simply means “an adversary.” It can often be used of men. A man’s adversary is his Satan. In the King James Version the Philistines are afraid that David may turn out to be their adversary or Satan (1Sam 29:4). Solomon declares that God has given him such peace and prosperity that there is no Satan left to oppose him (1Ki 5:4). David regards Abishai as his Satan (2Sam 19:22). In all these cases, Satan means an adversary or opponent. From that, the word Satan goes on to mean one who pleads a case against someone.

The word “Devil” is the common Greek word for "slanderer," as in 1 Timothy 3:11, where Paul says women are to be serious-minded, not diabolous, "devils or slanderers." The evil one is both our real adversary and our real slanderer. Satan is no idiot and deserves our respect in the sense that he is dangerous and can ruin us if we let him. Proper prayer acknowledges the power that Satan does have. For this reason we should pray for God’s protection for us, our family, our friends, and our church. We do not need to fear or be in despair, however, for when we acknowledge Satan’s power by correctly praying, "Deliver us from the evil one," we are in the same breath acknowledging that God’s power is greater than the Devil’s. God can deliver us! Martin Luther was right when he sang:

\[\text{The prince of darkness grim,} \\
\text{We tremble not for him —} \\
\text{His rage we can endure,} \\
\text{For lo! his doom is sure:} \\
\text{One little word shall fell him.}\]
Our prayer should be that God would protect us from Satan’s temptations and from sinful living. What steps can we implement in our own lives to fulfill this desire? Again, we take a look at Joseph for some basic guidelines.

* Principles and Insights For Overcoming Temptation

1. His Authenticity in Character helped Him Overcome Temptation:

Joseph made the right decision because he was right with God in his heart. He had the right behavior because he had the right beliefs. Joseph kept his heart close to the Lord and guarded it against evil. We should do the same. Overcoming temptation all begins with our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and letting Him help us to overcome our temptations. Unless we have within us, that which is above us, we shall soon yield to that which is about us.

* Proverbs 4:23 - Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. The word “diligence” is from the Hebrew word mishmar (mish-mawr'). It carries the idea of guarding like a prison guard with eyes peeled for any possible escape. It means “to guard with extreme effort.” We are to keep our thoughts and desires under control or confinement like a prisoner locked up in jail. Our minds are to be made up about doing what is right. If you are going to overcome temptation, you need to make up your mind now that you are going to do what is right. Make your choice now. Don’t wait until the time of temptation. That may be too late.

* Psalm 119:30 - I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me.

One of the best ways to deal with temptation is to rule it out in advance. According to Harry Truman’s biographer, David McCullough, President Truman was under incredible pressure while attending the Potsdam Conference. One evening near the end of an arduous session at the palace, Truman prepared to leave for his nearby lodgings. A young Army public relations officer, seeing Truman about to leave in his car, stuck his head in the window and asked to hitch a ride. Truman told him to get in, and the two struck up a conversation, overheard and later reported by Truman’s driver.

In Berlin the black market was rampant, and everything was available—cigarettes, watches, whiskey, and seductive prostitutes. The officer said that if there was anything the President wanted, anything at all he needed, he had only to say the word. “Anything, you know, like
beautiful women.” Truman bristled. “Listen, son, I married my sweetheart,” he said. “She doesn’t run around on me, and I don’t run around on her. I want that understood. Don’t ever mention that kind of stuff to me again.” Truman’s driver later recalled, “By the time we were home, he got out of the car and never even said goodbye to that guy.” President Truman made up his mind before he was confronted with this sexual temptation. We must do the same thing too.

Beloved, debates with your fleshly nature don’t go to well. We have a way of rationalizing wrong and making excuses for evil behavior. You will find that the strength of temptation may not be revealed until you attempt to resist it, but then you may find out you are over your head. For this reason, make up your mind now about your response when you are confronted with temptation. Scripture is filled with believers who resolved to do what was right because their heart and character were right with God.

A. Daniel-
* Daniel 1:8- But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. The word “purposed” is from the Hebrew word suwm {soom} which means “to determine, fix, or in this case, to make up your mind.”

B. The Three Hebrew Children-
* Daniel 3:18- But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. They were determined not to bend, bow, budge, or by the grace of God, burn.

C. The Rechabites-
* Jeremiah 35:5,6- And I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites pots full of wine, and cups, and I said unto them, Drink ye wine. But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever:

D. Job-
* Job 23:11- My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined.

E. Isaiah-
* Isaiah 50:7- For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.
F. Paul-
* Acts 20:24- But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

G. Peter & John-
* Acts 4:19,20- But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. Have you made up your mind to do what is right?

2. His Analysis and Assessment were Correct and helped Him Overcome Temptation:

Joseph realized that yielding to the wife of Potiphar would be sin. He did not allow the appeal of lust to deceive him. He recognized sin for what it was and what it would do in his life. He refused to be deceived by his own fleshly reasoning. Paul addressed the reasoning and powerful deceptions of our flesh.
* Romans 7:11- For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.
* Galatians 6:7 - Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

Joseph called sin a sin. If we are to overcome temptation, then we must label temptations accurately and not let our flesh persuade ourselves into yielding to temptation and justifying our disobedience.

The lifestyle of this world is directly opposed to the lifestyle of the Christian. Worldly living is based on deception that leads to digression, destruction, and depression. What are the common deceptions and excuses that people offer today to excuse their sinfulness?

* Common Deceptions Today
a) You have your whole life ahead of you. Serve God later on in your life.

The Word of God addresses this deception, making it clear you may not have as much time as you expect or demand from God.
* James 4:14,15- Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.
An incident from the American Revolution illustrates what tragedy can result from procrastination. It is reported that Colonel Rahl, commander of the British troops at Trenton, New Jersey, was playing cards when a courier brought an urgent message stating that General George Washington was crossing the Delaware River. Rahl put the letter in his pocket and didn't bother to read it until the game finished. Then, realizing the seriousness of the situation, he hurriedly tried to rally his men to meet the coming attack, but his procrastination was his undoing. He and many of his men were killed, and the rest of the regiment were captured. Nolbert Quayle said, "Only a few minutes delay cost him his life, his honor, and the liberty of his soldiers. Earth's history is strewn with the wrecks of half-finished plans and un-executed resolutions. Tomorrow is the excuse of the lazy and the refuge of the incompetent."

b) Sinful living is fun and fulfilling.

During the waning days of World War II, thousands of Russian troops poured into the city of Berlin. Many of them were simple country bumpkins who had never been in a city before. They were amazed and confused by what they saw. Some soldiers unscrewed light bulbs and carefully packed them away to take home, believing they contained light and could be made to work anywhere. One group of Russian soldiers burst into a Berlin chemical lab. Ransacking the offices and laboratories, they came upon a dozen eggs sealed in an airtight container, emblazoned with bright red German words. Like kids at a picnic, the soldiers put down their weapons, pulled off their heavy overcoats, and began playing an old-fashioned egg toss.

Just then a German lab scientist stumbled upon the scene. Horrified, he started shouting at the Russian soldiers, but since the Russians could not understand German, they ignored him and continued their game. Finally the scientist found a Russian colonel who could translate. The colonel ordered the soldiers to carefully replace the eggs in their containers and get out of the building, which was then locked up tight. What the soldiers didn't realize was that the eggs they were playing with so nonchalantly contained the deadly typhus virus. If even one of them had broken, the soldiers would have certainly died and infected the entire population. What they were playing with was dangerous, destructive, and deadly.

The same truth holds for sinful habits and the philosophy that says that sinful living is fun and fulfilling. Sexual immorality, drugs and alcohol may seem pleasurable, but they are in reality destructive. The Prodigal Son bought into the lie that sin was fun and was left burdened and broke.
* Luke 15:14-17 ... And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. [15] And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. [16] And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. [17] And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! Satan does all that he can to camouflage the end of a sinful path. He does not want us to see where we are heading until we finally get there and then the damage is already done.

c) Freedom is doing your own thing and living anyway you wish.

Responsibility goes with freedom. If we do not live responsibly and righteously, then our so called “freedom” will eventually lead to bondage, addiction, or difficult circumstances. If we have done what we desired, but are left bankrupt, addicted to drugs or alcohol, pregnant out of wedlock, suffering from sexually transmitted diseases, imprisoned for crimes, or sued for our behavior, then our freedom is not really freedom at all, is it? The promise of “freedom” in this context is a ruse for physical, emotional, financial, and spiritual burdens and bondage.

* Proverbs 13:15- Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard.
* Proverbs 5:22- His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins.
* Isaiah 5:18 - Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope:

d) You won’t get caught.

Just outside Anchorage, Alaska, there is a place called the Turn-Again Arms. This particular area has one of the fastest tide rates in the world. The tide rushes in and out at about ten feet per minute. The water is so cold that if you got caught in it you would die within a few moments. When the tide is out, there is a huge flat area of mud. It looks like a great place to ride off-road vehicles, but this area—called the mud flats—is not just mud but also glacial silt.

When the tide rushes out, the water that is left settles quickly. When it settles, it leaves air pockets, and those air pockets form vacuums. You never know where they are and they are never in the same place twice. If you step in one of them, it will suck you in and you can’t get out. It’s not exactly like quicksand but more like super-glue as it locks you in.

In the summer of 1991, a couple who had just gotten married decided to spend their honeymoon in this part of Alaska. They went out riding
ATV's and decided to ride around on one particular mud flat. The bride's vehicle stalled and she jumped off to see what the problem was. She jumped into one of these areas of glacial silt and sank in up to her knees. As she struggled to get out, she sunk to her thighs. Her husband rode up on his ATV and she warned him not to get off his vehicle. People on the road above them saw what was happening and called for help, yelling at the man not to get off his vehicle.

Within moments the fire department arrived and tried to blast her out of the mud flat by using water hoses. It didn't work. Then they brought in an army helicopter from the Air Force base. They tried to pull her out with a rope and harness attached around her waist. As the helicopter pulled up, her legs dislocated. They knew if they pulled any more they would have ripped her legs from her body. They tried to put a wet suit around her, thinking that when the tides came in, it would keep her warm, but they could only get the wet suit around part of her body. When the tides came in she died while her husband helplessly watched her drift into eternity.

Beloved, this story accurately describes what happens to a person that plays with sin, believing he or she will never get caught or hurt. He believes he is having a great time when all of the sudden he is caught or trapped in his sin, with no way out of it. He sinks deeper and deeper into depravity, difficulties, addictions, and conflicts.

David fell into this trap and way of thinking. He did all he could to cover up his sin with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah, but to no avail. God revealed to Nathan the prophet the truth of his actions. Sin is an effective detective that has the objective of finding you out. It is as competent as Sherlock Holmes, Superman, and Batman. It finds its man.

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

Our responsibility is to choose to follow the Lord and do what is right. Others may choose a worldly lifestyle, but we are to live for God. Others may not consider serving the Lord or involvement in church a priority, but we are to follow God's leading, not the plans of the backslidden or the lost. Notice what Micah said.

* Micah 4:5- For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever.

* Psalm 1:1- Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.
3. His Appreciation for His Master helped Him Overcome Temptation:

Joseph was loyal and grateful to his master and would not think of betraying him. We are to be loyal to Christ, our master, always. Our love and dedication should not waver or tremble in troubled times, trials, testings, or in the trauma of intense, inviting temptations.

* Proverbs 17:17 - A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity. If you are living in sin, don't claim your allegiance and love for Christ when you are disobeying His Word. This makes a mockery of God and He is not mocked.

* Galatians 6:7 - Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

Daniel and Moses both valued their loyalty to God over their own safety and comfort. The eternal was more valuable than the present. When our lives are totally surrendered to Christ, He can use us in a powerful way. If we, on the other hand, are selfish and wanting to do our own will, we will have a tendency to yield to temptation. Paul's priority was to live for Christ and to die, was gain.

* Daniel 6:10 - Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

* Hebrews 11:24-27... By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; [25] Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; [26] Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. [27] By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

At the Milan Cathedral, there are three inscriptions over the respective doorways. Over the right-hand door is the motto: All that pleases is but for a moment. Over the left-hand door are these words: All that troubles is but for a moment. Over the central door is a simple sentence: Nothing is important save that which is eternal. We are to live our lives with eternity in view. Don't sacrifice the eternal on the altar of the immediate.
4. His Awareness of God's presence and Adoration for the Lord helped Him Overcome Temptation:

Joseph could not bear to break God's heart. He knew the Lord was watching over Him. Our love is a motivation for us to not surrender to sin. We should not want to disappoint or hurt the Lord or our loved ones who are watching us.

* Psalm 51:4a - Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight:....
* Psalm 34:15- The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.
* Proverbs 15:3- The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.
* 2 Corinthians 3:2- Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:
* Romans 14:13 - Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

When our love and passion for Christ begin to cool, the door is opened to temptation. The Bible warns us of this attitude. The church at Ephesus cooled in their love for Christ. Some drift from the Lord because their love for Christ has been replaced with other things. In a Discipleship Journal survey, 81% of respondents noted that temptations were more potent when they had neglected their time with God and when they were physically tired (57 percent).

* Revelation 2:4- Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.
* Matthew 24:12- And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.
* Matthew 6:24- No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Trying to serve two masters is impossible. If you try to serve God and a carnal crowd, you will be spiritually, stressed out and frustrated.
* 1 John 2:15- Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.
* James 4:4-Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.
Peter and Aaron valued the crowd’s opinion over God’s. They were both concerned about what others thought of them instead of what the Lord thought. Intimidation led to conforming to the crowd and yielding to temptation and peer pressure. People conform to the crowd today because they want to be accepted and not rejected. This kind of thinking makes them unstable and shackled to people’s opinions.

*John 18:25-27... And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not. [26] One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? [27] Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew.
*Exodus 32:1,2- And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me.

*James 1:8- A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.
*Proverbs 29:25- The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe.
*2 Timothy 4:10- For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.

5. He Answered Correctly and this helped Him Overcome Temptation:

Joseph knew how to say “Yes” to God, and “NO” to a seductive woman. Saying “No” can go a long way in keeping you out of trouble. One person saying “NO” to evil sends forth huge waves in the ponds of man’s perversion. One person can make a difference when they take a stand for right. For this reason, we are still reading about Joseph thousands of years after his victory over temptation.

*Proverbs 15:23- A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!
*Proverbs 16:1- The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord.
6. He Avoided & Abandoned the Temptation-

A man went to the doctor complaining that he had broken his arm in two places. The doctor’s reply: “Well then, stay out of those places.” Beloved, that is what we are to do and it is what Joseph did. He avoided this temptation with Mrs. Potiphar as much as he could. He ran away from the situation when there was nothing else he could do but run. Joseph got himself out of his predicament when others have failed.

* 1 Corinthians 6:18- Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.

Don’t stare or study the temptation, for you will be mesmerized by its lure. One three-year old’s explanation for being in the kitchen on top of a chair, eating cookies: “I just climbed up to smell them, and my tooth got caught.” Beloved, we fall into sin many times because we position ourselves in the path of temptation just like this little boy. Do not put yourself in a deliberate position where you know you are going to be tempted. Sometimes this is not possible, but in many cases we have a choice about who we are spending time, where we are going, and what we are doing.

* Romans 13:14- But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

* Proverbs 4:14-15... Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. [15] Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.

* James 4:7- Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Notice that James said we are to have an attitude of submission to the Lord. Many Christians struggle with this. If we are unwilling to yield and surrender our lives to the Holy Spirit each day and rely upon His power to live the Christian life, we will be much more prone to yield to temptation.

* Romans 6:13-Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

James said we are to have an attitude of submission and also of resisting Satanic temptation. Many times Christians make the mistake of saying “Maybe” to temptation instead of “No,” leaving the option open for us to say “Yes.” This is not resisting Satan or temptation. When we do this, we are like the person trying to get rid of a salesman on our
doorstep without saying a firm “No” and closing the door.

Though we say we are not interested in buying Satan’s sinful products, we leave the door ajar and continue to discuss his tempting wares. We leave open the possibility for the Devil to make a sale. Satan is persistent. If he can’t snare us with one temptation, he will try another until he finds our soft spot. We must beware and be on our guard for his attacks and lures. We must give a firm “No” toward temptation. Don’t put yourself on a path of temptation. Don’t play with it. You’ll get burnt for sure.

* Ephesians 4:27 - Neither give place to the devil. Don’t give Satan ground or room to build a stronghold of sinful habits in your life.

* Ephesians 6:11 - Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

* 1 Peter 5:8,9 - Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

A little girl was learning to ride her bicycle. She was doing real good until it was time to stop the bike. The only way she could stop was by running into something. She was constantly picking herself out of the bushes and off of the sidewalk. The problem was this, although she knew she had a brake, she wasn’t using it at all. She was getting into trouble and getting hurt because she had the power to stop, but did not use it.

The same principle holds true for the Christian. We have the power of the Holy Spirit to stop doing wrong, but when we fail to use that power, we get hurt and into trouble. What good is that power if we keep yielding ourselves to temptation?

7. He Absorbed Himself in his work which helped Him Overcome Temptation:

Joseph kept busy and kept his mind occupied. Joseph knew that our pondering leads to performing; our dwelling upon a thought leads to disobedience and our fantasizing leads to fraternizing with sin. Someone once said, “Sow a thought, reap and act. Sow an act, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a destiny.” Think on the right kinds of things and replace that which is bad or destructive with that which is good. Fill the vacuums of your life with that which is good and productive. Someone said, “An idle mind is the Devil’s workshop.” There is truth to that statement. Stay busy for the Lord and in serving other people. Encourage others instead of enticing them; love
people instead of laughing at them. Use your time to tell others about Christ and make time to pray and study God’s Word. Keep your mind occupied with the right kind of thoughts.

* Psalm 119:97- O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.
* Joshua 1:8- This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.
* Philippians 4:8- Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.
* Colossians 3:1,2- If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

*Psalm 34:14- Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.

8. The Ability of God and the Avenue of Escape helped Him Overcome Temptation:

We also overcome temptation with the strength and power that God gives to us to withstand temptation and the avenue He provides for us to escape it.

* 1 Corinthians 10:13- There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

Joseph was able to flee from the home. He had the courage, character, and conviction to run. He was then falsely accused. God’s way of escape for Joseph looked bad, but actually was good. God got Joseph out of Potiphar’s home. He was put in jail, yet, the Lord was with him and blessed him in the prison. Joseph did not have to deal with the harassment of Potiphar’s wife anymore. Beloved, realize the Lord gives us strength, grace, and power to do what is right.

* Psalm 28:7- The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him.

One thing you can do when you are tempted is use the temptation as a prayer trigger. Pray for someone or your situation immediately when you tempted. Never underestimate the power of praying and do not
be ashamed to pray. This has been a very hot summer, especially in the state of Texas. They are hurting for rain in the Lone Star state. In a UPI release on July 24, 2006, public officials in Lubbock, Texas, are organizing a day to pray for rain.

Mayor David Miller said, “Nobody is going to tell God what to do and what not to do, but we are in a serious drought in West Texas. Since He is the one who controls the rain clouds, we are asking Him for His mercy and His help.” The city council and the Lubbock county commissioners are expected to adopt resolutions this week to both pray and fast for rain this Sunday.

So far this year, Lubbock has received about half of its normal average of ten inches. Officials have tried praying for rain before and said their prayers were answered. In January, 2004, after a year of drought, the city council and county set aside a Sunday to pray for rain and got the second-wettest year since records have been kept. Beloved, prayer does work no matter what you are praying for.

9. Accountability to Another will helped you Overcome Temptation

In a Discipleship Journal survey, respondents noted that they overcame temptations by prayer (84%), avoiding compromising situations (76%), Bible study (66%), and being accountable to someone else (52%). Accountability is a great defense against conformity to temptation. When a person knows he must answer to someone for his actions, it helps him or her keep their priorities in perspective. Find someone that you can be accountable to and has permission to ask you pointed personal questions.

* Hebrews 13:17 - Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

* 1 Peter 5:5 - Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resistent the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

* James 5:16- Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.
VI. THE RESPECT FOR GOD  6:13b
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

This final portion of this blueprint for prayer focuses on the greatness and glory of our God. The blueprint began with praise for God and closes with praise for God on the lips of the one offering the prayer. Our prayers should be like this. The glory of God should be a dominate theme in our prayers; for, as we stated earlier, the main objective of our lives is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the purpose of the Christian life.

* 1 Corinthians 10:31- Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

This prayer includes much praise for God as well as petition to God. We are not to pray simply to get but also to give. We are to give glory to God. Prayer is not just asking. Prayer is also to include adoration for the Lord as well as asking. We could use a lot more adoration in our prayers. Cut the petitions if you have to, but do not cut the praise part of your prayers. Give praise a prominent place in your prayers.

This final statement of praise instructs us in some important theological truths. It speaks of the lordship of God ("Thine is the kingdom"), the power of God ("the power"), the magnificence of God ("the glory"), and the eternality of God ("forever"). This praise is a great testimony of who God is. Our prayers should always give a good testimony of God. Our prayers should reflect good doctrine or they will not be good prayers.

The prayer closes with the word "Amen." The word "amen" is a word of Hebrew origin, from a verb signifying to be firm, secure, to be true and faithful. It is a word, expressing consent or strong approbation. It means "verily, certainly, so be it." It is probable that this word was used by the people in the synagogue to signify their assent to the prayer that was uttered by the minister. To some extent, it was probably so used in the Christian church. Lord, I give consent, I agree, I affirm, so be it that the kingdom, the power, and the glory all belong to You!

It may be proper to remark, that this doxology, "for thine is the kingdom," etc., is wanting in many of the ancient Biblical manuscripts, is omitted by most of the fathers, both Greek and Latin and that its authenticity is doubtful. Though omitted in most of the older manuscripts, these words constitute a fitting climactic affirmation of faith.
Chapter 4
Fast Facts on Fasting
Matthew 6:16-18

I. THE ACTIVITY OF FASTING  6:16a
"Moreover when ye fast,..."

We hear about people fasting in the verses of the Bible or by the experiences of other Christians, but what is it exactly? What is fasting? Is it dieting or missing a meal? No, Bible fasting is not dieting. We hear a lot about fasting in diet programs today. As good as fasting in dieting may be, it is not what the Bible means when it speaks of fasting.

Furthermore, Biblical fasting is not abstaining from food because you are not feeling well. Sometimes when you are sick you abstain from food because you do not feel like eating. This has nothing to do with Biblical fasting. Bible fasting is not substituting one food for another which the Roman Catholic Church used to do on Fridays, substituting fish or meat.

Biblical fasting is basically abstaining from food for a period of time for spiritual reasons and purposes. The purpose for not eating food is to use the time that is spent on meals, to pray and study the Word of God. We often fail to understand God’s Word as fully as we ought simply because we do not seek to comprehend it with the same degree of intensity and determination of great men and women of God. Skipping a few meals might be the small price we willingly pay for staying in the Word until understanding comes to our hearts and minds. Skipping a meal eliminates distractions and interruptions, enabling a person to devote his attention to spiritual matters such a praying and Bible study.

In every scriptural account, genuine fasting is linked with prayer. You can pray without fasting, but you cannot fast biblically without praying. Fasting is an affirmation of intense prayer and the result of a
deep, spiritual, struggle before God. It is never an isolated act, a ceremony or ritual that has some inherent merit. It has no value at all. In fact, it becomes a spiritual hindrance and a sin when done for any reason apart from knowing and following the Lord’s will. It is especially sinful when done to bring attention to self. So just because you are fasting does not mean you are going to gain God’s attention or get more Brownie points with Him.

* Jeremiah 14:12 - When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence.

Fasting has been practiced for various reasons throughout history. Many ancient pagans believed that demons could enter the body through food. When they felt they were under demonic attack they would fast to prevent more evil spirits from gaining access to their bodies. The yogis of most eastern religions and cults have always been committed to fasting—often for long periods of time, in which mystical visions and insights are claimed to be received. In modern western society, fasting has become popular for purely physical and cosmetic reasons, and is recommended in some diet programs. As we have stated, the Bible records no teaching or practice of fasting for these reasons.

Legitimate fasting always had a spiritual purpose. Basically fasting is done to better enable one to do his spiritual duties. Thus, fasting is not the end in itself. We do not fast just to fast—that is not the purpose of fasting. Fasting is simply a means to an end—no more. The idea that there is merit in fasting is not a Biblical idea. Fasting must be connected to an important object or end, otherwise it has no spiritual justification.

So when should a person fast? The answer to that will be found in the examples given in Scripture about genuine and acceptable fasting. The practice of fasting was to be done for special occasions. It was an extra-ordinary practice not a routine, regular practice. Israel was commanded to fast only once a year (Leviticus 16:29; 23:26–31). Fasting was to be spontaneous when some crisis or other important situation developed.

* Nineveh fasted when judgment threatened (Jonah 3) and the nation needed to repent and get right with God. Abraham Lincoln wrote an address to the nation during the Civil War that was at least as important as the Gettysburg Address. It was his proclamation for a national fast-day, by which he did designate and set apart Thursday the 30th day of April 1863, as a day of national humiliation, fasting, and prayer.
Lincoln wrote: "It is the duty of nations as well as of men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God; to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon; and to recognize the sublime truth announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord. The awful calamity of civil war which now desolates the land may be but a punishment inflicted upon us for our presumptuous sins, to the needful end of our national reformation as a whole people. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity, too proud to pray to the God that made us. It behooves us, then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness."

* King Jehoshaphat proclaimed a national fast in Judah when they were threatened with overwhelming danger with attack from the Moabites and Ammonites (2 Chronicles 20). From a human standpoint they could not possibly win, and they cried out to God for help, forsaking food as they did so. Queen Esther, her servants, and all the Jews in the capital city of Susa fasted for three full days before she went before the king to plead for the Jews to be spared from Haman’s wicked scheme against her people (Esther 4:16).

* Ezra called for a fast when he was in the momentous occasion of leading people from Babylon back to Israel (Ezra 8:21)

* Fasting is appropriate during times of sorrow. When God caused the first child born to Bathsheba by David to be taken ill, David fasted while he pleaded for the infant’s life (2 Sam. 12:16). He also fasted when Abner died (2 Sam. 3:35). Nehemiah fasted and prayed when he heard of the bad conditions in Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1:4)

In the early spring of 1877, Minnesota farmers surveyed their lands, dreading the first hordes of locusts that had caused such widespread destruction the summer before. Another such plague threatened to destroy Minnesota's rich wheat lands, spelling ruin for thousands of families. Suddenly Governor John S. Pillsbury proclaimed April 26th a day of fasting and prayer, urging that every man, woman and child ask divine help.

A strange hush fell over the land as Minnesotans solemnly assembled to pray. Next morning the sun rose in cloudless skies. Temperatures soared to mid-summer heat. The people looked up at the skies in wonder, and to their horror, the warm earth began to stir with the
dreaded insects. This was a strange answer! Three days passed. The unseasonable heat hatched out a vast army of locusts that threatened to engulf the entire Northwest! Then, on the fourth day the sun went down in a cold sky and that night frost gripped the earth. Most of the locusts were destroyed as surely as if fire had swept them away! When summer came the wheat waved tall and green. April 26th went down in history as the day on which a people’s prayer had been answered and labor of fasting had been blessed.

* Fasting may be done when friends are sick.

* Psalm 35:13- *But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom.*

* Fasting often accompanied the beginning of an important task or ministry. Jesus fasted forty days and nights before He was tempted in the wilderness and then began His preaching ministry. The church fasted when seeking the will of God about Paul and Barnabas being sent out on missionary work (Acts 13:3). So Biblical fasting is associated with important and urgent occasions. It is not a weekly or monthly practice that one does routinely. It is reserved for special occasions, especially in the matter of trying to reach the lost for Christ.

The June, 1992, issue of Moody Magazine records the story of Pastor Stephen Bly, of Idaho, who was fortunate to have witnessed the beauty of discipleship in one of his church members. Mr. Jensen was an eighty-four-year-old widower who sat toward the back in church. Many perceived him as one who no longer had much to offer, but his pastor learned otherwise. On a visit to Mr. Jensen’s house, Pastor Bly saw the old man’s daily regimen. This man spent two and a half hours in Bible study and prayer followed by a three-mile walk where he conversed with God. He did this every day. Lately, he had been fasting for two meals a day and praying for the salvation of Anthony, a neighborhood teen who was good for little more than mischief. The pastor asked, "How long have you been fasting and praying for him like that?" Mr. Jensen replied, "Forty days." "How much longer will you continue?" wondered his pastor. With a smile, he said, "As long as it takes." On day fifty-one, Anthony committed his life to the Lord Jesus Christ.

* Fasting may also be needed when there is a very difficult task at hand. Such was the case with the person that was demon possessed.

* Mark 9:28-29. *And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out? [29] And he said
II. THE ACTION & APPEARANCE OF HYPOCRITES

6:16b
"...be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast."

Jesus said, “If you are going to fast, don’t act like hypocrites.” These religious leaders would walk around in public with a gloomy look on their faces to give the appearance that they were afflicting their souls through fasting. True fasting was not a joyous occasion. Rather, it was the afflicting of the soul especially in sorrow over sins.

So to walk around with a gloomy appearance left the impression that the person was fasting and was therefore afflicting his soul with mourning over some spiritual situation. However, the truth of the matter was that these hypocrites were not sad at all. It was all a front, a ruse, a show. They delighted in parading around town with a sad countenance because it resulted in people praising them for their superior piety.

The words “sad countenance” are from the Greek word *skuthropos* {skoo-thro-pos'} which means “a sad, gloomy, sullen look.” This word is a derivative of the word *optomai* {op-tom-ahee} which means “to look at, behold; to allow one's self to be seen.” This is what the hypocrites were doing. They were advertising a false piousness and seeking glory from men.

They would disfigure their faces. The word “disfigure” is from the Greek word *aphanizo* {af-an-id'-zo} which means “to cause to become unrecognizable through change in appearance; to render invisible or unrecognizable.” They deliberately took means to drastically change their appearance and look pale and starved so that they might the better advertise their fasting. They indeed were hypocrites in the basic meaning of the word.

The word "hypocrite" comes from the word which means “to act” and was applied to actors. Those who act on the stage employ a lot of cosmetics to appear the character they are portraying (but, of course, they are not that character themselves). So with the religious hypocrites, they were using cosmetics to appear as a character they definitely were not. These religious hypocrites are like many professing Christians today
whose religion is no better than cosmetics. Their religious faith is just skin deep; it is just paint and powder, nothing better.

The hypocrites wanted to appear unto men to fast. This was very important to them. Religion, of a certain kind at least, was in high repute among the Jews and consequently there was a great temptation to assume an appearance of piety among them. The Pharisees loved to be viewed by the people as extremely holy. They, like some in our day, craved to be called great men of God. So the pretentiousness in their fasting was motivated by pride. They were eager for self-glory.

Few things are so distasteful and ugly as religious pride. To use religious exercises and activities which were to humble a person before God, such as fasting, in order to exalt oneself, is extremely repulsive. The scribes and Pharisees were filled with religious pride which Jesus rebuked.

* Matthew 23:5-7... But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments. [6] And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, [7] And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.

* Zechariah 7:5 Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?

When we do pious deeds with our eye out to see if people are looking, it is nothing but vanity and a joke. God is not impressed. Discerning Christians are not impressed either. If you are a pastor in the self-glory business, then find another business before you destroy your church. The pastor is not to focus the attention of the people on him, but on the Lord Jesus Christ. If you are not willing to do this, you should not be pastoring.

* Matthew 15:8- This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.

When you get what you want in your struggle for self
And the world makes you king for a day,
Just go to a mirror and look at yourself,
And see what THAT man has to say.
For it isn't your father or mother or wife
Who judgment upon you must pass;
The fellow whose verdict counts most in your life
Is the one staring back from the glass.
Some people may think you a straight-shootin' chum
And call you a wonderful guy,
But the man in the glass says you're only a bum
If you can't look him straight in the eye.
He's the fellow to please, never mind all the rest
For he's with you clear up to the end,
And you've passed your most dangerous, difficult test
If the man in the glass is your friend.
You may fool the whole world down the pathway of years
And get pats on the back as you pass,
But your final reward will be heartaches and tears
If you've cheated the man in the glass.

* Author Unknown*

III. THE AWARD FOR HYPOCRISY  6:16c
"...Verily I say unto you, They have their reward"

As we have noted in previous chapters, this phrase indicates that this is all the reward that is coming to these hypocrites that put on pious camouflage and seek the glory and praise of men. The word "have" indicates this is their total payment. There is no more reward for these hypocrites for their fasting than the praise they may get from men. They have no eternal investment in Heaven. Thus, these religious hypocrites who fast pretentiously, will receive no reward from God. They will be empty-handed before God. That is poverty of the worst kind and of the most extreme kind.

The word "verily" emphasizes the greatness or extreme of their poverty. If all you get for your conduct is the praise of men, you have received the cheapest and smallest rewards possible. The praise of men is not lasting, it is not satisfactory, and it will not show up in Heaven. It is like trading diamonds for sand pebbles. The rewards that wise men will seek are those which God gives, not men. Otherwise eternal poverty will be their destiny.
IV. THE ANOINTING & OUR APPEARANCE WHEN WE FAST 6:17-18a

“But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; [18] That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: ....”

As we have stated, it was the habit of some people, when they were fasting, to neglect the care of their appearance. The Pharisees in their hypocrisy in fasting, exaggerated this neglect by the use of cosmetics and other means. Christ said that those who truly fast should do just the opposite. They were not to change their appearance to draw attention to their fasting but were to maintain their normal appearance.

Anointing the head and washing the face were normal hygienic duties done every day. In present day terminology, we are to keep taking care of our appearance. For men this would be combing and hair oil or whatever is used and for women it would be combing and curling and whatever else is done to give their hair an acceptable appearance. The face should be washed and cleaned. We are not to go around with gloomy faces so people will ask us what is wrong and we can say, “I’m fasting,” with spiritual syrupy words. All of this says that when you do your religious exercises, you are not to do anything that draws extra attention to yourself to show your devotion to the Lord.

Keeping your outward appearance normal would conceal any extra religious exercises. It is the same as praying in the closet where only God sees. It is also the same as giving your alms as privately as possible. This order to appear normal when fasting must not be confused as deception like the Pharisees, who put on make-up and did other things to give the appearance of fasting.

There is a vast difference between deception and keeping your pious acts, such as praying and fasting, private so only God can see. Taking care of yourself normally does not mean you have neglected fasting or praying, what it does is prevent attention to your pious acts. If we would work as hard to keep our pious acts private as some do to make them public, our spirituality would be markedly improved.

The appeal in fasting, witnessing, giving, and other Bible practices is to God, not to man. The same is true in our praying. We pray to God, not to man. Fasting is done to devote our attention to the Lord, not to gain the attention of men.
By fasting we are showing God dedication and earnestness. When we start doing religious exercises to attract the attention of men, we have lost sight of what these religious exercises are all about. They have to do with our appeal to God, not man. As an example, when the Ninevites fasted and prayed, they fasted and prayed with God in mind. They were appealing to God for mercy, but those who use religious exercises to gain the praise of men have perverted the religious exercise. Biblical fasting, prayer, and repentance must come from a repentant heart.

* Joel 2:12-13... Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: [13] And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

V. THE AWARD FOR OBEDIENCE  6:18b

"...Thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

God’s promise for secretly seeking His glory and not men’s is He will reward us. In order to obtain men’s rewards, we must be seen by men. They need to know what we are doing, but with God, it matters not if we are seen by men. Our work may be public or it may be private, it does not matter when God is doing the rewarding because He "seeth in secret." Isn’t that great! This fact gives confidence in receiving future reward because the Lord is a good record keeper. We never have to worry whether or not God knows about our consecration. We will never miss any awards from Him because of the obscurity of our labor and deeds. God looks at the heart and our motives for service.

You may be living for God ever so faithfully, with great dedication, and yet be in great obscurity such as the jungles of the Philippines or a tiny town in America. Your work may be small, your people poor, and nobody may know your name, but GOD does beloved! Amen! Your anonymity or obscurity will not hinder one bit the heavenly reward that will come to you for your commitment to Him. God sees all and nothing will be overlooked or missed by Him.

* Psalm 34:15- The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.

* Proverbs 15:3- The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.
Beloved, God is impressed by your faithfulness and obedience to Him. We are in for some rude awakenings when we get to Heaven. Big shots here may find that they are little shots in Heaven. Those who are unknown here, may be well-known in eternity.

**God will openly reward those who are faithful.** His reward is heavenly in character. It will not corrupt. No earthly reward compares to God's reward. Earthly rewards are not lasting (especially the praise of men), and they do not satisfy. They often corrupt people. Indeed, how corrupted people become in order to obtain the praise and approval of mankind.

Men may not have seen your religious works which you did in private, but they will see your rewards for such practices. Your reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ will manifest the way you lived here on earth. No or little rewards will speak volumes. Great rewards will shout your dedication to Christ.

* 1 Corinthians 3:13- Every man's work shall be made manifest:...

**God can exalt and vindicate you very easily.** Whether the reward is in Heaven or on earth, God can make it public. He can expose sin so all know about it. Likewise, He can reveal godly living so all will know about it. Here are a few examples.

1. James Duncan, preaching with great unction and power, was asked what was the secret of such powerful preaching. "The secret," he said, was "thirteen hours of consecutive prayer."
2. When asked the secret of his spiritual power, Charles Spurgeon said: "Knee work! Knee work!"
3. Livingston of Shotts, on two different occasions, preached with such power that in each service 500 were converted. Both sermons were preceded by a night of prayer.
4. Charles Finney, after spending a day in the woods in prayer and fasting, preached that night to a phenomenally irreligious congregation. The sermon was accompanied by such divine power that the whole congregation, except one man, fell prostrate upon the floor, and voiced their agony under conviction of sin in such loud outcries that the preacher was forced to stop.

Your godliness will be especially public when we are rewarded in eternity. Our responsibility is to be faithful to Him and do His will. He will be faithful to reward us for our faithfulness.

* Revelation 22:12- And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.
Chapter 5
Where is Your Treasure?

Matthew 6:19-21

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: [20] But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: [21] For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

I. THE CAUTION ABOUT COVETOUSNESS  6:19a
Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth,

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ennessee Titans’ center, Kevin Long, who played under Coach Bobby Bowden at Florida State University, said his college coach inspired the team with parables. Kevin recounted a favorite story: [Bowden] was playing college baseball, and he had never hit a home run. Finally, he hit one down the right-field line, into the corner. He rounded first and looked to the third-base coach. He turned at second, was halfway to third and the coach was still waving him on to home plate where he arrived safely. He had his first home run. He was so excited and everybody was slapping him with high fives. Then the pitcher took the ball, threw it to the first baseman, and the umpire called him out. Coach Bowden said, "If you don't take care of first base, it doesn't matter what you do. If you don't honor the Lord first, it doesn't matter what else you do."

In this section of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus stresses to us the importance of stepping on first base before you attempt to step on the other bases. In other words, He is dealing with the issue of our priorities and the focus of our lives by dealing with the issue of what we treasure in our lives and place first. Something is always going to be first in your life. God’s challenge in this section is to put Him first and invest in heavenly treasures. A key theme of Scripture is to put God first in your
life with all that He has given to you.
* Matthew 6:33- But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.
* Proverbs 3:9-10... Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: [10] So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.

Many Christians are not victorious in their Christian growth and service because they don’t treasure Christian growth and service for Christ. Going to church is not important. Praying is a waste of time. Bible reading is considered irrelevant. Telling someone about Christ or inviting them to church is embarrassing and giving God tithes and offerings is out of the question. The quest for material possessions is much more important and interesting than investing in reaching the souls of men and having spiritual and eternal treasures. Instead, their lives are consumed with accumulating things that they will be willing to lose their families over, that will not satisfy them, and will be left behind when they are dead. The same attitudes of selfish greed existed in the days of Christ. For this reason Jesus gave all of us a warning about covetousness. He first tells us what NOT to do and then what we should do concerning the matter of what we treasure in life. First He says, “Don’t lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth.”

What is this all about? First, let’s address what this does NOT mean.
1. He is not condemning those who are wealthy. Abraham and Job were both very wealthy men. Wealth that is gained by honest work and used rightly is commended in the Bible.
2. This negative command does not mean we are prohibited to earning a living and providing for our families. We are to be diligent in hard work and our business matters.
* Romans 12:11- Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;
* Matthew 25:27 - Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.
* Proverbs 14:23- In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury. Penury means “poverty.”
* Proverbs 28:19 - He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that followeth after vain persons shall have poverty enough.
* 2 Thessalonians 3:10- For even when we were with you, this we
commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.
3. He is not condemning saving for the needs that we or our family may
have in the future.
* Proverbs 6:6-8 ... Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and
meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.
* 1 Timothy 5:8- But if any provide not for his own, and specially for
those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an
infidel.

What does Jesus mean in this verse? The words "lay up" come
from the Greek word thesaurizo {thay-sow-rid'-zo}. Does it sound
familiar? It helps to form our English word “thesaurus” which is a
treasury of words. The word thesaurizo carries the connotation of
stacking or laying out horizontally, as one stacks coins; to treasure up.”
In the context of this passage the idea is that of stockpiling or hoarding,
and therefore, it pictures wealth that is not being used and is wasting
away. In the Greek text it can read “do not treasure up treasure.” This
action requires much energy and time. This kind of behavior describes
the rich man in Luke 12. He was a man that was wasting the blessings
that God had given to him. Don’t fall in his shadow and make the same
mistake. Don’t waste your life and abilities. Don’t shut the Lord out of
your life like the rich man in Luke 12.
* Luke 12:16-21... And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground
of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: [17] And he thought
within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to
bestow my fruits? [18] And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my
barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my
goods. [19] And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up
for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. [20] But God
said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee:
then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? [21] So is
he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

What is the meaning of the word “treasure?” Does it only refer to
money or things? The word "treasure" in our text is translated from a
Greek word which here means "the things laid up in a treasury ... something precious, a deposit or wealth.” What our Lord means here by
“treasure” is not merely money, or material goods, but whatever each
man thinks best, that which he most eagerly strives to attain, that which
he most dreads to lose, that which, if he has, he thinks he will be blessed,
that which, if he has it not, he believes he will be dissatisfied and miserable."

Certainly this verse is a warning to those who are rich, but this teaching is not for the wealthy only. Our text does not say, "Do not lay up for yourselves money on earth." It says, "treasures," and the Greek word used here is an inclusive term. Treasures were a number of things. Treasures, or wealth, among the ancients, consisted in clothes or changes of raiment, as well as in gold, silver, gems, wine, lands, and oil. It meant an abundance of "anything" that was held to be conducive to the ornament or comfort of life.

What Jesus has in mind are people who get their entire satisfaction from things that belong to this world only. Jesus is concerned about selfishness in misplaced values and a coveting spirit consumed by greed. He warns us against focusing our ambitions, interests, and hopes on the things of this life. What Jesus is prohibiting is the selfish accumulation of goods. Even if you have not set your mind on the greedy accumulation of great wealth, something else — for example, a home — could be a sinful treasure if it becomes the most important thing in your life. Beloved, dedicate your home to God.

There is also the treasure of family. Let me say that we should treasure our family. It should be considered valuable to us. When Chris Spielman played for the Buffalo Bills, he was everything a middle linebacker should be: tough, strong, and smart, with passion, total commitment, and loyalty to the game. He played the entire 1995 season with a torn pectoral muscle that he sustained in the season opener, but the game took a distant second place in his thinking during the 1998 season. He chose to stay home. He cooked, took care of his kids, and cared for his wife—by choice.

Stephanie, Chris's wife, was struggling through the stark reality of breast cancer. Surgery, chemotherapy, and nausea were Stephanie's opponents and constant companions. During her fight, Chris was at her side. His actions supported his "family before job" credo. Asked by a reporter from the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle if he'd consider a return to the Bills late in the season, Spielman said, "I'd play in a heartbeat, but what kind of man would I be if I backed out on my word to her? I wouldn't be a man at all." Football fans saw Spielman as a man because of his aggressive, leave-it-all-on-the-field style of play. But what really made him a man? It was his personal sacrifice and unending commitment and loyalty to his wife. Chris treasured his wife.
Let me very direct and blunt here. Men, if you will treasure your wife, you won’t be shopping around for another woman to fulfill your sexual fantasies and desires. You will have no need of pornography to satisfy your lust and imagination. Your wife needs to hear frequently from you, “I love you.” She needs your encouragement and support. She needs your hugs and kisses often throughout the day, every day. Some husbands are as romantic as a dead frog. Wake up gentlemen and love your wife!

* Ephesians 5:25- Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

Ladies, on the same note, your husband needs your affection, admiration, adoration and your attention. He needs your hugs, kisses, and sexual intimacy. He needs your flirting with him and seductiveness with him. Such behavior from both the husband and wife help produce a strong and happy marriage. A passionate sex life in your marriage will also provide a huge deterrent against another man or woman that may want to steal your spouse away from you. If you want to keep your marriage from cooling off then keep the bed hot. God has greatly blessed sex in the marriage. It is a wonderful gift from Him for a husband and his wife.

* Hebrews 13:4- Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

Treasure your family, but not to the extent that they become more important than the Lord. Some people put family before everything. Some mothers and fathers think only of their children. When we give such primacy to our family, there is no time for our neighbors, community, or church. When your family gets you out of church or out of God’s will, then it has become a treasure on earth. If anything in this world is everything to you, it is an earthly treasure and will eventually become nothing. Beloved, let me ask, “Where are your treasures? Where is your heart?”

Another thing that people treasure today is their time. Our time is valuable. Make sure you give God time in your life. Take time to pray, read the Word, to tell others about Christ, and to go to church. Give God your time. The earthly time that you use for Christ will have eternal benefits and blessings.

Harold L. Fickett, Jr., wrote about a wealthy businessman who on his deathbed was filled with deep remorse. When his pastor called, he opened his heart and shared the burden he was carrying. He said that ten
years earlier he had been given the opportunity to teach a Sunday school
class of nine-year-old boys. Thinking he didn't have the time, he declined
the offer. Now, however, deeply conscious that his life would soon be
over, he confessed to the pastor that his most painful regret was that he
had missed such a golden opportunity to serve the Lord by investing his
life in the lives of those nine-year-olds. He estimated that at least 100
boys would have passed through that class. "My investments in stocks
and bonds will stay behind when I leave," he declared. "What a fool I
have been." Someone put it this way, "It's easy to make a buck. It's a lot
tougher to make a difference." Are you making a difference for Christ
with your life? Where is your treasure?

II. THE CANKER AND CORRUPTION OF EARTHLY
TREASURE 6:19 b

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust
doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

Jesus urges us not to lay up earthly treasures because they can be
spoiled or stolen. In ancient times, wealth was frequently
measured in part by clothing. Compared to our day of mass-produced
clothes, garments represented a considerable investment. Rich people
sometimes had golden threads woven into their clothing, both to display
and to store their wealth, but the best clothes were made of wool, which
the moth loves to eat, especially cloth that has been soiled with the salt
from sweat. The wealthiest persons had difficulty protecting their clothes
from the insects.

Grain was considered a treasure in Bible times as illustrated by the
rich farmer in Luke 12, but this treasure could be ruined. The word
"rust" is from the Greek word brosis {bro'-sis}. "Rust" means "to be
devoured or eaten" and refers not only to the corrosion of metals but to
the destruction of grain effected by rats, mice, mildew, worms, insects,
and the like.

Treasures could also be stolen by thieves who would dig through
the walls made of straw and mud. For this reason, many folks would
bury their treasures somewhere on their land. Moth and rust corrupt
treasure. This word "corrupt" is from the Greek word aphanizo {af-
an-id'-zo} which means "to snatch out of view or sight; to cause to vanish
away, to destroy or consume; to deprive of luster, render unsightly or
disfigure." This is what moths and rust do to metals and materials.
It is ironic that earthly treasures eventually lose their luster in our own eyes. The satisfaction they give eventually goes away. When this happens, we have nothing to fill the void of our heart or we must seek new treasures to give us a “satisfaction” fix until that wears off and the cycle repeats itself again. What a dull and empty way to live. It is sad and wasteful to pursue things in life that will leave us empty, but this describes the way most people live.

* Haggai 1:6- Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.

It is possible that both our treasures upon earth and our treasures in Heaven can involve money and other material things. Possessions that are wisely, lovingly, willingly, and generously used for kingdom purposes can be a means of accumulating heavenly possessions. When they are hoarded and stored, however, they not only become a spiritual hinderance but are subject to loss through moth, rust, and thieves. Be careful about treasuring money or things to the point that the Lord is neglected or rejected in your life.

* Money will buy a bed; but not sleep;
* books but not brains;
* food but not appetite;
* a house but not a home;
* medicine but not health;
* luxuries but not culture;
* amusements but not happiness;
* religion but not salvation;

**Jesus warns that earthly treasure will be destroyed.** You cannot take it with you. It is temporal, not eternal. An old miser called his doctor, lawyer, and minister to his deathbed. "They say you can't take it with you," the dying man said. "But I'm going to try. I have three envelopes with $30,000 cash in each one. I want each of you to take an envelope, and as they lower my casket, throw in the envelopes!"

Each man tossed in his envelope as requested, but on the way home the minister confessed, "I needed the money for the church, so I took out $10,000 and threw only $20,000 into the grave." The doctor said, "I, too, must confess. I'm building a clinic. So I took $20,000 and threw in only $10,000." The lawyer said, "Gentlemen, I'm ashamed of you. I threw in a personal check for the full amount." The old miser's material fixation
produced a futile scheme to take his wealth with him, but the scheme did not even survive his burial because of the materialism of his three friends. Beloved, none of us will take anything with us! Job understood this perfectly.

*Job 1:21- And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.

III. THE COMMAND ABOUT OUR TREASURES 6:20

But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

Jesus has given us a negative command and has told us what NOT to do. As in all balanced preaching, He now gives positive instruction and tells us what we SHOULD do. If we are going to lay up treasures, then lay them up in Heaven. They will be blessed not broken, relished, not ruined.

*Colossians 3:2- Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.* The phrase “set your affection” is from the Greek word *phroneo* *(pron-eh'-o).* It means “to seek or set your mind to a thing.” It comes from the Greek word *phren* *(frane)* which means “the heart or mind.” Our heart is to be on Heaven because we are citizens of Heaven, not this earth.

*Philippians 3:20- For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:* The word “conversation” means “citizenship.”

What does it mean to lay up treasures in Heaven? It means to use all that we have for the glory of God. It means to “hang loose” when it comes to the material things of life. It also means measuring life by the true riches of the kingdom and not by the false riches of this world. We are to abound in heavenly treasures. Heavenly treasures will never be diminished in value; they are permanent, lasting, satisfying. The luster will never decrease or disappear, the glory will never be gone, the joy will never cease, and time will not take away anything from these treasures. Heavenly treasures are absolutely safe, not even death can steal away these treasures. Nothing is more safe than that which is stored in Heaven. God Himself protects them so they will never be stolen. Heavenly treasure, however, is more
than most Christians are interested in.

Most Christians seem to be content with a very small amount of heavenly treasure. They prefer to live on skimpy spiritual rations. They want to cut the Bible preaching and teaching time in church and increase the playing time. They want to decrease their giving instead of increase it. The Apostle Paul exhorted the Thessalonians to abound in spiritual matters.

* 1 Thessalonians 4:1- Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.

* Investing in Spiritual Treasures

How do we invest in heavenly treasures? Here are some things you can do.

1. Sacrificial Giving to the Lord is a Spiritual Investment

* Matthew 6:4- That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.
* Matthew 10:42- And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.
* Mark 10:21- Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.

In Matthew 6:24, the Bible says, “You cannot serve God and mammon.” This Hebrew word “mammon” was a word that referred to material possessions. It came from a Hebrew root word which means “to entrust or to place in one’s keeping.” Mammon therefore meant the wealth that one person entrusted to another for safe keeping. During the time of Christ, it did not have a negative meaning unless an adjective was added to it such as “the mammon of unrighteousness.”

As time passed, the sense of this word changed from “that which is entrusted to another” to “that which a man trusts.” The history of this word is illustrated in the lives of many Christians. God has blessed them and entrusted them with wealth and possessions for His glory and proper use, but covetousness and greed grip the hearts of many believers and they begin to trust in their things and wealth. They lay up their treasures on earth instead of in Heaven. Has this happened to you? Paul gave us a warning about this.
* 1 Timothy 6:17- Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;

2. Supplication or Praying is a Spiritual Investment
* Matthew 6:6- But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

3. Serving the Lord Jesus Christ is an Investment in Eternity
* 1 Corinthians 3:8- Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor.

4. Steadfastness or Faithfulness to the Lord is a Great Investment
* Luke 6:22-23... Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. [23] Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.
* Revelation 2:10- Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.
* 1 Corinthians 15:58- Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

5. Soul winning or Evangelism is a Huge Spiritual Investment
* Daniel 12:3 - And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.

6. Suffering for the Sake of Christ is a Valuable Spiritual Investment
* 2 Timothy 2:12- If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:
* 2 Corinthians 4:17- For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;
* Matthew 5:11-12... Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. [12] Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Some Christians believe that it is always carnal to desire and to work for eternal treasures and rewards, but Jesus commanded us to do precisely that.
* 1 Corinthians 3:11-15. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. [12] Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; [13] Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. [14] If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. [15] If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

* 2 Corinthians 5:10- For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

I like what that great Bible teacher G. Campbell Morgan wrote: “You are to remember with the passion burning within you that you are not the child of today. You are not of the earth, you are more than dust; you are the child of tomorrow, you are of the eternities, you are the offspring of Deity. The measurements of your lives cannot be circumscribed by the point where the blue sky kisses the green earth. All the fact of your life cannot be encompassed in the one small sphere upon which you live. You belong to the infinite. If you make your fortune on the earth—poor, sorry, silly soul—you have made a fortune, and stored it in a place where you cannot hold it. Make your fortune, but store it where it will greet you in the dawning of the new morning.”

IV. THE COMPANION OF YOUR TREASURE 6:21

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Your heart will shadow your treasure. It will focus on that which you consider to be important and valuable. The thing that a person values most highly, inevitably occupies the center of his or her heart. Your heart is the center of your personality, and it controls the intellect, emotions, and will. If honor and recognition are your treasures, then you will be occupied with ambition. If money is your treasure, then you will struggle with covetousness and greed. On the other hand, if you value eternal riches most highly, you will pursue spiritual matters. Where are your treasures? Some folks are not sure. The following questions may help you with an answer.

1. What occupies your thoughts when you have nothing else to do? What occupies your daydreams? Are your investments, your position, or some
person consuming your thoughts all the time? If so, those are the things you treasure, and that is where your heart really is located.

2. What do you fret about the most? Is it your home or perhaps your clothing? If so, then you know where your treasures lie.

3. Apart from your loved ones, what or whom do you most dread losing?

4. What are the things that you use to measure others? This question is a very revealing mirror because we measure other people by that which we treasure. Do you measure others by their clothing, by their education, by their homes or by their athletic abilities? Do you measure others by their success in the business world? If so, you know where your treasures lie.

5. Lastly, what is it that you know you cannot be happy without? Where is your treasure exactly? Only you can honestly answer these questions.

A man's heart has only enough life in it to pursue one object fully.

*** Charles Spurgeon ***
Chapter 6
Fixing Your Focus
Matthew 6:22-23

The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. [23] But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

Jesus has been dealing with the issue of our priorities in this portion of His message by speaking about what we value or what we treasure in our lives. We all treasure something. Our treasures may involve people, places, positions, or possessions. The challenge from the Lord Jesus Christ is to lay up our treasures in Heaven. In other words, we are to place value and invest in eternal, spiritual things. We are to treasure and value those things that God values which include the souls of men and glorifying Jesus Christ. The benefit of doing so is the fact that our heavenly treasures cannot be stolen or ruined.

In verses 22 and 23, Jesus continues to expand on the issue of our priorities and treasures. When you have a camera, sometimes you have to adjust the lens to focus the picture properly. In this segment, Jesus gives us insights that will help us make adjustments in our lives to fix our focus so that we will clearly see that which is truly valuable and important and not have a distorted, deceived view of unimportant, unprofitable affairs in this life. Notice verse 22.

I. THE SINGLE EYE 6:22

The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

Jesus said, "The light of the body is the eye." What does this mean? The eye in this context is an illustration of the heart of a person. What goes on in our heart or mind is going to affect our vision or view of life. It is going to affect how we evaluate or look at things. Our heart is the eye of our soul. It is through our hearts that God's truth, love, peace, and every other spiritual blessing come to us. Our heart is
also a garage door in which Satan can store his debris of discouragement, depression, doubt, and depravity into our lives. Our heart reveals our character which in turn, will be the key factor in determining our priorities and what we consider important and worthless.

**For this reason, there is a battle for your heart.** If God has your heart, He has you and you have His calm. If you are stingy with your heart, then you will be in conflict with Him. This is why we are challenged repeatedly to surrender all of our heart to the Lord.

*Proverbs 23:26- My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.*

*Proverbs 4:23- Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. The word “keep” means “to guard.”

*Mark 12:30- And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. We tend not to yield our heart to the Lord. For this reason we are commanded to love Him.*

*Psalm 9:1- I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will shew forth all thy marvelous works.*

*Psalm 119:2- Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.*

*Psalm 119:10 - With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.*

*2 Corinthians 8:5- And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God. God used these Macedonian Christians in a great way because they had given their hearts to the Lord first, which motivated them to give themselves to others.

No matter how many good things you do, if the Lord does not have your heart, if your genuine focus and desire is really not upon Him, He does not have you. Jesus addressed this problem.

*Matthew 15:8 - This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.*

When the Lord does not have all of you, you will be spiritually weakened and a target for Satanic attack. One of the reasons a tribe of lions on an African plain will walk along the herds of animals is to keep the herds moving. When the animals are grazing and still, it is difficult to see those animals that are weak or injured. When the herds are running, it is much easier to see the lame, the sick, or the young which are prime targets for attack. Satan and his forces roam this world to see
which Christians are weak and prime targets for temptation and destruction. As in Job’s life, he may stir up circumstances in our lives to see how strong we are in our faith. Notice what Peter said.

* 1 Peter 5:8- Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

Does Satan have his eyes on you? Are you spiritually weak because you have yet to surrender your heart and life to the Lord? If so, you are a target for Satan and have a big bull’s eye on your life with Satan taking aim at you. Why not make the decision today to turn your life, your family, your job, your health, your finances, and your future over to Him.

The Lord wants our eye or our heart to be “single” and clearly focused on doing and being what pleases Him. What is this all about? In the Bible, single or singleness represents or is associated with that which is good and steadfast when speaking about our heart or eyes.

* Colossians 3:22- Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:

* Ephesians 6:5- Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;

* Acts 2:46- And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

This word “single” comes from the Greek word haplous {hap-looe't} which means that God wants our eye or heart to be “clear, sincere, open and aboveboard, honest, with no hidden agendas, without folds.” It is a word that reflects our attitude and treatment of other people. Words that are closely related to haplous mean “liberality” and “generosity.” The single eye or heart is a generous one.

* Romans 12:8 ...he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity;...

* James 1:5a- If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally.

* Proverbs 11:25- The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.

The person with a single eye is devoted to treating other people right. The single heart, the single eye has integrity and is full of the light of God’s truth because it is not cloaked with deception that darkens the soul by cover ups and selfishness. The single heart has nothing to hide because everything is out in the open. The single heart can see clearly
and has discernment because it is full of God’s light. The single eye sees properly and is clearly focused. It views treasures, especially wealth, with the right evaluation. It sees the great value of heavenly treasures and the worthless value of earthly treasures.

**The eye that is single has the ability to discern good from evil, to know that all that glitters is not gold and glamorous.** People with a single eye are concerned about others. They are focused and alert to needs that people may have and they do something about it by meeting those needs with their assistance, encouragement or generosity. They realize that loving and caring for others in the name of Christ is “heavenly treasure” that pleases God.

*Matthew 10:42- And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.*

**The single or heart is just like the heart of God who also loves and cares for others.** When we, as Christians, have a single heart of purity and integrity, generosity and liberality, our heart in a way becomes knit with God. We become just like Him because we are following His example. In fact, this truth is seen in the Greek root word for *haplous*.

The word *haplous* is formed from the root word *pleko* {plek'-o} which means “to plait, braid, weave together.” Like many strands of the long, beautiful hair of a young lady that are woven together in a beautiful braid, our hearts are braided with God’s when we have a single heart or eye that is focused on doing what is right and cares for other people. When we have a single heart, a single eye, our heart is knit with God and also with others that love the Lord. This was true of the early church.

*Colossians 2:2a- That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, ...*

*Acts 4:32- And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.*

*Psalm 57:7 - My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise.* David’s heart was resolved and determined to serve the Lord. This is the idea behind the word “fixed.” His heart was one with God. His mind was made up. This is the attitude of an eye that is single, fixed, or focused on a goal. When we make up our mind to serve and love others and show them the love of Christ, we will be a huge encouragement and blessing to people that need to be blessed. Our focus
will give us a purpose in life and good, godly spiritual goals. Just having a purpose for living is a treasure in itself because many people don’t have one. They don’t know why they exist, but the Christian does know.

**Loving people is a treasure we will enjoy now and one that cannot be taken away when we do it for the Lord Jesus Christ.** The people in North Platte, Nebraska, understood the treasure of sacrificial giving and love for others during WW 2. Many of these folks were Christians that demonstrated the love of Christ to those who needed encouragement. They had a single eye. Let me tell what they did.

Ten days after the attack on Pearl Harbor, a group of citizens in North Platte, Nebraska, a little town of just over 12,000, heard a rumor that soldiers from their town, who were part of the Nebraska National Guard, Company D, would be coming through on a troop train on their way to the West Coast. So five hundred people showed up at the train depot with food, letters, and love to give to the boys. When the train showed up, however, it was not the Nebraska National Guard Company D boys on board; it was the soldiers from the Kansas National Guard Company D.

After a few awkward moments, a woman handed a young man she’d never seen, the gifts intended for her very own son. Everyone else followed that lead, and there were hugs and prayers and love shared all around. It was a spontaneous act of genuine devotion that touched both the soldiers and the 500 people who came to the depot that day. That alone would have been a beautiful illustration of the willingness to sacrifice for others or to treasure people, but the story continues. It doesn’t end here. It begins.

A few days later, a 26-year-old Christian woman named Rae Wilson wrote a letter to the editor of the local paper recounting the powerful, profound experience they’d shared that night. She then suggested the town organize a canteen, so they could do something similar for every troop train that came through the town. She offered to lead the effort as a volunteer.

A few days later, on Christmas Eve, 1941, the canteen opened and for every day of the war, every troop train from the first, which arrived at 5:00 a.m. until the last after midnight, was met by the people of North Platte and the surrounding towns. In that ten minute stop, they managed to distribute cookies, cakes, cupcakes, pies, coffee, sandwiches, soft drinks, doughnuts, candy, magazines, books, and lots of love and good cheer. There were even birthday cakes for anyone having a special day.
This went on for four and a half years.

Just to get perspective on the size of the task, each train had three hundred to five hundred soldiers on it and each day they saw eight to twelve trains come through the depot, and sometimes up to twenty. That would mean they would serve anywhere from 2400 to 10,000 soldiers and sailors every day. All this food was home-made and all at the expense of the people whose lives were severely impacted by war-time rationing.

Of course, being farming communities, they could contribute what they raised. By Christmas of 1943, more than 55 towns had monthly work-dates. Many traveled by car or train provided by the Union Pacific railroad from towns as far as 200 miles away. By war's end, almost 125 communities in the western half of Nebraska, the northeastern portion of Colorado, and the northwestern area of Kansas contributed a total of 55,000 volunteers at one time or another during the 51 months. Of all the money that was donated, not one dime came from any government organization. The funds came from private donations. Voluntary cash gifts during the canteen's entire existence were about $137,000 (an amount estimated to be equal to buying power of $1.3 million in the year 2000).

The final statistics are staggering. By the time the last train arrived on April 1, 1946, six million soldiers had been blessed by the North Platte Nebraska Canteen. Most of the troops had only ten minutes to sprint from the train, grab some food, hear the appreciation of those present, and sprint back before the train left without them, but in those ten minutes, they got more than a meal. They received a dose of unconditional love that they remembered later during the heat of battle as well as decades after the war was over.

Bob Greene's book, *Once Upon a Town*, made the North Platte Canteen story known to the world. He wrote that as he interviewed those few surviving soldiers who had experienced the canteen firsthand, there was a universal reaction from the men, who were by that time in their late seventies and eighties. They all cried as they remembered the smiles and the love of these people and how they made them feel at home and appreciated.

To this day, North Platte is remembered for what they did. They were honored by the Congress in 2004 for their contributions in WW2. You could say that many of these people had a single eye. They discovered the great joy in giving and investing their lives in the lives of other people. Do you treasure people and their souls? Do you have a
concern for those in full-time ministry and try to encourage them?

In contrast to the word “single” is the word “double” which in the Bible represents or carries the idea of that which is impure, bad, defective, false, and corrupt when it is used in reference to our heart, mind, or speech.

* James 1:8- A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.
* James 4:8- Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.
* 1 Timothy 3:8- Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;
* Psalm 12:2 - They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak.

When we are seeing double, we are not seeing clearly. We are dizzy and disoriented and our walk is unstable. Does that describe your life? Are you dizzy and staggering in your walk with God? Are you having difficulty being faithful to the Lord? Do you need to fix your focus back on Him? Remember that the single eye is the one that is focused on God and can see clearly. It knows how to have proper priorities and treasure that which is valuable to God. So how is your spiritual focus? Are your eyes on the Lord, looking to Him for direction in your life? May we follow the challenge and example of Paul.

* Philippians 1:20- According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.

Paul makes some personal decisions that were among life’s choicest. Paul has one expectation and hope. His focus was fixed upon the Lord as indicated by this verse. The word for “expectation” is rich in meaning. It is the word apokaradokia. It is formed from three Greek words.

* apo which means “looking away from; ignoring other interests”
* kara which means “the head”
* dokein which means “to look or watch”

This word means “the eager, intense look which turns away from everything else to fix on the one object of desire; to watch with head outstretched.” The word was used of watchmen looking into the darkness for a beacon of light. Paul fixed his eyes on Christ and was determined that in nothing he would be ashamed by the way he lived. He would be a witness and servant for Jesus Christ. The apostle knew he must appear
before the Lord someday and did not want to be ashamed.

* Philippians 3:14- I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

* Acts 20:24- But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. Do you have the same attitude? Do you have a single eye? Are you determined to finish your course and faithfully live your life for Christ?

Bill Broadhurst was running in the Omaha, Nebraska, Pepsi 10k, a race of 6.2 miles. Broadhurst, who is a Christian, was slowed by a brain aneurism he suffered as a young man, leaving him partially paralyzed on the left side. He wanted to finish the 10k despite this handicap and obstacle. He was determined to run because Bill Rogers, his hero, was in the race that day. Rogers is a great runner and ran the race that day in 29 minutes and 37 seconds. The other runners finished in 30 to 50 minutes. The joggers crossed the line in 60 or 70 minutes.

It would take Bill Broadhurst much longer. As he ran, some kids didn't understand that he was competing and said, "Hey mister, you missed a good race." As he ran, his left side got so numb he wanted to quit. He wanted to drop out. After two hours, the cars were back in the streets, it was getting dark on Saturday afternoon, and running through intersections became difficult. One policeman stopped cars to let him across; a nice lady handed him some water.

At two hours and twenty minutes he said the pain and throbbing were bad. He said, "I didn't want to make it; I didn't want to go on," but then he saw the end. He saw the finish line. They had already taken the banner down. Broadhurst ran down the street on the sidewalk, saw the banner had gone, and his heart sank because everybody had left. He thought, "Man, what's the use?" But he decided to finish the race anyway. When he got to the end, out of the alleyway stepped his hero Bill Rogers and a gang of people. They were waiting for him at the finish line. Rogers opened his arms, and welcomed the crippled, suffering, yet determined Broadhurst across the finish line and hugged him.

After Broadhurst willed his partially paralyzed body the last few steps to the end of the race, Bill Rogers took the gold medal from around his own neck that he won that day, and put it around the neck of the last runner to cross the finish line. Rogers said, "Broadhurst, you're the winner; you take the gold."
When I read this story, I couldn’t help but feel that the Lord would be doing the same thing for those believers who are faithful in serving the Lord. Many believers go through life and spiritually stumble, fall, and want to quit, but they get back up and keep trying to go forward for Christ. They get beat up by Satan and suffer affliction, but they do their best to finish their course for the Lord. If this describes you, I believe it is possible that the Lord and even our loved ones in the Lord will be waiting for us at the finish line when we are called home to Heaven’s shores, ready to reward us for serving Him and finishing our race. Notice the comments of the writer of Hebrews and what Paul said in 2 Timothy chapter four.

* 2 Timothy 4:7-8... I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: [8] Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

* Hebrews 12:1- Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. If you faithfully serve the Lord and finish your course, you are a winner. Have you fallen down? If so, then get back up and keep doing your best to make your life count for Christ.

* Proverbs 24:16 - For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: ..... The just or righteous man does fall sometimes. The word “falleth” is from the Hebrew word naphal {naw-fal’}. It means “to fail, fall short, waste away, to be inferior, to be attacked and thrown or knocked down.” A righteous man may fall, but he gets back up! He may get knocked down, but he is not knocked out. Have you failed, wasted your life, or been spiritually knocked down? Get back up! Fix your focus on God!

II. THE SINFUL EYE 6:23

But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

Jesus said, “If your eye is evil your whole body is full of darkness.” Again we are still talking about the condition of our heart. What does it mean to have an evil eye? The word “evil” here is
from the Greek word *poneros* (*pon-ay-ros*). This word *poneros* can mean “evil, vicious, malicious, deceitful, worthless, or degenerate.” When it was used to describe a bad tree it was translated as “worthless or rotten.” In the New Testament and in the Septuagint, however, the word *poneros* regularly meant “stingy or grudging.” An evil eye was a phrase in use, among the ancient Jews, to denote an envious, covetous man or disposition; a man who was miserable at his neighbor's prosperity, loved his own money, and would do nothing in the way of charity for God's sake. I believe this is the idea of this word in the context of this passage since Jesus is dealing with the issue of treasure and mammon.

The book of Deuteronomy speaks of the duty of lending to a brother who is in need, but the matter was complicated by the fact that every seventh year was a year of release when debts were cancelled. Some men were hesitant or refused to lend to those in need because they could take advantage of the debt cancellation law. Their eye or heart was considered evil, ungenerous or stingy.

* Deuteronomy 15:9 - Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee.

We are warned in God's word to avoid selfish, stingy, greedy people.

* Proverbs 23:6 - Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats: We are not to crave or covet the delicacies of a selfish man.

* Proverbs 28:22- He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him.

There is nothing like generosity for giving you a clear and undistorted view of life and of people; there is nothing like a grudging and ungenerous spirit for distorting your view of life and of people.

When we look in Luke 16, we find an example of a man with an evil eye. In Luke 16:19-31, Jesus tells a story about a rich man who refused to show any mercy to a beggar at his gate. His self-centered, stingy spirit never thought of aiding poor Lazarus, who longed to be fed with crumbs from the man's table. Ultimately death came to them both, and the rich man was plunged into the darkness that had long been in his soul. In torment, he begged for a messenger to go and tell his living relatives about the truths he had failed to see during his life.
Beloved, materialism and greed shut out the light of Christ, because things tend to become more important than spiritual matters. Such was the case with Esau, Solomon in later years, and Demas, who forsook Paul "because he loved this world" (2 Timothy 4:10). If we are not careful, we can adopt the same grasping attitude of people with an evil eye. Such a spirit clouds the way we look at life and distorts our vision and focus to what truly is and is not treasure. It sees great value in earthly treasures and little in heavenly treasures. Thus, you will waste your life because you got distracted and invested your life in the wrong treasures.

Eighty years ago, as Notre Dame was preparing to play the USC Trojans in college football, Fighting Irish coach Knute Rockne was aware that his opponent had a far better team. So he devised a plan to intimidate the opposing players. Rockne scoured the city of South Bend, Indiana, which is the hometown of Norte Dame. He hand-picked 100 of the largest men he could find. These guys were monsters, each at least six-foot-five and 300 pounds. He put the men in Fighting Irish uniforms and, at game time, marched them onto the field ahead of the real team. (Obviously, this was before the days of limited rosters and eligibility restrictions.)

As USC watched those giants line up on the sidelines, they forgot about their talent and their undefeated record, and they began mentally preparing themselves for a beating. Though none of the specially recruited men played during the game, their presence on the sidelines was enough to knock Southern Cal's concentration off balance. Knute Rockne's trick had worked. He had intimidated the Trojan players into giving up before the game even started.

Does this story describe you? Do you suffer from the same attitudes in your own life? If you are a Christian, have you given up on serving the Lord? Is the passion for Jesus Christ gone and been replaced with a quest for earthly treasures? If you have lost your first love for the Lord, then get it back. Beloved, don’t go through life trying to fit the mold of this world and crave for that which is worthless in eternity. Make your life count for Christ.

* Romans 12:1-2.. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. [2] And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.
When the things of this world are our focus and our treasures, we believe we cannot be happy without them. That's the unrelenting gospel of Hollywood and the majority of people believe it. Christians need to learn the lesson a certain unhappy king learned. The story is told of a poor king who was so discontented with life that he called in his wise men and asked if they could help him. Their consensus was that if the king could find a happy man, borrow his shirt, and wear it for his garment, he would be happy. So a delegation was sent out to find a happy man. They searched and searched and almost gave up, but at last they found a happy man. There was only one problem — he had no shirt! He had given it away to someone in need.

**Greed, selfishness, and covetousness cloud our vision of genuine joy and happiness.** It also clouds our vision of genuine success. Because of our grasping spirits, some of us have defined success in financial terms and have thereby condemned ourselves to perpetual failure because we never quite reach our goal. What a tragedy! Many men and women have sacrificed everything to accumulate money, thinking this is what makes them a success. Yet, in the process, they have lost friends, ruined their families and their testimonies by the compromises they have made to gain "things." Beloved, this is not success at all. Success is to be based on God's standards of success, not men's. Believe me, those standards are totally different. True success is following God's will and obeying God's Word. It involves us having a single eye, not an evil one.

*Joshua 1:8- This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.*

**Multitudes of people today have poor spiritual vision because they do not know the Lord at all.** Scripture speaks of the unregenerate heart or the unsaved person as blinded and filled with darkness.

*Ephesians 4:18- Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:*

*2 Corinthians 4:4 - In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*

Do the above verses describe you? Have you shut the Lord out of your life because of your selfishness? Do you have the attitude that says, "It is my life and I will do as I wish. I don't need God telling me what to
do!” If so, your life is filled with darkness. Two brothers were arguing about the wisdom of their parents. “Father is very wise,” said the first brother. “We should listen to him and do what he says.” The second brother disagreed. “Father is not so wise! Why, we are just as smart as he is. I'll prove it to you!” The next day the second brother went into the woods near his home and captured a small bird. He brought the bird home and said to his brother, “Let’s go find our father. I will show you that he isn’t so smart!”

The two brothers went into their father’s study, the second one holding the small bird between his cupped hands. “Father, I have a question for you,” he said. “I hold a small bird in my hands. Tell me, is this bird dead or alive?” The boy was confident that his father would not answer correctly because if he said that the bird was dead, the boy would simply open his hands and show that the bird was alive. If his father answered that the bird was alive, he would crush the bird between his hands and reveal that the bird was dead. Then he would prove to his brother that his father was not so wise after all. The boys’ father considered the question for a moment and said, “My son...the answer is in your hands.”

Beloved, you must make the decision to accept or reject Christ or to serve Him or neglect Him. The decision is in your hands. Your only hope for Heaven is in the Lord Jesus Christ. Men without the Lord see only a hopeless end, but the Christian rejoices in an endless hope. May the Lord help us all to keep our focus upon Him!
Chapter 7
A Castle Can Only Have One King

Matthew 6:24

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Ron Hutchcraft describes a visit to Fort Sumter, in Charleston Harbor, South Carolina: “As the tour boat approached Fort Sumter, I wondered whether the guides would be dressed in blue or in gray. Sumter had been a Union fort in Confederate territory when the Civil War began. It had changed hands several times. At the gate, we were greeted by a "soldier" wearing a blue coat and gray pants! This uniform wouldn't have worked very well back in 1861. It would have gotten its wearer shot on both ends!”

Beloved, it's not a good idea for a follower of Christ to send mixed signals to this world either. As inconsistent as this world is in its beliefs, it demands consistency from Christians and condemns believers when they are inconsistent. Christians are held to a higher standard of living by the lost because they expect us to live the way that Jesus lived and taught even though they don’t want to live that way or even believe in the Lord.

The inconsistency that is evident in the lives of professing Christians is created by the fact that many times they are trying to serve two masters. This is the issue that Jesus addresses in this verse and is a key reason why believers either succeed or fail in service to Christ or are faithful or flimsy in their faith and forward direction in Christian growth. Beloved, Jesus makes it very clear that a castle can only have one king. The castle of your life can only have one ruler that you will serve. This truth cannot be avoided. Notice this concept in verse 24.
I. THE CONCEPT 6:24a

"No man can serve two masters...."

The impossibility of serving two masters is made clear by the Lord. The Greek language is very emphatic and strong, "In no way can a man serve two masters." It cannot be done. There can be only one king that rules the castle of your heart. The word "serve" is from the Greek word _douleuo_ (dool-yoo'-o) which means "to be a slave." So to understand all that this means and implies we must remember two things about the slave in the ancient world.

First, the slave in the eyes of the law was not a person but a thing. He had absolutely no rights of his own; his master could do with him absolutely as he liked. In the eyes of the law the slave was a living tool. His master could sell him, beat him, throw him out, and even kill him. His master possessed him as completely as he possessed any of his material possessions.

Second, in the ancient world, a slave had literally no time which was his own. Every moment of his life belonged to his master. The slave had literally no moment of time which belonged to himself. Every moment belonged to his owner and was at his owner's disposal. The slave then could only meet the demands of one master. In our relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ, as Christians, we have no rights of our own. God must be the undisputed, unchallenged master of our lives. Paul made this very clear to us.

* 1 Corinthians 6:19-20... What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? [20] For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

Our attitude is not to be "What do I want to do with my life?" Instead, we should ask, "What does the Lord wish me to do?" We have no time which is our own. We cannot sometimes say, "I will do what God wants me to do," and, at other times, say, "I will do my own thing." Do you realize and understand the fact that the Christian has no time off from being a Christian? There is no time when he can relax his Christian standards, as if he was off duty, and remain right with God. A partial or a spasmodic service of God is not tolerated or acceptable. Being a Christian is a full-time responsibility that demands consistent obedience to God's Word and will for our life.
The March 17th, 2005, issue of the Suburban Chicago News records the story of Roger Powell. According to fans and sportswriters, Roger Powell looks a lot like Michael Jordan. This forward for the University of Illinois Fighting Illini basketball team is an impressive player. He seems like a natural for the NBA. However, the 22-year-old senior from Joliet, Illinois, is leaning in the direction of full-time ministry. Although Roger was raised in Mt. Zion Full Gospel Church, his commitment to Christ was half-hearted. His love of basketball was one of several competing interests.

In March, 2004, when the Fighting Illini were in Indianapolis to compete in the Big Ten tournament, something happened that changed Roger's motivation. It was as if the Holy Spirit had given him a full-court press. When the rest of the team headed into town to look for some excitement, Roger was reluctant to go along. Seeing a stream of young people headed into a downtown hotel for a Christian music concert, he followed them. What began as simply a way to pass the time before the team meeting later that night, became much more. During the concert, Roger felt God asking him to fully surrender his life and help spread God's Word. When the Illini's season ended, Roger totally dedicated his life to the Lord and proceeded toward becoming a licensed preacher of the Gospel.

While completing his senior year at the U of I, and contributing to his team's near flawless season, he's been actively involved in the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, leading small group Bible studies and preaching at his home church. "It was kind of like a struggle from my freshman year to junior year," said Powell. "It was back and forth, but once God came into my life and revealed my purpose, I just gave it all to Him, and He's been blessing me." Roger made the decision to serve one master the best he could. He realized that a castle can only have one king.

Beloved, you cannot go two ways at once. You cannot do business on both sides of the street. You cannot be for and against. No man can serve two masters. It is a simple axiom and an irrefutable one, yet many try to beat it, but no one has. If you are a Christian that desires to bring honor to Christ with your life, your master cannot be yourself, people you want to please or be accepted by, money, power, popularity, possessions, or positions. Christ must be the king of your castle. This leads us to this question, "Why can't we serve two masters?" Notice the conflict in verse twenty-four.
II. THE CONFLICT 6:24b

"...for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other..."

In regards to our affection, Christ says you will either hate or love. You cannot love both masters or loath both. Whichever one you love, you will reject the other. In regards to action, Christ says you cannot be loyal to both or honor both. Whichever master you are loyal to, you will be disloyal to the other. Whichever master you honor, you will dishonor the other. Thus, the affection and action involved in serving two masters supports the fact you cannot serve two masters at the same time. It won’t work. The Lord made this very clear.

Trying to serve two different masters creates instability because many times two masters are going in two different directions, have two different philosophies of living or doing things, and have two different demands. To please one, you will offend the other and be torn between these two masters. Children of divorced parents are confronted with this kind of emotional trauma all the time. They are torn between pleasing their mother and father who many times pressure their children to take sides.

When serving two masters, the service to each master also becomes weak and frustrating for that master who is depending upon you because what he has commanded or expects is not completed or performed in a competent manner. James warned of the instability of being double-minded which is a trait of those who have two masters.

* James 1:8 - A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. The word “unstable” is from the Greek word akatasstastos {ak-at-as'-tat-os} which means “unstable, reckless, uncontrollable, or fickle.” This is a description of those who are double-minded. An old African proverb put it this way, “The man who tries to walk two roads will split his pants.” When you are double-minded, you will bring embarrassment to yourself. Your walk or life will be affected just like a man who has split his pants. Beloved, a castle can only have one king.

One of the conflicts that has arisen from ladies working out of the home is the conflict between the expectations of the husband and the boss of the wife. The husband wants to do one thing and the boss needs the wife to do something else in the same time slot. If the husband is continually rejected over the demands of the boss, it leads many times to strife or a ruined marriage. If the wife continues to say “No” to the
demands of the boss, she may end up being fired. The stress for the wife is phenomenal. This type of problem does not describe every situation for those who work outside the home, but it does describe the situation of many.

The conflict between two masters is seen in the story of a middle-aged man who seriously courted two women at the same time. This is not a good idea at all. This man’s hair had begun to turn gray. One of the women he was courting was young, and the other was well-advanced in years. The elder woman, ashamed to be courted by a man younger than herself, made a point, whenever her admirer visited her, to pull out some portion of his black hair. The younger woman, on the contrary, not wishing to become the wife of an old man, was equally zealous in removing every gray hair she could find on his head. Thus, it came to pass that between them both, he soon found that he had not a hair left on his head. The lesson here is if you court two women at the same time, you’ll get scalped! In a nutshell the idea is you cannot serve or devote yourself to two different loves or lords.

III. THE COMMANDERS 6:24c
"...Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

Jesus says, "You cannot serve God and mammon." These are two commanders that pull at the heart of the believer. Mammon was a Hebrew word for material possessions. Mammon is a Syriac word, a name given to an idol worshiped as the god of riches. It has the same meaning as Plutus among the Greeks. It is not known that the Jews ever formally worshiped this idol, but they used the word to denote wealth.

Originally it was not a bad word at all. The Rabbis, for instance, had a saying, "Let the mammon of thy neighbor be as dear to thee as thine own." That is to say, a man should regard his neighbor’s material possessions as being as important as his own, but the word mammon had a most curious and a most revealing history. It comes from a root which means “to entrust.” Mammon was that which a man entrusted to a banker or to a safe deposit of some kind. Mammon was the wealth which a man entrusted to someone to keep safe for him, but as the years passed as the sands through the hourglass, mammon came to mean, not that which is entrusted, but that in which a man puts his trust. The end of the process was that mammon came to be spelled with a capital “M” and came to be
regarded as nothing less than a god.

The history of this word shows vividly how material possessions can usurp a place in life which they were never meant to have. Originally a man's material possessions were the things which he entrusted to someone else for safe-keeping; in the end they came to be the things in which a man put his trust. Surely there is no better description of a man's god, than to say that his god is the power in whom he trusts. When a man puts his trust in material things, then material things have become, not his support, but his god.

Money or mammon can get such a grip on a person's life that he will do almost anything to get it. For example, just when you thought advertisers had made use of every available location, another prime spot for advertising has been identified. Andrew Fischer recognized his forehead was going to waste. Fischer, a Web page designer, decided to auction off the empty space to the highest bidder on e-Bay. Amazingly, Fischer attracted a great deal of interest. The snoring remedy, *SnoreStop*, rented the blank space above his eyes. SnoreStop's CEO commended Fischer as "a man who clearly has a head for business in every sense of the word." Renting out his forehead as a billboard for 30 days earned Fischer $37,375. Beloved, don't get yourself into a position where you will do sinful, embarrassing, or foolish things just to make a buck. Don't let material things become your master. A castle can only have one king. Make sure that king is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Total loyalty to God cannot be divided between Him and loyalty to one's material possessions. A master is a lord or an owner. That God claims total lordship over His own is obvious in this passage. The concept of the lordship of Christ has often been greatly mistaken. Even in the face of the immediate denial of and on the part of His disciples, notice what Jesus said to them in John 13. He makes it clear that He is our master!

*John 13:13-* Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.

There is no passage or command anywhere in the New Testament asking the believer to make Christ “Lord of his life” after salvation. The very experience of receiving Christ as Savior is looked upon throughout the Scriptures as an acknowledgment of His lordship and ownership. When you receive Christ as your Savior, you are acknowledging Him as your Lord. If you are not, then your decision is not sincere or genuine.

If perfect obedience were required in order to make Christ our Lord, He would be the Lord of no one! It is the fact that He is already Lord that
makes our disobedience so serious. As Lord and Master He has the right to demand complete obedience. My disobedience as a believer is an act of sin against His lordship. Even though we may reject Him, He is still the Lord.

One thing emerges from all this—the possession of wealth, money, material things are not a sin, but it is a grave responsibility. If a man owns many material things, it is not so much a matter for congratulation as it is a matter for prayer, that he may use them as God would have him to do. Jesus is not condemning money or possessions in and of themselves, but the improper attitude of enslavement toward wealth. His point here cannot be overemphasized in light of the affluent society of our day. Our finances are a tool that can be used to help others and support the work of the Lord. We are to have a proper attitude and have control over our financial blessings. Our money is not to be in control of us. It is not to be our master. God is to be the master of our lives and when He is not, we begin to flop, flounder, and fail. Such is the case of many in the Bible and when we are not sold out to Him, He does make note of it.

* 1 Kings 11:6- And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father.
* 2 Chronicles 25:2- (Of Amaziah)... And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, but not with a perfect heart. The word “perfect” means “complete or whole.”
* Jeremiah 3:10- (Tribe of Judah)... And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the LORD. Feignedly means “to pretend, deceive, fraudulently.”
* Matthew 26:58- But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.
* Revelation 3:15- (Laodicean church)... I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.
* 2 Timothy 4:10a- For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world,....

Beloved, God wants us to make up our mind whom we are going to serve. A castle can only have one king. Is Jesus Christ the king of your castle, your life?

* Joshua 24:15- And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.
The question at this point is, “How do we yield our lives daily to the Lord and let Him continue to be our master?” The struggle between our will and God’s will is an ongoing battle that we face almost every day. How do we yield to Christ’s lordship over us? There are several things we can do.

1. **Be Saved**

   Letting Christ rule your life begins by trusting Him as your personal Lord and Savior. You must invite Him into your life and heart and trust Him to take you to Heaven when you die.

   * Romans 10:13- For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

2. **Have a Sweet Love for the Lord**

   It will be difficult to yield to His control if you do not love Him and other Christians.

   * John 13:35- By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

   * Matthew 22:37- Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

   Don’t lose your love or passion for Christ. If you are not careful, this can happen. You can get into a spiritual rut if you are not careful and forsake that first love for the Lord.

   * Revelation 2:4- Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

3. **Surrender yourself and yield your all to the Lord**

   Andrew Murray said, “God is ready to assume full responsibility for the life wholly yielded to Him.”

   * 2 Corinthians 8:5- And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.

   * Luke 14:26-If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

   * Luke 14:33- So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

4. **Be Submissive to God’s will in your life**

   The captain of the ship looked into the dark night and saw faint lights in the distance. Immediately he told his signal-man to send a message, “Alter your course 10 degrees south!” Promptly a return message was received: “Alter your course 10 degrees north.” The captain was angered; his command had been ignored. So he sent a second
message: “Alter your course 10 degrees south—I am the captain!” Soon another message was received: “Alter your course 10 degrees north—I am seaman third class Jones.” Immediately the captain sent a third message, knowing the fear it would evoke: “Alter your course 10 degrees south—I am a battleship.” Then the reply came “Alter your course 10 degrees north—I am a lighthouse.”

In the midst of our dark and foggy times, all sorts of voices are shouting orders into the night, telling us what to do, how to adjust our lives. Out of the darkness, one voice signals something quite opposite to the rest—something almost absurd, but the voice happens to be the Light of the World, and we ignore it at our peril. The smartest thing we can do is be submissive to God’s will for our lives. This was David’s attitude for most of his life.

* Psalm 40:8- I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.

* Ephesians 6:6- Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

5. Be in Subjection & obedience to the Lord-

* Acts 5:29- Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

* John 14:15- If ye love me, keep my commandments.

6. Spend time in the Scriptures-

Is reading the Bible a necessary part of your day or does it have a low priority in your life? George Mueller, after having read the Bible through one hundred times with increasing delight, made this statement: “I look upon it as a lost day when I have not had a good time over the Word of God. Friends often say, ‘I have so much to do, so many people to see, I cannot find time for Scripture study.’ Perhaps, there are not many who have more to do than I. For more than half a century I have never known one day when I had not more business than I could get through. For four years I have had annually about 30,000 letters, and most of these have passed through my own hands. Then, as pastor of a church with 1,200 believers, great has been my care. Besides, I have had charge of five immense orphanages; also, at my publishing depot, the printing and circulating of millions of tracts, books, and Bibles; but I have always made it a rule never to begin work until I have had a good season with God and His Word. The blessing I have received have been wonderful.”
* Isaiah 34:16- Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them. The word “seek” comes from the Hebrew word *darash* {daw-rash'}, which means “to seek carefully and frequently.” Reading your Bible once in a while is a poor study habit. We are to read the word carefully and frequently.

*Acts 17:11- These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

This phrase “readiness of mind” in Acts 17:11 comes from the Greek word *prothumia* {proth-oop-meet'-ah} which means “with zeal and great eagerness.” The word “searched” is very intense. It comes from the Greek word *anakrino* {an-ak-ree'-no} which means “to examine, to investigate, enquire into, scrutinize, sift, or to question.” We are to scrutinize the Scriptures. Our study of the Word should be intense. If possible, take time to look up the meaning of Greek and Hebrew words to get the full impact of the verse. Many times, great truths are lost or the message of Scripture is weakened when Hebrew or Greek words are translated into English. The great treasures of Scripture are found many times in the study of Greek and Hebrew words. If you have a Strong’s Concordance, you can easily study these words even though you have no training in Greek or Hebrew.

Martin Luther said, “I study my Bible like I gather apples. First, I shake the whole tree that the ripest may fall. Then I shake each limb, and when I have shaken each limb, I shake each branch and every twig. Then I look under every leaf. I search the Bible as a whole like shaking the whole tree. Then I shake every limb—study book after book. Then I shake every branch, giving attention to the chapters. Then I shake every twig, or a careful study of the paragraphs and sentences and words and their meanings.”

7. Be Sensitive to the Spirit of God-

We are to listen to what God has to say and be teachable. When we stop learning and listening, we stop growing in the Lord. We start to lose our effectiveness for Christ.

*Psalm 143:10- Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness.*

*James 1:19- Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:*
8. A Superior effort or your “best” effort should be given to the Lord-
* 2 Timothy 2:15- Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

The word “study” in this verse comes from the Greek word spoudazo which means “do your best, be diligent, make every effort.” Do your best to show yourself approved unto God. The word “approved” comes from the word dokimos which means “acceptable or pleasing.” It was used to describe coins in Roman times that were an acceptable weight and not shaved on the edges. This also described honest money changers that would not put corrupt money into circulation. We are to live our lives in such a way that what we do is pleasing and acceptable to the Lord. Our actions and attitudes will not contradict His Word.
* 2 Peter 3:14- Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. Spoudazo is translated “be diligent.” Do your best to be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.
* Ephesians 4:3 - Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Spoudazo is translated “endeavoring.”
* 2 Peter 1:10- Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: The words “give diligence” come from spoudazo. Do your best to make your calling and election sure.

9. Self-denial and Selfish pride and desires are to be conquered-
* John 3:30- He must increase, but I must decrease.
* 1 Corinthians 9:27- But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

If we do not conquer our pride, it will conquer us. Get to the point where you just don’t care what people think about you. Be more concerned about what God thinks about your life and what people think about Him. That is what an ambassador does.
* Proverbs 16:18- Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

10. Shine for Christ by honoring and glorifying Him-
* Matthew 5:16- Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.
* 1 Corinthians 1:29- That no flesh should glory in his presence.
* 1 Corinthians 1:31- That, according as it is written, He that glorieth,
let him glory in the Lord.

* 1 Corinthians 6:20- For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

* John 15:8- Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

Johann Sebastian Bach endeavored to glorify God in his music. He said, “All music should have no other end and aim than the glory of God and the soul’s refreshment; where this is not remembered there is no real music but only a devilish hub-bub.” He headed his compositions: “J. J.” “Jesus Juva” which means “Jesus help me.” He ended them “S. D. G.” “Soli Dei gratia” which means “To God alone the praise.”

11. Shun other masters in your life-

* James 1:8- A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

It is vital that things or possessions do not grip our lives. Almost everyone bemoans how easily we accumulate stuff, but that tendency nearly killed Patrice Moore, a 43-year-old man living in the Bronx, New York. Moore lived a reclusive life in a 10-by-10 foot room where he compulsively saved newspapers, magazines, books, catalogs, and junk mail. On December 27, 2003, it all came crashing down on him, literally. He was buried by his possessions. An avalanche of Moore's stuff fell down and trapped him. For two days, he was trapped in a standing position and moaning before his neighbors heard him and called the fire department. Neighbors and firefighters hauled out 50 garbage bags of paper for an hour just to reach him.

12. Be Steadfast or faithful-

* 1 Corinthians 15:58- Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoving, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

The word “steadfast” comes from the Greek word *hedraios* {hed-rah'-yos} which means “firm, settled in one's thinking or belief, to be solidly in place or immovable.” When it comes to the Lord and His Word, our convictions are to be firm, settled, and solid. We are to be unmoving. The word “steadfast” comes from the word “seat” indicating we are to be entrenched and resting in God’s truth.

The word “unmovable” comes from the Greek word *ametakinetos* {am-et-ak-in'-ay-tos} which not only carries the idea of immovable, but also firmly persistent. It is formed from the three Greek words.
1. $a = \text{not}$
2. $\text{meta} = \text{with}$
3. $\text{kinetos} = \text{movement, disturbance, commotion, or wagging.}$

God wants us to have stability in our lives, not commotion, confusion, chaos, and the wagging of inconsistency. Stability comes from putting Him first and making Him the priority of our lives. It comes from putting our faith, trust, and confidence in Him. He is our peace. I like what Charles Spurgeon said, “By perseverance the snail reached the ark.” The snail was steadfast and faithful to his task of getting to the ark.

* I Corinthians 4:2- Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

**13. Have a Servant’s attitude -**

* Psalm 2:11- Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.
* Colossians 3:22- Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:
* Romans 12:11- Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

**14. Be Sensitive & available to Service opportunities-**

Be sure to be faithful to church. There are many opportunities at church to serve the Lord and there are many ways you can be a blessing to others.

* Hebrews 10:25 - Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

God wants us to be available to Him. The available person makes his own schedule and priorities secondary to the wishes of those whom he is serving. This word “available” comes from an Old French term avaler which comes from the Latin word ad combined with the word valere. The word ad means “to” or “for” and valere means “to be strong; of worth.”

**Availability then is the ability to add strength or worth to another person.** It is the quality of one who stands ready to contribute of his or her own strength and talent to another. Availability is recognizing that it is by making others successful that I myself am successful. Availability is not always a matter of duty. It is a voluntary attitude. Do not think of availability as “something I have to do,” or you will destroy the spirit of it. Availability is something I am happy and willing to do because I am committed to the success or needs of the
person I am serving. God wants us not only to have this attitude toward
others, but also toward Him. The Bible teaches we are to be available
and ready to serve the Lord. It is tragic when God’s people are
unavailable to the Lord. Isaiah said in Isaiah 63:5a- “And I looked, and
there was none to help...”  God help us to always be ready to serve Him
and to always make sure He is the king of our castle.
15. Be Squared-away or prepared to do what the Lord wants-

a. We are to be prepared to Serve Him.
* 2 Timothy 2:21- If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall
be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and
prepared unto every good work.

b. We are to be prepared to Satisfy spiritual questions from others.
* 1 Peter 3:15- But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready
always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the
hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

If you don’t know the answer to a question, say so. There is nothing
wrong in telling the person you don’t know the answer to their question,
but you will find out and get back with them with the answer. You
should at least be able to tell someone about Jesus and how to be saved
by putting their faith in Christ.

c. We are to be prepared to Speak for the Lord.
* Romans 1:15 - So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel
to you that are at Rome also.

d. We are to be prepared to Sacrifice our life for Christ.
* 2 Timothy 4:6 - For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my
departure is at hand.

e. We are to be prepared for the Second coming of Christ
* Matthew 24:44 - Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as
ye think not the Son of man cometh.

A castle can only have one king. God help us all to have the right
one. Make sure you are prepared to serve the Lord and for His coming.
Doug Oldham used to sing, “The King is coming, the King is coming, I
can hear the trumpet sounding, and soon His face I’ll see. The King is
coming, the King is coming, praise God, He is coming for me!”
Chapter 8

How to Put a Stop to the Daily Grind

Matthew 6:25-34

There is a phrase that some people use to describe the stress, worry, and activity of daily life. They call it the “Daily Grind.” Let me say up front, you can be busy, but not under stress. As a pastor, I am busy but don’t feel under stress. On the other hand, you can have little to do, but have a lot of stress in your life that has been created by worry, conflicts, hopelessness, despair, expectations, obligations, and lack of control of your circumstances.

Grinding is not an inaccurate term to describe the effect that stress and worry have on the lives of people. People feel like they are being ground to pieces. In an article in USA Today Snapshots entitled “Americans Working Too Hard,” Lori Joseph and Bob Laird did a survey among Americans about their lives. Here is what they found from their research. The results shout out the misery that people are facing and the emptiness of their lives. The percentage of Americans who say they:

* Need more fun: 68%
* Often feel stressed: 66%
* Feel their time is crunched: 60%
* Feel pressured to succeed: 49%
* Feel overwhelmed: 48%

When we mention worry and stress, we usually address these issues to adults, but children and teenagers have stress and worry in their lives too. This is especially true when their home is a war zone. They understand the term “Daily Grind.” The health of these kids and their parents is severely affected by worry and stress which create health problems like acid reflux disease, hives, depression, diarrhea, eating binges, acne, sleep deprivation, migraine headaches, chronic fatigue, psoriasis, high blood pressure, and many other problems.
Stress causes the heart rate to go up and the arteries to constrict, which in turn increases the blood pressure. Increased blood pressure leads to heart attacks or strokes. Worry and stress will increase your cholesterol which can lead to the hardening of the arteries. Stress also increases sugar levels in the blood and in the long term, can lead to Type 2 diabetes. Stress will weaken the body’s immune system which will make your body more susceptible to disease. All of these stress factors can be created by worrying about our problems. Sounds pretty grinding to me. From schoolwork and peer relationships to meeting high parental expectations or living with conflict in the home, childhood can be a very stressful time.

Scientists recently discovered a difference between stresses caused inside and outside the home. Researchers measured levels of cortisol in children’s saliva. This is a hormone that is produced when you are under stress. Health records and interviews provide a reliable picture of the negative effects of unresolved stress. Persistently high cortisol levels can be especially damaging in children. When stress continues over days, weeks, or years, many of their developing systems are put on hold, sometimes causing permanent damage. Unusually high cortisol levels from constant stress slow physical growth, delay sexual maturity, and can slow the growth of brain cells.

In the December 16th, 2000, issue of The New Scientist, Meredith Small states in an article entitled “Trouble in Paradise” that the cause of high cortisol levels has surprised researchers. Living in poverty, school work, or conflict with peers raises cortisol levels very little. According to researchers, what really does affect them are family issues.

When a family experiences some sort of trauma like a father and mother having a fight, or the termination of the marriage, there is a physiological effect on the children. Their cortisol levels rise and stay high. The continual absence of a mother or father in the home also has a major effect. Children react the same way each time their parents fight or leave home. While adults learn to adapt to relentless stressful circumstances, children always react as if they were encountering it for the first time. The daily grind of worry takes its toll on the body.

A little less than 20 years ago, singer Bobby McFerrin had a huge hit (his one and only) with the song "Don't Worry, Be Happy." No doubt you've heard it on a television commercial. The song has already made him a bundle of money, but if he received a nickel for each time his song was mentioned in a speech or a sermon, he would be richer than Bill
Gates. The song struck a chord with people, not just because it has a catchy melody, but it also touches on a subject we all struggle with: worry. His message is somewhat simplistic: Don't worry. Be happy. In the real world, it's not always that simple—or, at least, it doesn't seem that way, but God gives instructions to Christians on how we can be happy and be rid of worry in our lives.

Beloved, living keeps us busy, but God never intended for us to be ground to powder by stress and worry, and you know what, we don't have to be ground to pieces. Jesus made this clear to those who were dealing with daily grinds in their own lives. You will see this in a familiar passage in Matthew 11.

*Matthew 11:28-29... Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*

Here in Matthew 6, Jesus tells us how to put an end to the daily grind of life. Jesus gives us specifics on how to turn our burdens over to the Lord and stop the daily grind of worry in our lives. Notice first of all verse 25.

I. THE COUNSEL 6:25

*There*fore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. *Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?*

When you see the word “therefore” in the Bible, find out what it is there for. In the previous verses, Jesus has been addressing the issue of our possession, wealth, or mammon. He makes it clear that we are to use our mammon as a tool of blessing. We are to have a single or generous eye and be a blessing to others. The Lord also makes it clear that we can only have one master in our lives. He is to be our master and He will care for us. Because of this truth, we therefore are not to take thought of our lives.

The phrase “take no thought” comes from the Greek word *merimnai*o {mer-im-nah'-o} which means “fretting, anxious worry, burdened with cares.” The word *merimnai*o comes from a Greek root word *merizo* {mer-id'-zo} which means “to divide, to cut into pieces, to divide into parties, to be pulled in different directions, or be split into factions.” This is what worry does to a person. Our goals and desires pull us in one direction and our worries and fears pull us in another.
Worry distracts people and cuts them into emotional pieces. Studies have found that the most dangerous day for heart attacks is Monday. Monday seems to be the most stressful day of the week for most people that were studied. When a person worries, their peace of mind and ability to focus on the right things is chopped up. Instead of keeping their eyes on the Lord, they focus on things that cannot satisfy. In fact, the average person crucifies himself between two thieves: 1) the regrets of yesterday, 2) the worries of tomorrow.

**Christ is not forbidding proper attention to these material needs but is forbidding improper attention.** It is not ordinary, prudent foresight that Jesus forbids. Jesus is not advocating a shiftless, thriftless, reckless, thoughtless, improvident, lazy attitude to life. He is forbidding a care-worn, worried fear, which takes all the joy out of life. He is not forbidding foresight but He is forbidding foreboding or worry.

Christ is not teaching here that we are not to think about and take proper action regarding food and clothes. It is the inordinate, consuming concern about these things that is forbidden. We must eat to live and we certainly need to be clothed, but it is possible to get so anxious about these things that we take our eyes and attention and interests off the more important matter of our spiritual needs.

If the word "thought" did not mean anxiety in our text, then we are left with a very unacceptable teaching which would encourage reckless neglect and carelessness in life which is hardly what other scriptures teach. In other texts of scripture, we are exhorted to industrious actions to supply our daily needs.

* 1 Timothy 5:8- But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.
* Proverbs 6:6- Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise:
* Proverbs 28:19- He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that followeth after vain persons shall have poverty enough.

We spend too much time worrying about things such as clothes, food, health, money and we tend to ignore things with eternal significance. I like the story of three men who died and were waiting to receive entrance through the pearly gates. The first man said to St. Peter, "I was a preacher of the Gospel, serving faithfully for 50 years." Peter told him to step aside for further consideration. The second man said, "I was also a preacher of the Gospel. I served my church faithfully for 40
years." Peter told him to step aside for further consideration. The third man stepped man stepped up. "I was not a minister, just a government worker with the Internal Revenue Service for 6 months." Peter told him to step right in. The first preacher objected, "Why does he get to go in before two preachers?" Peter said, "The truth is, in six months the IRS agent scared the devil out of more people than either of you did in a lifetime!" Now beloved, that's the way we are many times. We tend to worry about things that have no eternal significance at all. We have tunnel vision only for the insignificant matters of this life.

Those who ignore their spiritual needs or who are unbelieving and care not about their spiritual needs are really ripe for worry and anxiety, for all their interests are on temporal matters which can be summed up as food and clothes.

**Covetousness will not only cheapen our riches, but it will also cheapen us!** We will start to become worried and anxious, and this anxiety is unnatural and unspiritual. The person who pursues money thinks that riches will solve his problems, when in reality, riches will create more problems! Material wealth gives a dangerous, false sense of security, and that feeling ends in tragedy. Our focus is not to be consumed with things. You will find that lots of things increase your worries.

In the Greek, the command "**take no thought**" includes the idea of stopping what is already being done. In other words, we are to stop worrying and never start it again. The phrase "**for your life**" makes the command all-inclusive. The word "**life**" is from the Greek word *psuche* (*psoo-khay*) which is a comprehensive term that encompasses all of a person's entire being which include his physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health. Jesus is referring to life in its fullest possible sense. Absolutely nothing in any aspect of our lives, internal or external, justifies our worry and anxiousness when we have the Lord.

This command "**take no thought**" appears three times here (vss. 25,31,34). This repetition is significant and must not be ignored. Repetition in Scripture not only emphasizes the weightiness of the instruction, but it also emphasizes the slowness of humanity to heed the lesson. So when Christ repeats the command three times, we need to sit up and pay earnest attention. The fact that He has to repeat it so many times is an indication of the struggle we have with worry.

Worry is sinful. We may dignify worry by calling it by some other name—concern, burden, a **cross to bear**—but the results are still the
same. Instead of helping us live longer, anxiety only makes life shorter. Worry is the sin of distrusting the promise and providence of God, and yet it is a sin that Christians commit perhaps more frequently than any other and zaps the life out of believers. Notice Matthew 13:22.

* Matthew 13:22- He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

It is interesting to note that the cares of this world, or worries, "choke" the word. The word “worry" originally meant “to choke.” The English word “worry” comes from a German word wûrgjan which produced the word wügen which means “to choke, strangle, seize by the throat with the teeth.” God wants us to trust Him to take care of us and to be content with what we already have in our lives lest we be strangled and choked by our worries. Worry is a kind of mental and emotional strangulation, which probably causes more mental and physical afflictions than any other single cause.

It has been reported that a dense fog extensive enough to cover seven city blocks a hundred feet deep is composed of less than one glass of water—divided into millions of droplets. In the right form, a few gallons of water can cripple a large city. In a similar way, the substance of worry is nearly always extremely small compared to the size it forms in our minds and the damage it does in our lives. Someone has said, “Worry is a thin stream of fear that trickles through the mind, which, if encouraged, will cut a channel so wide that all other thoughts will be drained out.” Worry is draining and distracting. It will grind the joy out of your life.

Because of its importance, we are consumed with the need for food and clothing. Taking care of the body has always been a common obsession with men. Even when we are not starving or thirsty or naked, we still give an inordinate amount of attention to our bodies. We pamper the body, decorate it, exercise it, protect it from disease and pain, build it up, slender it down, drape it with jewelry, keep it warm or keep it cool, train it to work and to play, help it get to sleep, and a hundred other things to serve and satisfy our bodies.

Even as Christians we are sometimes caught up in the world’s idea that we live because of our bodies, and since we think we live because of our bodies, we live for our bodies. We know better, of course, but that is the way we often act. Our bodies in themselves are not the source of anything. They do not give us life but are given life by God,
who is the source of all life, both spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and physical. Therefore, whether the Lord gives us more or gives us less of anything, it all belongs to Him, as owner, controller, and provider. It is our responsibility to thank Him for what He gives and to use it wisely and unselfishly for as long as He entrusts us with it. We are to look to Him to provide for our needs. When we look at worry, we find that it is irreverent, irresponsible, irreligious, and irrelevant.

A. Worry is Irreverent

Worry is irreverent because it fails to recognize that God is working in this world. God knows what He is doing. He has not forgotten us and placed us in exile somewhere. God is at work, doing new things all the time, but when we worry, we are saying that God is not in control. He doesn’t know what He is doing and He can’t take care of us. We are on our own. Worry is in essence “practical atheism.” Worry is the interest we pay on tomorrow’s troubles. If we worry, we can’t trust; if we trust, we can’t worry. Worry is like a rocking chair. It requires an investment of your energy, but it does not get you anywhere.

Worry refuses to learn the lesson of life. We are still alive and our heads are still above water; and yet if someone had told us that we would have to go through what we have actually gone through, we would have said that it was impossible. The lesson of life is that somehow we have been enabled to bear the unbearable and to do the undoable and to pass the breaking-point and not to break. The lesson of life is that worry is unnecessary because the Lord can supply every need for every situation that we face in life. God is bigger than our problems. In fact, He is never taken off guard or surprised at what takes place in our lives. He knows what is going on and will take care of you.

B. Worry is Irresponsible

Worry is irresponsible because it wastes our energy so that we don't have the energy we need for constructive and creative problem solving. Worry wears us out and burdens us so that we don't have what it takes to know how to overcome situations in our lives.

C. Worry is Irreligious

Worry is essentially irreligious. Worry is not caused by external circumstances. In the same circumstances one man can be absolutely serene, and another man can be worried to death. Both worry and serenity come, not from circumstances, but from the heart.

Alistair MacLean quotes a story from Tauler, the German mystic. One day Tauler met a beggar. "God give you a good day, my friend,"
Tauler said. The beggar answered, "I thank God I never had a bad one." Then Tauler said, "God give you a happy life, my friend." "I thank God," said the beggar, "I am never unhappy." Tauler in amazement said, "What do you mean?"

"Well," said the beggar, "when it is fine, I thank God; when it rains, I thank God; when I have plenty, I thank God; when I am hungry, I thank God; and since God's will is my will, and whatever pleases Him pleases me. Why should I say I am unhappy when I am not?" Tauler looked at the man in astonishment. "Who are you?" he asked. "I am a king," said the beggar. "Where then is your kingdom?" asked Tauler. And the beggar answered quietly: "In my heart." The beggar understood the truth of Isaiah 26:3.

* Isaiah 26:3 - Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.

D. Worry is Irrelevant

Worry is irrelevant, it cannot change anything. Experts have estimated that forty percent of things we worry about will never even happen. Worry about the future is wasted effort, and the future of reality is seldom as bad as the future of our fears. The man who feeds his heart on the record of what God has done in the past will never worry about the future. Thirty percent of things we worry about are things from the past.

The past is past. It is not that a man can or ought to dissociate himself from his past; but he ought to use his past as a spur and a guide for better action in the future, and not as something about which he broods until he has worried himself into a paralysis of action. Twelve percent of our worries are about our health (when nothing is actually wrong with us), and ten percent of things we worry about are too petty and insignificant to really affect our future. That means that only eight percent of the things we worry about legitimately deserve our concern and thought.

We don't worry about the things we're sure of, we mainly worry about the things we're not sure of or we conjure up in our head. For example, a woman in Arkansas was sitting in her car in a parking lot last year when she heard a loud bang and then felt a sharp pain in the back of her head. She was holding her hands behind her head when someone walked by and asked, "Are you OK?" The woman answered, "I've been shot in the head, and I'm holding my brains in." Well, it wasn't her brains. It was dough. A Pillsbury biscuit canister had exploded in the back seat, apparently from the heat, making a loud explosion and
shooting the dough into the back of the woman's head. She had imagined the worse. We do this too sometimes.

Different people worry about different things. Some people lay awake at night wondering if their spouse really loves them; others never give it a second thought. Some people lay awake at night wondering if their children are getting into trouble; others never give it a second thought. Some people worry about their health or wealth, others don't. There are also folks that worry about job security, and others don't. It's all a question about the areas of your life you feel are secure.

If you're worried about something, it may be because you've put it too high on your priority list. What do you worry about? Is it what the neighbors think? There are things in life more important than their opinions. Do you worry about your job? Your job isn't the last job on earth; there are other jobs out there. Are you worried about a promotion? This won't be the last promotion to come along. There will be other chances. There are more important things in life than a job promotion. Are you worried about the stock market? This isn't the first (or the last) downward trend in our nation's economy, and it certainly won't last forever. There are more important things in life than the value of your stock portfolio.

Worry can be a wake-up call to help us recognize what is lacking in our spiritual lives. When you struggle with worry, you need to ask yourself, "What is it I'm unsure of? Are my priorities straight? Am I trusting God to provide? Am I living in the present? Am I placing too much value or security in temporal things instead of in the Lord?"

Because of the ill effects of worry, Jesus tells us not to worry about those needs that God promises to supply. The fact that He tells us not to worry indicates that "worry" is a choice. We choose to trust or to worry. Worry may (1) damage your health, (2) cause the object of your worry to consume your thoughts, (3) disrupt your productivity, (4) negatively affect the way you treat others, and (5) reduce your ability to trust in God. How many ill effects of worry are you experiencing? Here is the difference between worry and genuine concern. Worry immobilizes or freezes you, but concern moves you to action.
II. OUR CONSIDERATIONS 6: 26-32

There are several things we can consider to help us overcome the daily grind of stress and worry in our lives. Jesus gives us a menu here.

A. Consider the Birds 6:26

*Psalm 19:1* The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.

*Romans 1:20* - For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.

**Are you suffering from the daily grind of life?** Jesus tells us we can alleviate or put an end to the daily grind of stress and worry by bird watching. What? Run that by me again. Yes, you heard it right. Jesus points us to the birds and tells us, “Watch how I take care of them.” There are millions and millions of birds, and by and large they are healthy and happy. None of them are suffering hypertension or stress-related diseases, and certainly none of them are worrying. God takes care of them even though, unlike us, they do not sow or reap. Guess what, God will take care of you too. That is the obvious meaning of what He is trying to get across to us, but what Jesus did not mean needs to be addressed.

This verse does not negate the necessity of personal industry to provide for our need of food when it says the birds do not reap nor gather in barns but they are still provided for by God. Jesus was not calling us to goofing around, sloppiness, or laziness. This verse simply shows that if these birds, who do not even sow and reap and provide little for their future are cared for by God, how much more will He provide for those who do?

Birds themselves instinctively make provision for the future. In fact, some argue that no creature works harder than the birds! They must be at the business of gathering food morning till night or they will starve. God’s provisions for animals or humans is never intended to make us
lazy. Neither does the example of the birds teach us that if we trust God, every day will be smooth sailing. Sparrows sometimes starve, sometimes they are eaten by predators, and certainly they all die in a short span.

The point of this illustration is not industry, but God’s gracious care, and it is summed up in "Are ye not much better than they." This means God will care for humans better than animals. The birds demonstrate God's care for the lower creation, and thus, we who are a much higher creation can be assured of His great care. For this reason, we should not be worry warts and ground down by life. We are not to be fretting about finances, fighting, feebleness, frustrations, family, and friends. Instead, we are to focus our trust in God.

\[\text{Said the robin to the sparrow:}\\ \text{"I should really like to know}\\ \text{Why these anxious human beings}\\ \text{Rush about and worry so."}\\ \text{Said the sparrow to the robin:}\\ \text{"Friend, I think that it must be}\\ \text{That they have no heavenly Father,}\\ \text{Such as cares for you and me."}\]

The little birds in the poem are trusting God to take care of them, and we are to trust Him also. “Are ye not much better than they?” Christians have a heavenly Father but sometimes they forget they do. We are to really trust Him with our lives. This does not mean that we shouldn’t exercise judgment, because God has given us the ability to discern.

Some may ask, “Since we are to trust God, should a Christian ought to have insurance?” My reply is, “Yes!” Insurance is one means we have today to put our minds at ease concerning the care of our families and ourselves. It is an available tool for our care and provision, so use it. The important thing is that we are not to go through life with material things becoming a burden to us, and being so focused and consumed about things, that we lose our joy and our focus on the Lord Jesus Christ. Beloved, over and again the Word of God stresses God’s care for us and our responsibility to trust in Him.

* 1 Peter 5:7- Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. The word “casting” is from the Greek word \text{epirrhipto} \{ep-ir-rhip'to\}. It is formed by two Greek words \text{epi} which means “upon” and \text{rhipto} \{hrip'\}-
which means “throw down; be cast into the sea or throw overboard, cast out such as the fishing lines or nets.” It is a word that indicates a deliberate act of our will. God wants us to throw our cares overboard. He wants us to willingly throw them upon Him. In other words, “I will thrust my cares upon the Lord.”

* Psalm 55:22 Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved

* Psalm 37:5 Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. We are to commit or roll our way unto the Lord.

* Philippians 4:6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

We are not only to consider the birds and God’s care for them, we are also to consider the barrenness of worry. Notice verse 27.

B. Consider the Barrenness of Worry

Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

We can put a stop to the daily grind of worry by first, realizing that God provides for us. Secondly, we saw that birds don’t worry and God takes care of them. He can care for us too. Now we will see that worry is a waste of time. It accomplishes absolutely nothing. Can we add height or a cubit (18 inches) to our stature by our thoughts? No. Our worrisome thoughts accomplish nothing either. It is not constructive, but destructive, creating problems for us instead of solving them.

Those worried about losing their hair accelerate the process and end up losing it. Folks worried about getting sick weaken their immune system and end up many times, getting sick. Employees who are worried about losing their jobs can lower their performance at work and end up losing their jobs. Dieters who are worried about gaining weight sometimes will eat more and gain the weight. Worry cannot change the past or control the future; it makes you miserable today. Worrisome thoughts are barren, so why worry?
C. Consider Botany and the Lord 6:28-30

And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: [29] And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. [30] Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

To help us stop the daily grind of worry and stress Jesus now points us to flowers and He speaks about them as one who loved them. The lilies of the field were the scarlet poppies and anemones. They bloomed one day on the hillsides of Palestine; and yet in their brief life they were clothed with a beauty which surpassed the beauty of the royal robes of kings or queens. When these flowers died, they were used for nothing better than for burning fuel in oven fires.

The Palestinian oven was made of clay. It was like a clay box set on bricks over the fire. When it was desired to raise the temperature of it especially quickly, some handfuls of dried grasses and wild flowers were flung inside the oven and set alight. The flowers had a few days of life and then they were set aflame to help a woman to heat an oven when she was baking in a hurry, yet God clothes them with a beauty which is beyond man's power to imitate.

The herbs and flowers of the field have their being, nourishment, exquisite flavors, and beautiful hues from God himself. They are not only without anxious care, but also without care or thought of every kind. If God gives such beauty and care to a short-lived flower, how much more will he care for man whose life is a vapor that appears for a little time and then soon vanishes away? Surely God's concern and care, which is so lavish for the lilies of the field will not be negligent of people, the crown of His creation. Beloved, Jesus does not want you fretting and worrying about what you are going to wear and eat. He has that covered. Look to Him to meet your needs.
D. Consider the Barbarian’s or Pagan’s Unbelief  6:31-32

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? [32] (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

Our worries and fears do not empty tomorrow of its sorrow, but only empty today of its strength. Worry is inconsistent with our faith. It is a characteristic of pagan unbelief, and is not to be a trait of one who knows the Lord. Surely, the true believer does not want to act in this way. Worry is essentially distrust of God. Such a distrust may be understandable in a heathen who believes in a jealous, capricious, unpredictable god, but it is beyond comprehension in one who has learned to call God by the name of Heavenly Father. Unbelievers live in the flesh, not in the spirit. The world does not think in spiritual terms. They are focused entirely upon the world and upon the flesh.

The Christian, on the other hand, has no need to worry because his heavenly Father is the Creator of the universe and is intimately concerned about the needs of his or her life. Beloved, delegate you cares to the Lord. If you don’t, you become double minded and unstable in all areas of your life.

*James 1:8- A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

A businessman ran into a friend of his a stockbroker who had always had problems with ulcers and high blood pressure. "How's your health?" the man asked his stockbroker friend. "Great. My ulcers are gone and I don't have a worry in the world!" The man asked "How did that happen?" The stockbroker said, "It's easy. I hired a professional worrier. Whenever something comes along that I need to worry about, I tell him about it and he does all of my worrying for me." The businessman couldn't believe it. "That's incredible. I'd be interested in something like that. How much does it cost?" The stockbroker said, "He charges $100,000 a year." The businessman said "How in the world can you afford to pay him $100,000 a year?" The stockbroker said, "I don't know. I let him worry about it."

In the same way the stockbroker gave his worries to the "professional worrier," we should give our worries and cares to God. In other words, give your financial problems, family problems, health problems, work and school problems, people problems, etc. all to the Lord. When we fail to do this, we show a lack of faith in Him as Jesus
rebukingly says, "O ye of little faith."

In "How to Put a Stop to the Daily Grind" we have examined so far the Counsel, our Considerations, and now we will address the Commands.

III. THE COMMANDS 6:33-34

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. [34] Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

The Lord gives us closing instructions on how to overcome the daily grind of stress and worry in our lives. In a nutshell He says, "Get out of the way and put me first in your life. Let me drive and you get in the back seat." We are to seek Him first! The story is told of a young boy was driving a big hay-rack down the road and it turned over right in front of a farmer's house. The farmer came out and saw the young boy crying and said, "Son, don't worry about this, we can fix it. Right now dinner's ready. Why don't you come in and eat with us and then I'll help you put the hay back on the rack." The boy said, "No, I can't. My father is going to be very angry with me." The farmer said, "Now don't argue, just come in and have some lunch and you'll feel better." The boy said, "I'm just afraid my father is going to be very angry with me."

The farmer and the young boy went inside and had dinner. Afterwards, as they walked outside to the hayrack, the farmer said, "Well, don't you feel better now?" The boy said, "Yes but I just know that my father will be very angry with me." The farmer said, "Nonsense. Where is your father anyway?" The boy said, "He's under that pile of hay."

Beloved, the key to eliminating worry is taking God "from under the pile of hay" where we sometimes try to keep Him, and putting Him back in the most important place of our lives. Giving Jesus Christ first place in your life means, first of all, that you accept Him as your Lord and Savior. Maybe you have never done that. Today is a good time to make that decision. You will never have a peaceful mind free from worry, especially about death, until you surrender your life to Jesus Christ. You also have no guarantee that you will have the opportunity to trust Him as
Chapter 9
The Problem of Planks in the Pupil
Matthew 7:1-5

Judge not, that ye be not judged. [2] For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. [3] And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? [4] Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? [5] Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

Two of the best commercials shown during Super Bowl XXXIX were sponsored by Ameriquest Mortgage Company. Both had the same message: “Don’t judge too quickly.” In one ad, a convenience store shopper is standing in line at the counter and talking on his cell phone. He says to the person on the other end of the phone, “You’re getting robbed.” The two clerks hear those words, don’t realize he is on the phone, and assume that the man is going to rob the store. They react by squirting this man with pepper spray, slugging him with a baseball bat, and then zapping him with an electric cattle-prod.

In the second commercial, a man is preparing a very romantic dinner. He chops vegetables with a large knife, while tomato sauce simmers on the stove. His white cat knocks the pan of sauce onto the floor and then falls into the crimson tomato mess. Just as the man picks up his tomato-splattered cat, his wife gets home and opens the door. She sees him holding a cat dripping with red sauce in one hand and a large knife in the other. The scene appears to be unmistakably terrifying as she assumes the worst that her cat has been stabbed.

As these ads show, things aren't always as they first appear. For this reason we better be careful about being hasty and unjustly judging other people. We can make fools out of ourselves because we don’t have all the facts or we have the same problem we are condemning, in our own
lives. We have a problem with planks in our own pupils or eyes. This is what this section is all about.

I. THE COMMAND 7:1

Judge not, that ye be not judged.

Few portions in the Bible are so misinterpreted, misunderstood, and thus misapplied, as this section of Scripture. Arthur Pink said, "There are few verses quoted more frequently than the opening ones of Matthew 7, and few [verses] less understood by those who are so ready to cite it and hurl it at the heads of those who they ignorantly or maliciously suppose are violating it." These first seven words, "Judge not that you be not judged," have been taken by some to mean that good Christians must never exercise any critical discerning judgment at all.

Some believe that model Christians are totally accepting, whatever the situation. Christlikeness is equated with an absence of any kind of critical analysis and a pious, all-accepting blindness to whatever people are doing. Many use this portion to attack the Pastor who dares to preach against or take a stand against some sin or against a group which is advocating some evil. The preacher is accused of "judging" and is considered to be a bad, divisive person. The ideal Christian, and especially the ideal preacher, is considered to be a sissy, undiscerning, indulgent, all-accepting jellyfish without any backbone who lives out the misinterpretation of "judge not" and doesn’t rock the boat or ruffle any feathers.

It is ironic that the world loves opinionated people who know what they believe. Its darlings are those who are articulate and dogmatic about their positions on politics, art, music, literature, culture, you name it! However, when it comes to matters of personal morality, the world cannot stand opinionated people, especially if they represent conventional conservative, Biblical morality that speaks out against pre-marital sex, adultery, and homosexuality. In these types of matters it adores the nonjudgmental person.

On the other hand, Christians that do take a stand against wickedness are accused of judging and are labeled with shame. Let me say right now real LOUD, "There is no shame in standing for righteousness or opposing that which is evil." In fact, those who accuse Christians of judging are in themselves judging in order to make their accusation. Their hypocrisy is more obvious than their accusation. You
cannot condemn one of judging in this misinterpreted way without condemning yourself.

Some people have falsely concluded that this verse means we cannot judge the motives of a person, but that is ridiculous. The text does not say that at all and, furthermore, if we cannot discern motives, our courts of law will have an impossible task in finding justice in criminal cases. As an example, if a man shoots and kills a woman, you have to establish the motive of the killer so you know whether he was shooting accidentally, defensively, or if it was a premeditated murder.

Courts frequently have to know the motive prompting the deed in order to be able to determine if an action is a crime or not or the degree of crime. The motive and actions determine the degree of murder, whether it was first, second, or manslaughter. The degree determines the punishment for the crime. We do not know what goes on in a man’s heart, but what a person does, his attitude, his actions, his words, all will work together to reveal what is in his heart for out of the heart are the issues of life.

If this greatest sermon by our Lord teaches anything, it teaches that His followers are to be discerning and perceptive in what they believe and in what they do, that they must make every effort to judge between truth and falsehood, between reality and sham, and between true righteousness and false righteousness. In short, they must discern between God’s way and all other ways. If these verses mean we are not to judge at all, then they contradict Scripture in many other places. As an example, just a few verses away from this text, judging is required if we are going to fulfill the command in the text. Notice what Jesus said in the following references.

* Matthew 7:6- Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

The reasons Matthew 7:1 cannot be made to say that we are never to judge are quite simple and obvious when compared with other scriptures. Here in verse 6, which immediately follows Jesus' teaching on judgment in verses 1-4, Jesus continues His message on judging by saying, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine," We cannot obey Jesus' command here unless we must judge who are "dogs" and who are "pigs."

* Matthew 7:16-20... Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? [17] Even so every good tree
bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. [18] A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. [19] Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. [20] Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. If we cannot apply a discerning judgment, then we cannot judge fruit.

Jesus warns in Matthew 7:15, “Beware of the false prophets.” In other words, we are to judge who speaks for God and who does not. This requires subtle, discriminating judgment on our part. In Matthew 18, Jesus tells us to confront a sinning brother privately with his sin and, if he will not repent, to take one or two others with us to speak to him, and if that does not cause him to change, to bring him before the entire church. If he still does not repent, he is to be put out of the church and regarded “as a heathen and a tax-gatherer.”

* Matthew 18:15-17... Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. [16] But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. [17] And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

Notice the instructions of Paul and John, instructions which would require some form of judging.

* Romans 16:17-18... Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. [18] For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

* 1 Corinthians 5:11- But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.

* 1 Thessalonians 5:21- Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. We are to examine or test everything carefully, including people.

* Ephesians 5:11- And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.

* 1 John 4:1- Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.
* 2 John 1:10-11... *If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: [11] For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

The Apostle Paul did the same thing and told the Corinthians believers. "Judge ye what I say" (1 Corinthians 10:15). In Jesus’ parable about love and forgiveness, He asked a man, who in the parable, loved the most. When the man gave the answer, Christ said, "Thou hast rightly judged" (Luke 7:43). Christ did not condemn the man for judging but commended his good judgment. Also in another acceptable usage, Christ said, "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24).

*If we are not to exercise discerning judgment, then we cannot put into practice, these commands of Scripture.* If we are not to judge with discernment, it would make it impossible to condemn error, wickedness, and false doctrine. It would strip authority from anyone from attempting the responsibilities of the office of a preacher, a policeman, or a judge. The consequences would be that the earth would be controlled by the wicked, heresy would flourish, and evil would abound. You would not be safe or secure for fear of someone wanting to fulfill their evil desires of abuse or harm upon you. Anarchy would abound in society as evil men wanted to fulfill their lust by killing, raping, robbing, and abusing others.

*So what is the Lord commanding us here? What does Jesus mean by “judge not?”* In Matthew 7, Jesus tells us to do some things that require judging. From the above verses we have seen that the word "judge" can be used in a good way as well as a bad way. An in-depth look at the Greek meaning for the words judging, examining, testing, or proving and especially the context of the passage will give us clarity on what Jesus is saying here in Matthew 7, and in other passages that deal with discerning or properly judging a matter and negatively judging a situation or person.

The word "judge" in Matthew 7:1 is *Krino* which means basically "to separate, choose, select, or determine," and has a dozen or more shades of meaning that must be decided from the context. Here in this verse, Jesus is talking about the self-righteous, egotistical judgment and unmerciful condemnation of others practiced by the scribes and Pharisees. Their primary concern was not to help others from sin to holiness, but to condemn them to eternal judgment because of actions and attitudes that did not square with their own worldly, self-made traditions.
So what does it mean to judge someone else? What is judging and what is spiritual discernment? How do I know if I am guilty of judging someone or using Biblical discernment in an effort to help them? First of all, a person who spiritually discerns a matter will thoroughly examine his own life before he evaluates the actions of others or confronts others about their sin. The discerning individual who reprov es or rebukes another believer, understands that he or she also has limitations and weaknesses. The person who reprov es or confronts others also has the intention or purpose of restoring the offender through the exhortation of Scripture, not just blasting away at them. Notice what Paul said to the Corinthians.

* 2 Corinthians 13:5- Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

Paul says we are to examine ourselves. We are to deal with the problem of the plank in our own pupil first. This is an important step in discerning a matter and dealing with it. What does he mean by this? The word “examine” is from the Greek word peirazo {pi-rad'-zo} which means “to try whether a thing can be done; to try or test to ascertain what a person thinks, or how they will behave.” This is the good sense of the word and is its meaning here. It can also be used in a negative context. In a bad sense, it can also mean “to test one maliciously or craftily; to test one’s faith, virtue, or character by enticement or tempting them to sin.” This word is used to describe the temptations of the Devil.

The word “prove” is from the word dokimazo {dok-im-ad'-zo} which means “to test, examine, prove, to scrutinize to see whether a thing is genuine or not such as metals; to recognize as genuine after examination, to approve, deem worthy.” Dokimazo deals with bringing forth that which is good in us. It could not be used of Satan since he never wants us to experience God’s approval. He always tempts (peirazo) us with the intent to make us fall.

* 1 Corinthians 11:28- But let a man examine (dokimazo) himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. This verse also deals with spiritual discernment.

On the other hand, a person who judges will condemn others for their outward, visible problems, but he fails to realize that his attitudes come from heart problems which he has not yet conquered in his own life. He does not deal with the plank in his own pupil. One of the most prominent characteristics of this critical, fault-finding, judgmental person
is that he predictably focuses on things that are of little importance and treats them as matters of vital importance. That which is trivial is magnified and what is minor becomes a major issue.

A person who uses spiritual discernment will also check the truthfulness of all the facts and related factors in a matter before reaching a conclusion. Failure to do this leads to egg on our face and unjust conclusions about others. A grocery store check-out clerk once wrote to advice-columnist Ann Landers to complain that she had seen people buy "luxury" food items like birthday cakes and bags of shrimp with their food stamps. The writer went on to say that she thought all those people on welfare who treated themselves to such non-necessities were "lazy and wasteful."

A few weeks later Landers' column was devoted entirely to people who had responded to the grocery clerk. One woman wrote, "I didn't buy a cake, but I did buy a big bag of shrimp with food stamps. So what? My husband had been working at a plant for fifteen years when it shut down. The shrimp casserole I made was for our wedding anniversary dinner and lasted three days. Perhaps the grocery clerk who criticized that woman would have a different view of life after walking a mile in my shoes."

Another lady wrote, "I'm the woman who bought the $17 cake and paid for it with food stamps. I thought the check-out woman in the store would burn a hole through me with her eyes. What she didn't know is the cake was for my little girl's birthday. It will be her last. She has bone cancer and will probably be dead within six to eight months." You never know what other people are dealing with. Get all the facts before you make a fool out of yourself.

It is significant that, though God is omniscient, He gives us many examples of the care we ourselves should take before making judgments, especially those that involve serious consequences. Before He judged those who were building the tower of Babel the Bible says, "And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded."

Before He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah He said, "I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know." (Genesis 18:21)

The Bible consistently forbids individual or vigilante justice that assumes for itself the power of a duly established court of law. It also consistently forbids hasty judgments that do not have full knowledge of the facts.
* Proverbs 18:13- He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him. Sometimes what appears to be wrong is nothing of the sort.
* 1 Corinthians 2:15- But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. The word “judgeth” is the word anakrinō which means “to ask questions, scrutinize, investigate, or examine.”
* 1 Thessalonians 5:21- Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. The word “prove” is the word dokimazo which means “to test, examine, or discover.”

It is almost impossible for any man to be strictly impartial in his judgment. Again and again we are swayed by instinctive and unreasoning reactions to people. It is told that sometimes, when the Greeks held a particularly important and difficult trial, they held it in the dark so that judge and jury would not even see the man on trial, and so would be influenced by nothing but the facts of the case. The person who uses discernment in a matter gets all the facts that he can to make a decision. He shields himself from negative or unjust influences. He has removed the plank from his pupil.

Montaigne has a grim tale in one of his essays. There was a Persian judge who had given a biased verdict, and he had given it under the influence of bribery. When Cambyses, the king, discovered what had happened, he ordered the judge to be executed. Then he had the skin flayed from the dead body and preserved. With the skin, he covered the seat of the chair on which judges sat in judgment, that it might be a grim reminder to them to never allow prejudice to affect their verdicts.

**So how do you know if you are improperly judging someone?**
A person who judges will formulate conclusions or opinions on first impressions or hearsay, and then he will look for evidence to confirm his own opinions, even though the evidence may be out of context or not there at all. The reviler could care less about the person he has already judged and condemned. He does not claim any further concern or responsibility for that person. When we improperly judge someone, we are not concerned at all about their spiritual welfare.

The Pharisees did this with the blind man. *Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses’ disciples* (John 9:28). People revile or harshly judge others today when they go to a person and tell them off without giving them an opportunity to get all the facts on the table or tell their side of a predicament or problem. Some folks will go to an authority such as a boss, parent, or pastor, tell them off, and then
quit or run away from work, home, or their church without any effort in trying to bring about reconciliation by resolving the problem or misunderstanding. This is wicked far as I am concerned! A boss, parent, or pastor can also be guilty if they discipline or fire someone without hearing out the whole matter. God says, “Get all the facts before making any decisions.” This holds true especially for a pastor!

* Proverbs 14:15- The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going.

* Proverbs 25:2 - It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter.

* John 7:24- Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

* John 7:51- Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?

How do you know if you are judging or discerning? One who uses spiritual discernment will deal as privately as possible with the problems he is observing.

* Matthew 18:15- Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. Spiritual discernment has a concern for restoration when there is a conflict or sin problem. Only an irreconcilable, rebellious, unrepentant spirit is the criteria for bringing a matter before the church.

* Matthew 18:17- And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

The judgmental reviler’s goal is to expose the person he has already judged. He doesn’t go privately first to the person to deal with the difficulty. His mission is to destroy and embarrass the person. One who judges will publicly expose those whom he condemns without first trying to resolve the matter privately and making an effort to restore the erring brother. The judgmental reviler recognizes no rules, restrictions, or limitations on his intentions to vilify, defame, or destroy the person. He could care less about the individual. So let me ask, “Do you have a discerning spirit or a judgmental one?”

You have a judgmental spirit if .....  

* the failures of others improves the opinion of yourself.
* the failures of others decreases your concern for the faults and weaknesses in your own life.
the failures of others gives you a desire to see they are punished.
* you are eager to tell others about the faults of others.
* the failures of others prompts you to review their past mistakes.
* the failures of others causes you to feel you cannot forgive them.

A discerning spirit is constructive. A hyper-critical, condemning, unconcerned, uncaring, unjust, judgmental spirit is destructive. The person with a destructive, overcritical spirit revels in criticism for its own sake. He expects to find fault. He is like the man who sat watching his preacher-neighbor nail up a trellis in his backyard. The preacher, seeing him intently watching him from his yard, asked, "Trying to pick up some pointers on carpentry?" His neighbor replied, "Nope. Just waiting to see what a preacher says when he hits his thumb with a hammer." When a critic discovers faults in another, he feels a malignant satisfaction and always sees the worst possible motives in the actions of other people. His judgmental spirit is like the carrion fly that buzzes with a sickening hum of satisfaction over sores, preferring corruption to health.

Let me say that properly dealing with sin is not judging. Sin has to be dealt with or else the church becomes corrupted (1 Corinthians 5). When dealing with the sin of a brother or sister in Christ, however, it is to be done with a spirit of humility. The planks must be removed from our own pupils. Our lives need to be right with the Lord and others.

* Galatians 6:1- Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

Your authority for confronting another about sinfulness is the Word of God. Is someone erring? Do you want to restore them or do you want revenge? Do you want the construction of a life or the destruction of a life? If you have been judging, repent of this sin and confess it to the Lord. Pull the plank from your own pupil and then try to help someone else grow in grace.

II. THE CONSEQUENCES OF JUDGING 7:1b-2

Judge not, that ye be not judged. [2] For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

There is an old story about two neighbors, a baker and a farmer. The baker began to be suspicious of the farmer, suspecting that he wasn't getting his money's worth when he paid for a pound of
butter. He weighed the farmer's butter on several occasions and finally had him arrested for fraud. The judge asked the farmer at the trial, "I presume you have scales?" "Yes, of course, Your Honor," the farmer replied. "And weights?" the judge asked. "No," replied the farmer. "I don't have a set of weights." "Then how do you hope to weigh accurately the butter you sell to your neighbor?" the judge asked. "That's easy," the farmer said. "When the baker began to buy from me, I decided to buy my bread from him. I've been using his one-pound loaves to balance my scales. If the weight of the butter is wrong, he has only himself to blame." This story amply applies to what Jesus is teaching here.

The Lord reminds us of a cardinal truth of Scripture. We reap what we sow and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again. The warning is that if you judge in the wrong manner, you will be judged in the same way by the same standards. If you are prejudiced in your judgment, you will be judged prejudicially. If you are caustic, critical, harsh, and unjust in your assessment or treatment of others, without getting all the facts, you will be treated the same way. Adonibezek found this out the hard way.

* Judges 1:6-7... But Adoni-bezek fled; and they pursued after him, and caught him, and cut off his thumbs and his great toes. [7] And Adoni-bezek said, Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me. And they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died.

The consequences of unjustly, harshly judging others is not limited to this life, but also what takes place when we stand before God. We cannot ignore how God will deal with us if we improperly judge others. Notice what Psalm 18 says.

* Psalm 18:25-26... With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright; [26] With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward.. This does not mean that God is unholy in His dealings with man; rather it simply means that God will permit you to reap what you have sown.

Paul warned us about the consequences of judging in Romans 2.

* Romans 2:1a- Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; ....
We set the standard and tone for our own final judgment by our judgmental conduct in this life. We prove by our judging of others that we know what is right. So if we do not do what is right, we condemn ourselves by the standards we have set. Perhaps the clearest statement of this is in James 3:1.

*James 3:1- My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.*

If you become a teacher, set yourself up as a religious authority over others, and act accordingly, you will be judged by the authority you claim. Do you claim to have an exceptional knowledge and grasp of Scripture? You will be judged accordingly. Do you claim to have been an especially wise and discerning servant? You will be judged according to the position you have assumed. If we set ourselves as authorities and judges over others, we should not be surprised or complain when we are judged by our own standards. "For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you." We need to face and apply this text to our own lives with all its fearful force and implications.

When we look at Matthew 7, we find that the warning about judging others is repeated several times. First, it is found in "that ye be not judged." Second, in "with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged." Third, it is stated in terms of measuring, "with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

**When a truth in the Bible is repeated over and again, then the message that is being repeated is obviously important.** The fact that God has to repeat something several times is an indication that the message is not only very important, but it also indicates we are slow to learn the lesson and need it repeated over and again. Therefore, when a message is repeated, it is not done without a purpose. It is done to give weight to the truth and to earnestly exhort us to pay attention to the message.

The problem of unjust, harsh, prejudicial judgment is no small matter or problem among believers. It is an issue that needs correcting in the hearts of Christians. Therefore, we need to give due heed to this warning, "Judge not, that ye be not judged. [2] For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

We do reap what we sow. Let me remind you also that this verse also teaches the truth that when we are kind, patient, and fair with others
in dealing with a matter, you will also reap the same kind of treatment. If you sow blessing, you will reap blessings.

III. CONSIDERATIONS FOR CHRISTIANS 7:3-4

And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? [4] Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?

People have a tendency sometimes to worry about what everyone else is doing without considering what they are doing themselves. They don’t pull the planks out of their own pupils or eyes. They will complain, “They are doing this or not doing that.” Jesus says, “Why are you behaving this way? What are YOU doing? Pull the plank out of your own pupil.”

The picture Jesus is painting here is as ridiculous and sarcastic as possible. The word translated “beam” is from the Greek word dokos {dok-os'} which denotes a huge piece of wood, like a plank or rafter in a house. The word "mote" is from the Greek word karphos {kar'-fos} which is a thin piece of wood, a splinter, or a small piece of sawdust.” Though small in comparison to a beam, plank, or log, it is not an insignificant object to have in your eye.

We are much more quick and acute to judge small offences in others, than to condemn large offences in ourselves. The sin of the one who is unjustly judging is much greater than the sin of the person he is condemning because there is a problem in his own heart that he is not seeing or acknowledging. He has a plank in his own pupil. The wretched and gross sin that is always blind to its own sinfulness is self-righteousness, the sin that Jesus repeatedly condemned in the scribes and Pharisees. Self-righteousness is a sin of blindness, or of grossly distorted vision. The self righteous person looks directly at his own sin and still imagines he sees only goodness.

Several years ago, Millard Fuller of Habitat for Humanity addressed the National Press Club on public radio, and he recalled a workshop at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary with 200 pastors in attendance. The assembled pastors quickly pointed toward greed and selfishness as the reason the church never had enough money to assist others creatively. Millard then asked this seemingly innocent question: "Is it possible for a person to build a house so large that it's sinful in the eyes of God? Raise
your hand if you think so." All 200 pastors raised their hands. "Okay," said Millard, "then can you tell me at exactly what size, the precise square footage, a certain house becomes sinful to occupy?" There was absolute silence from the pastors. You could have heard a pin drop. Finally, a small, quiet voice spoke up from the back of the room: "When the house is bigger than mine."

Beloved, the very nature of self-righteousness is to justify self and judge and condemn others. In so doing, people play God when they do this because they judge themselves on the basis of their OWN standards and wisdom. Self-righteousness is the worst of sins because it is in essence "unbelief." It trusts in self rather than God. It trusts in self to determine what is right and wrong and to determine who does what is right or wrong.

Self-righteousness claims to be both lawgiver and judge, claiming authority that belongs only to the Lord. The attitude of "judge" in the self righteous person creates problems in the area of judging others. The self righteous, judgmental person tends to deny and oppose the Gospel, because the Gospel proclaims man's sinfulness and lostness even as it proclaims God's mercy and grace. Because the self-righteous person sees no sin in his own personal life, he sees no need for God's grace in his behalf. If the self-righteous person is already a Christian, but is struggling with a judgmental spirit, it is difficult for him to walk with God because he is unwilling to acknowledge his sin and get matters right with God. He is unwilling to pull the plank out of his own pupil.

With such a monstrous log or plank in a man's eye, his vision would not be simply impaired, he would be absolutely blinded! It often happens that the faults which we consider enormous in the lives of others, compared to our own iniquities, are as a little splinter is when compared to a large beam. On one side, self-love blinds us to our own faults, and, on the other, envy and malice give us piercing eyes in our view of others. The idea of the person with a log in his own eye, lending a helping hand to another man who has sawdust or a splinter in his eye, would not only be comical but impossible! The tragedy is, the situation Jesus is portraying is very common even in Bible-believing, Bible-preaching churches and Bible colleges.

An Old Testament example of the mote and beam is found when King David was at the lowest point morally in his life. David took Uriah's wife and committed adultery with her. When Bathsheba revealed
to David that she was pregnant, David schemed to have Uriah murdered. Nathan the prophet found out what David did and told him a story about a rich man with huge flocks of sheep who lived next door to a poor man. The poor man had only one little ewe lamb that he loved like a daughter, but the rich man, not wanting to take a lamb out of his own herds to feed some guests, took that little lamb and slaughtered it. David was furious. His response was basically, "That man deserves to die. He must repay everything fourfold." Nathan, pointing a prophetic finger at the king, pronounced, "You are that man." David had a serious problem with a plank in his own pupil or eye that needed to be pulled out.

Our flesh finds it so easy to turn a microscope on another person's sin while we look at ours through the wrong end of a telescope! We use strong terms for someone else's sin but mild alternative names for our own faults. We easily spot a speck of phoniness in another because we have a logjam of it in our own lives. Furthermore, we especially hate our own faults when we see them in others. Wrath toward the splinter we see in someone else's life may come from the suppressed guilt and conviction from the Lord over the same massive sin in our own lives. This is what Paul was trying to get across to us in Romans.

* Romans 2:1- Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.

Jesus wants us to get our focus off the weaknesses of others and consider our own faults first, for a reason. The purpose of self-judgment is to prepare us to serve others. Christians are obligated to help each other mature in Christ and grow in grace. When we do not judge ourselves, we not only hurt ourselves, but we also hurt those to whom we could encourage. The Pharisees judged and criticized others to make themselves look good. Christians, however, should judge themselves so that they can help others look good. If we do not honestly face up to our own sins and confess them, if we do not pull the plank out of our own pupil, we blind ourselves to ourselves and then we cannot see clearly enough to help others.

When it comes to spiritually examining ourselves, unbalanced extremes must be avoided. One extreme is the deception of a shallow examination of your life. Sometimes we are so sure of ourselves that we fail to examine our hearts honestly and thoroughly. A quick, careless, flippant glance into the mirror of the Word will never reveal the true
situation of our heart’s condition. Serious examination of ourselves involves application of truth.

*James 1:22-25... But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. [23] For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: [24] For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. [25] But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

Another unbalanced extreme in self-examination is known as a "perpetual autopsy." Sometimes we can get so consumed in self-examination that we become unbalanced. We should not look only at ourselves, or we will become discouraged and defeated by the failures of our past. Satan is the accuser, and he enjoys it when we accuse and condemn ourselves! He loves to remind us of all our mistakes. Self-examination requires that we should look by faith to Jesus Christ and let Him forgive and restore us. This is what Paul taught in the Philippian letter.

*Philippians 3:13-14...Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, [14] I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

After we have judged ourselves honestly before God, and have removed those things that blind us, then we can help others and properly judge their works, but if we know there are sins in our lives that we have covered up, and we try to help others, we are hypocrites and will not prosper. The Pharisees were guilty of this, and Jesus denounced them for it. In fact, it is possible for ministry to others to be a device to cover up sin or avoid dealing with it! The good deeds are a tool to throw off any accusations of wrong. This predicament will lead to eventual failure. For this reason, it is vital that if you are in some kind of ministry that you make sure your life is right with God. Resistance in dealing with your own sins will lead to eventual failure or burnout in the ministry. It will not only affect you, however, your failure will hurt those who are following your leadership. Your sin has a ripple effect. If you got a sin problem, then deal with it and get it right with God NOW!

*Proverbs 28:13- He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.
It is easy to see the faults of others, but helping them get victory is another matter. Ministry is not easy. Correction takes better sight than detection, for correction is much harder to do than detection. It is easy to find fault but fixing the problem requires time, energy, patience, and wisdom. Critics, however, ignore this fact. Anyone can criticize, but few can correct the problem. If you can do nothing to help the problem, your criticism will only aggravate the problem and lead to frustration and failure.

IV. CASTING AND CLARITY 7:5

Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

The unjust person guilty of judging others is labeled by the Lord as a hypocrite. The self-righteous person can never be anything but a hypocrite, because he continually puts on a deceitful act of righteous superiority. That is why he feels qualified to say to his brother, “Let me take the splinter or mote out of your eye. Let me tell you what is wrong in your life. Let me straighten you out.”

Jesus gives corrective steps to the wrong kind of judgment by showing the right balance of humility and conviction. The Lord gives us instruction in casting for clarity. First take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the splinter out of your brother’s eye. Pull the plank out of your pupil. We are to confess and get our own sin right with God which many times is the sin of self-righteousness and of a condemning spirit toward others when we are guilty of judging. We are then to ask for God’s cleansing.

When our own sin is forgiven, cleansed, and repented of, and when the log is taken out of our own eye, then we will see our brother’s sin clearly and be able to help him get victory in his own life. We will then see everything clearly. We will have a focused view of God, others, and ourselves. We will see God as the only Judge, others as needy sinners who are just like us, and we will see that we have weaknesses, faults, and limitations in our own lives.

David applied the principle of casting for clarity in Psalm 51.

* Psalm 51:10- Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.
* Psalm 51:12-13... Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. In these two verses, he applies the “casting”
principle of getting his own life right with God by dealing properly with his own sin.

Then we see the clarity principle for ministry in verse 13.

*Psalm 51:13- Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.*

We are to get our lives right so that we can help others who are struggling. We are not to view the faults of others to kick them around and be cruel. We are to lovingly confront them to help them get victory. When they are unwilling to be helped, then we need to be patient. Firm discipline may be required down the road, but not until steps of reconciliation have been taken first to restore the person.

Beloved, all confrontation of sin in the lives of others must be done out of meekness, not cockiness or pride. It must be done, however, or the sin begins to affect the church. This philosophy that is going around that says, "I didn’t see it, so I don’t believe it" is foolish, dangerous reasoning. This philosophy has permeated Baptist churches over the past few decades and it is wreaking havoc. Immorality has been allowed to run rampant in some of our churches, especially in some of the big mega-churches.

As a pastor, when you hear about sinful matters that you didn’t see, you still need to search out the matter to see if it is true. Questions, not accusations, need to be asked. This involves confrontation, but it must be done. You don’t stick your head in the ground and pretend it is not there or you don’t know anything because you didn’t see it or you were not there. You are to check out the problem, especially if you are dealing with an issue that deals with immorality, drugs, drunkenness, violence, false teaching, idolatry, theft or other serious matters.

Before we confront, we are, however, to take a good look at ourselves before we deal with a problem in the lives of others. We cannot play the role of superior, as if we were exempt from the same standards we demand of others. We must not play the hypocrite, blaming others while we excuse ourselves. We are to pull the plank out of our pupils first, then we can see clearly to help others and deal with sin matters which is a biblical responsibility. When our spiritual sight is clear, we will then be alert to problems, to those who are hurting or drifting away from the Lord. We will also be able to see the Lord working in our own life and wonderful insights from His Word. Spiritual sight or alertness is the initial stage of ministry to others. Have you pulled the plank from your own pupils?
Chapter 10
Don’t Pitch Your Pearls to Pooches and Pigs
Matthew 7:6

We have been dealing with the issue of judging and discernment. Jesus makes it clear that before you get the splinter out of someone else’s eye, get the beam out of your own eye. Discernment and wisdom are necessary in the life of the Christian. They are required if we are going to make the right choices and decisions in our lives.

Here in Matthew 7:6, Jesus gives us a command that requires discernment and discretion in dealing with other people. He shoots holes in the teaching that says in the name of humility and love, we are never to oppose wrong or correct wrongdoers. It is clear that Jesus does not exclude every kind of judgment. In fact, He just as plainly commands a certain kind of right judgment here as He forbids a wrong kind in verses one through five. Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you. To obey that command it is obviously necessary to be able to determine who are dogs and swine.

This is one of the “hard sayings” of Jesus. We must take the command seriously and do our best to obey it, because it is the Lord’s will, but because it is so serious and because we may also be inclined to be self-righteous and judgmental, we need to depend on the Lord with special care and sincerity. Even when we determine that a person is too rebellious to hear the Gospel or is a heretical and false teacher, we must be careful to go on our way, not in self-satisfied judgment, but in great disappointment and sorrow. We are to remember how the Lord, as He approached Jerusalem for the last time, “saw the city and wept over”
those who refused to recognize and receive their King (Luke 19:41-42).

The counsel from our Lord, in the text for this chapter, which says to give preference to good over evil, will not be found to be very acceptable by the world. In fact, it will for the most part, be totally rejected. This counsel, which says to withhold things of value from evil people, is counsel the world says is uncharitable and which unfairly discriminates against some people. The world says that to act, as this verse says to act, is to be guilty of great discrimination. Indeed it is great discrimination, but all discrimination is not evil! We must constantly discriminate in life. Here is one place Christ taught us to discriminate or use right judgment and discretion. Let’s take a look at what He is saying and apply it to our lives. What does Jesus mean when He says, “Do not pitch your pearls before pooches and pigs?”

I. THAT WHICH IS PRECIOUS

“Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine,...”

What does the Lord mean by that which is “holy” and our “pearls?” By some, the word “holy” has been supposed to mean flesh offered in sacrifice, made holy, or separated to a sacred use, but it probably means here, anything connected with Scriptural admonitions, precepts, or Bible doctrine.

Pearls are precious stones found in shell-fish, chiefly in India, in the waters that surround Ceylon. They are used to denote anything peculiarly precious. In this place, they are used to denote the doctrines of the Gospel. The Greek word translated "pearls" in our text is the word from which we get our English word "Margaret." Pearls, because of their high value, make a good symbol of that which is very valuable in life. Here they speak figuratively of the spiritual and moral character values which are the most valuable things in life. These valuable pearls include the Word of God, purity, honesty, integrity, virtue, and faithfulness. These are things that are of greatest value in life. In the text before us, we are told how scornfully some people treat these pearls.
II. THAT WHICH IS PERVERSE

"Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine."

The "pigs" are not only unclean animals but wild and vicious, capable of savage action against a person. The fact they were unclean means the Jews were not to eat pork (Deuteronomy 14:8). Anyone who touched an unclean animal became "ceremonially unclean" and could not go to the Temple to worship until the uncleanness was removed. Pigs were considered as an abomination. That is the reason Antiochus Epiphanes' sacrifice of a pig on the Jewish altar and forcing the priests to eat it was such an absolute abomination and sparked the Maccabean revolt against Greece in 168 b.c.

Because a Jew would never have tried to domesticate a pig, most of the swine they encountered were wild animals who foraged for themselves, often in garbage dumps on the edge of town. Like the scavenging dogs, those swine were greedy, vicious, and filthy even by ordinary pig standards. If you came between them and their food they would likely turn and tear you to pieces with their tusks and sharp hooves.

"Dogs" must not be thought of as household pets. In the Scriptures they are normally wild, associated with what is unclean and despised. The dogs in our text and in those days were savage and snarling dogs that would turn and bite the hand feeding them. These dogs were scavengers, fierce, dangerous, half wild, brutal, and a symbol of disgrace and reproach. For these reasons, dogs were equated with the lowly character of a harlot or male prostitute, and their price could not be given to the house of God. Dogs represented that which was evil and foolish.

* Deuteronomy 23:18- Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of the Lord thy God for any vow: for even both these are abomination unto the Lord thy God.

* Proverbs 26:11- As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly.

* Philippians 3:2 - Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.

These two animals serve together as a picture of what is vicious, unclean, and abominable. The effect of sin and evil upon man as a result of the Fall is to make us, with respect to the truth of God, dogs and swine. Sin's effect upon men makes them antagonistic to the truth.
In Old Testament times they were a symbol of men and women with worthless, poor, and evil character. They had a contempt for the things of God and for that which was pure and right. Swine denote those who would trample Scriptural precepts under foot. They were men of impurity of life that were corrupt, polluted, profane, obscene, and sensual. These vile men would not know the value of the gospel and would tread it down as swine would tread pearls. They represent the grossly depraved who have no appreciation for noble character. Men who are dogs and piggish tell us that sin makes men brutal, vicious, vile, fierce, cruel, and filthy. They tell us in our text that sin makes men to have a terrible sense of values in which they despise the valuable and dignify the worthless.

III. THE PULVERIZATION OF OUR PEARLS

*Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.*

It would have been unthinkable for a Jew to have thrown to those dogs a piece of holy meat that had been consecrated as a sacrifice in the Temple. Some parts of those offerings were burned up, some parts were eaten by the priests, and some would often be taken home and eaten by the family who made the sacrifice. The part left on the altar was the part which was consecrated exclusively to the Lord, and therefore was holy in a very special way. If no man was to eat that part of the sacrifice, how much less should it be thrown to a bunch of wild, filthy dogs. Such an act would be the height of desecration, but there are men and women that treat that which is holy and precious with that kind of contempt.

A wild animal whose primary concern is scavenging for food will hardly appreciate being thrown a pearl. He will resent its not being something to eat and possibly attack the one who throws it. Pooches and pigs represent those who, because of their great perversity and ungodliness, refuse to have anything to do with the holy and precious things of God, except to trample them under their feet, and tear God’s people to pieces.

Some folks refuse to receive Christian truth. Wicked men and women have no respect for the most valuable things of life. They despise the things of God, hesitate not to use God's name profanely, and have a
lousy sense of moral values. Why?
* It may be that their minds are shut.
* It may be that their minds are brutalized and covered over with a film of filth.
* It may be that they have lived a life which has obscured their ability to see the truth.
* It may be that they are constant mockers of all things holy.
* It may be, as sometimes happens, that we and they have absolutely no common ground on which we can reason with them.

A man can only understand what he is fit to understand. There are always those to whom the preaching of Christ will be foolishness and a joke. To share with these people holy things is to dishonor holy things. Also giving these people valuable things is a great waste. The dogs and hogs in character do not appreciate that which is holy. They do not attach any value to spiritual pearls. Dogs and hogs in character are a peril to God's people especially when they give that which is holy and valuable to these beasts. When there is no respect for the gift, there will be no respect for the giver. They will "rend" the giver with slander, mocking, jeering, rejection, intimidation, hatred, verbal abuse and sometimes physical abuse.
* Proverbs 9:8 says, "Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee." Not everyone is fit for reproof.

The barkers and oinkers of mankind are those who have deliberately rejected the message of truth. These particular animals were especially repulsive to Jesus' audience. Let me clearly say that verse six is not implying that we should refuse to present the Gospel to the outcasts of society. Jesus Himself went to poor sinners among His people. Rather, the idea is that it is futile to continue to present truth to those who have continually and viciously refused what they have already heard. A man cannot appreciate new truth until he has responded to the truth which he has already received. Since the context deals with the matter of discernment and judgment, it may rightly be assumed that there is a proper place for such activity in the Christian's life.

There will be times when the Gospel we present is absolutely rejected and ridiculed and we make the judgment to turn away and speak no more, deciding that we should "shake off the dust of our feet" and preach somewhere else.
* Matthew 10:14- And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your
feet.

There may even be times when those to whom we witness will resist the Gospel and blaspheme God, and we may speak words of judgment like Paul did.

* Acts 18:6- And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.

When people not only reject the Gospel, but insist on mocking and reviling it, we are not to waste God’s holy Word and the precious pearls of His truth in a futile and frustrating attempt to win them as long as they have this kind of attitude. Jesus’ point is that certain truths and blessings of our faith are not to be shared with people who are totally antagonistic to the things of God.

It is futile to try to teach holy concepts to people who don’t want to listen and will only tear apart what we say. They have no appreciation for that which is holy and righteous. They will take the pearls of God’s Word and treat them as foolish and as an insult. It may not happen often, but it does happen.

IV. PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF THIS TRUTH

So what in the world do we do with these people? Are they to be abandoned as hopeless? Is the Christian message simply to be totally withdrawn from them? Beloved, I have found that time and trials have a way of softening the hearts of people. The testimony of believers can also change a person’s heart. What Christian words cannot do, a Christian life can often do. A man may be blind and impervious to any Christian argument in words, but he can have no answer to the demonstration of a consistent, consecrated, Christ-like Christian life. In time, if you sense a change in attitude and a more receptive spirit in the person, then speak to them again about the Lord.

With those folks who remain hardened toward God, we are to leave them to the Lord, trusting that somehow His Spirit can penetrate their stony hearts as He apparently did with some of those who at first rejected the preaching of Paul and the other apostles. We can also leave them to the just judgment of God. We should not stop giving God’s Word to unbelievers, but we should be wise and discerning in what we teach to whom. Solomon also warned us about using discernment in speaking with others, especially fools.
* 1 Corinthians 2:14- But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. Proverbs 23:9 says, "Speak not in the ears of a fool, for he will despise the wisdom of thy words."

When we look at the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, we find that He did not give all of His teaching to everyone who happened to be listening. Notice His prayer in Matthew 11.
* Matthew 11:25- At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

On another occasion Jesus made this statement to His disciples in answer to their question about why He spoke to the multitudes in parables.
* Matthew 13:11 He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.
* Matthew 13:13- Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. It is also interesting to note that after Jesus arose from the dead, He showed Himself to no one who was not a believer.

We are not to give that which is holy to the dogs and cast our pearls before swine that will trample these precious things under foot. Godly, Scriptural advice or counsel can be trampled under foot. Not every person is fit for reproof or Biblical counsel. We waste our time and endanger our well-being by reproving and arguing with some people over some issues and problems. There are some people with violent tempers, difficult dispositions, and irrational, stubborn, hardheadedness who cannot be reasoned with. Leave them alone until a possible later time when there is a change in their heart.

Our Gospel witness can be trampled under foot too. There are cultists who are unreasonable and will trample on every truth you give them from Scripture and use it to attack you. Leave them alone and don’t waste your time arguing with them. There are people, who when you give them a tract only tear it up and throw it away and then harass you. Leave them alone. Go to others who are more receptive.

Bible preaching can be trampled under foot. There are churches and Christian schools whose attitude and reception of a godly pastor and his message are so poor that the pastor would be wise to stop preaching to
that rebellious congregation and leave the church. Do not waste your time on people who will not listen to you, but seek to spend your time giving the message to those who will respect it and respond to it. Help those who want to be helped, not those who refuse it and fight you if you try to help them. We are to use wisdom in fulfilling our calling.

Your virtue, purity, and character can be trashed by dogs and hogs. Do not give the pearl of your character and the pearl of your virtue in friendship, companionship, or marriage to some vile, trampy piggish, selfish character. Teenagers, keep yourself pure. Girls, if you give your virginity away to some high pressure, sweet-talking boy, you are giving that which is holy to the dogs. You are casting the pearl of your purity before a pig that will trample you underfoot and if you get pregnant, in most cases, you will be left all alone with the burden of raising the child for the rest of your life, while the boy looks for other pearls of girls he can trample. Our character, our virtue, our integrity, our nobleness are precious pearls or attributes which we must keep from all that is vile and unholy lest we lose these valuable attributes and our lives are scarred and ruined.

Young people, be careful who you marry someday. Many a girl or boy has given herself to some dog or hog in marriage and has seen her husband or his wife despise all that was holy, pure, and lovely, and ruin his or her life in the process. Many a man has talked "God talk" to get a girl to marry him, and then after they were married, the man got his wife out of church by his intimidation, ridicule, threats, domination, verbal abuse, or evil influence. It is tragic that many young couples get out of church after they are married. They pitch their pearls to pooches and pigs. This is why you want to marry a godly young man or lady and not date or marry an unbeliever.

* 2 Corinthians 6:14- Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

Be careful about the crowd you run around. As someone has said, "If you lay down with the dogs do not be surprised if you rise up with fleas." If you run with the hogs, you will be laying in some mud hole before long. The stench of sin on you will be very pronounced and will muddy your life.

Furthermore, do not confide in those of the dog and hog nature. Keep your mouth shut about private things in your life and family when around these varmints of character. Keep the important matters of your
heart from the vile. The less you speak publically about personal and private matters the better. The wrong person hearing these things will pervert what they have heard, gossip about you, and really hurt you.

We need to examine our own hearts in regard to this message. Do we act like dogs and hogs in our disposition or behavior? How many times have we forfeited or rejected Bible preaching, wise counsel and help from Christian friends because we became incorrigible, unteachable, proud, and unreasonable in our attitude and conduct? How often have we been so belligerent in our sinful, selfish way that we would not allow anyone to give us helpful warning, counsel, and instruction to keep us from great peril and loss? How often has God withheld valuable spiritual blessings from us because in our conduct and behavior we have evidenced a lack of respect for holy things? Jesus’ message for all of us is, “Don’t pitch your pearls before pooches and pigs.”
Chapter 11
How Do I Get the Juice?
Matthew 7:7-11

Last Sunday night was the first communion service that Autumn Joy, our five year old attended. Linda explained to her ahead of time that she would not get any grape juice or cracker. When the time came and the elements were being passed down the pews, she was not a happy camper. My eighteen-year-old, Katie, was being a stinker and did not help matters when she whispered to Autumn, “It’s candy and you don’t get any.” That night when Linda was tucking Autumn to bed, Autumn asked her mother, “Why did I not get any juice?” Linda proceeded to tell her that she needed to ask Jesus in her heart first. It did not register. Autumn asked, “But how do I get the juice?” Linda began to explain again the fact that God sent His Son Jesus to die for our sins so we could have eternal life. Again, Autumn asked, “But how do I get the juice?” Our five-year-old did not want to hear anything but the answer to her simple question, “How do I get the juice? Don’t make it complicated, don’t give me requirements, just get to the point!”

We tend to be the same way too when it comes to spiritual matters like salvation or prayer. We want to know how to get the juice. In other words, how do I get things from God? How do I get my prayers answered? How do I go to Heaven? Don’t make it complicated, don’t give me requirements, just tell me in simple terms how I can get provision, protection, perception, and direction from God? Jesus, in simple terms, gives us the answer right here. You could say that He tells us how to get the juice. He tells us how to get things from God, but He gives us what some folks don’t want to hear. He gives us the requirements. They are not complicated, but they are necessary. People want to go to Heaven, but they don’t want to hear the requirement which says that you must put your faith in Christ for your salvation, not your
good deeds or church. Folks want their prayers answered, but don't want to hear the requirements. Do you want the juice? Here is how you get it.

I. THE COMMANDS  7:7

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

This famous text is not blank check for our material desires. God is not a celestial slot machine. Pull the handle enough times in prayer, be persistent, and you will get what you want! There is more to prayer than this. This passage tells us how to pray for Christlike character in our lives. It instructs us how to pray the Lord's Prayer. It teaches us to pray that our morals and ethics will be like the Lord Jesus Christ. In a word, Jesus teaches us how to pray for our spiritual lives as well as for other needs. The story of Frances Havergal is an example of this truth.

As a young woman, Frances Havergal, author of the hymns, Take My Life and Let It Be and Like a River Glorious, had a very quick temper. It was the kind that would easily explode. After she would blow up, she would be mortified and confess her failure to the Lord only to lose her temper, again and again. One day after a particularly bad explosion, she threw herself down by her bed and wept. She prayed, "Lord, must it always be so? Will I always have this temper to keep me humble before you?"

While she was on her knees, the Lord injected a verse of Scripture in her mind: "The Egyptians whom you have seen today you will see no more forever." God spoke these words to Moses when the Egyptians pursued the Israelites to take them back into bondage. Havergal related the verse to her temper and the way in which Satan wanted to use it to pull her into failure, bondage, and defeat. She saw that God could take her temper away. She asked, "Lord, could it be forever?" It seemed to her that the words came back from the Lord, "Yes. No more, forever." Her sister said that from that day Frances Havergal never again lost her temper. She believed God, and the Lord gave her total victory in her life.

Beloved, as we look at this portion of Scripture, we find that there are three things we are told or commanded to do if we desire to get things from God. They involve supplications, seeking, and striking. We will look at each element carefully.
A. Supplications- "Ask, and it shall be given you..."

Asking, seeking, and knocking deal with our attitude and also actions. They describe the elements of prayer and asking things from God. In fact, they form an acrostic A-ask, S-seek, K-knock. Notice the three words increase in intensity and effort on our part. The word "ask" implies asking for a conscious need in our lives. There are two key words in the New Testament for the word "ask."

1. erotao {er-o-tah'-o}:

This word suggests that the petitioner is on a footing of equality or familiarity with the person whom he requests. Erotao was used of a king in making request from another king. When Jesus prayed to His Father, this is the word that he used for He was on equal terms or footing with God the Father.

2. aiteo {ahee-teh'-o}:

Aiteo more frequently suggests the petition of one who is lesser in position than the one to whom the petition is made. It was used to describe the case of men in asking something from God, a child from a parent, a subject from a king, or a beggar from a passer by. Jesus never used this word when praying to God the Father. This is the word used here in Matthew 7:7. It thus suggests humility in asking and recognizing our needs and limitations. When we approach the Lord in prayer, we are not to have a cocky, proud, demanding spirit.

There is a hidden treasure found here in this verse in the mood of the Greek verbs. In the Greek language, there are two kinds of imperatives or commands. There is the aorist imperative which issues one definite command. For example, "Shut the door behind you," would be an aorist imperative. There is also the present imperative which issues a command that a man should always do something or should keep on doing something. It expresses continuous action. "Always shut doors behind you," would be a present imperative.

The imperatives here in this section are present imperatives or commands showing the priority that prayer is to have in our lives. It is our duty to pray. Jesus is saying here, "Keep on asking; Keep on seeking; Keep on knocking." He is telling us to persist in our prayer life and never be discouraged in prayer and to never give up until the Lord removes the burden to stop praying about a matter. This will test our sincerity and steadfastness in the area of our praying. Do we really want a certain thing? Is a matter of such nature that we can bring it repeatedly
into the presence of God, for the biggest test of any desire is, "Can I pray about it?"

Never take for granted the wonderful privilege that we have as Christians to pray to the Lord any time and anywhere. That privilege is seen in Hebrews 4.

* Hebrews 4:16- Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

The greatness of the privilege is emphasized here by the word "boldly" which means when we pray, we can speak freely and frankly, but we must take the time to pray. How do you get the juice? You are to pray with penitence, with humility and persistence. Perseverance is one of the great needs of Christians today. Most Christians don't serve Christ at all or served Him for a little while but quit. They lost their burden for the things of God. One little inconvenience and they threw their hands up and quit. When we look at the Bible, we find that over and again we are challenged to be persistent, persevering people in many different areas of our Christian life besides our prayer life.

* The Responsibilities of Christians that Demand Persistence

1. In BESEECHING the Lord in Prayer:

* Matthew 7:7,8- Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

2. In BEATING BACK Satanic Temptations:

* 1 Peter 5:8,9- Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

* Romans 6:13- Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

* 2 Peter 3:17- Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.

3. In BEARING Chastisement & Suffering:

* Hebrews 12:7- If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?
4. In BRINGING THE BODY under Subjection:
   * 1 Corinthians 9:27- But I keep under my body, and bring it into
       subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I
       myself should be a castaway.

5. In BECOMING a Finisher of God's Course For Our Life:
   * Philippians 3:13,14- Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended:
     but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and
     reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the
     mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.
   * Hebrews 12:1- Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with
     so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin
     which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that
     is set before us,

6. In BUILDING THE BLOCKS of Spiritual Growth:
   * 2 Peter 1:5-8- And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith
     virtue; and to virtue knowledge; [6] And to knowledge temperance; and
     to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; [7] And to godliness
     brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. [8] For if these
     things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be
     barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

7. In BLENDDING & BRINGING Unity Among Believers:
   * Philippians 1:27- Only let your conversation be as it becometh the
     gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I
     may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind
     striving together for the faith of the gospel;

8. In being BOUNTIFUL in the Work of the Lord:
   * 1 Corinthians 15:58- Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast,
     unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye
     know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.
   * Galatians 6:9- And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season
     we shall reap, if we faint not.

9. In BURNING for God:
   * Matthew 5:16- Let your light so shine before men, that they may see
     your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

10. In being BENEVOLENT & Having BROTHERLY Love For Others:
    * John 15:9- As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue
      ye in my love.
11. In BRIDLING your Mouth:
* Psalm 39:1- I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.

12. In BANDING CLOSE to the Lord:
* John 15:4,5- Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. [5] I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

13. In BOOSTING UP Others:
* Hebrews 3:13- But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

All of the above areas demand persistence and perseverance in our lives. The most fatal thing in the Christian life is to be content with passing desires. If we really want to be men of God, if we really want to know Him, and walk with Him, and experience those boundless blessings which He has to offer us, we must persist in asking Him for them day by day. We need to be bulldog believers that are persistent.

B. Seeking- "Seek and ye shall find..."

The next step, "seek," involves asking but adds action. The idea is not merely to express one's need, but to get up and look around for help. It involves an effort on our part. The word "seek" comes from the Greek word zeteo {dzay-tek'-o} which means "to look for something earnestly and intently." The verb tense here indicates we are to continually seek. The idea of this word is a craving desire to investigate and a diligent search, not a casual kind of search. This type of seeking involves effort and energy. The message here is the fact that prayer is not a casual exercise. It is more than simply going through the motions, being concerned more about form than substance. You cannot expect God to get serious about answering your prayer if you are not serious and sincere in praying your prayer. It is the effectual, fervent prayer that is effective.

* James 5:16- Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

"Effectual fervent" is a translation of the Greek word energeo {en-erg-eh'-o} which is the word that gives us our English word "energy."
Prayer is hard work and takes energy.

God desires that we seek Him out. He wants us to find Him and know Him, if we are truly serious about getting to know Him.

* Proverbs 8:17- I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me.

In 1935, Blasio Kugosi, a schoolteacher in Rwanda, Central Africa, was deeply discouraged by the lack of life in the church and the powerlessness of his own life. He followed the example of the first Christians by seeking the Lord’s power in his life. He closed himself in for a week of prayer and fasting in his little cottage. Revival gripped his life and he emerged a changed man.

He confessed his sins to those he had wronged, including his wife and children. He proclaimed the Gospel in the school where he taught, and revival broke out there, resulting in students and teachers being saved. They were called abaka, meaning “people on fire.”

Shortly after that, Blasio was invited to Uganda to share with other Christians what God had been doing. As he called the leaders to repentance, the fire of the Holy Spirit descended again on the place, with similar results as in Rwanda. Several days later, Blasio died of fever. His ministry lasted only a few weeks, but the revival fires sparked through his ministry swept throughout East Africa and continue to the present. Hundreds of thousands of lives have been transformed over the decades through this mighty East African revival. It all began with a discouraged Christian setting himself apart to seek the fullness of God’s Spirit. Jeremiah said we would find the Lord if we would truly seek Him.

* Jeremiah 29:12-13...Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. We are not only to ask and seek, we are also to knock.

C. Striking- “... knock and it shall be opened unto you.”

The word "knock" includes asking, acting, and persevering, like someone who keeps knocking on a closed door or one who keeps calling your house when they don’t get an answer on the phone! Again, the fact that this word is in the present imperative tense gives it a more intense and stronger meaning. We are to keep on knocking and the door will be opened to us. This word "knock" will reveal a number of insights.
This word reveals insights about our faith. We are to pray with faith and trust in the Lord. That may sound so simple, yet many do not put this simple truth into practice because they are consumed or overwhelmed with fretting, frustration, and failure.

One knocks on a door that is closed. Sometimes when we pray to the Lord, the door appears closed. We may feel we are not getting anywhere and get discouraged. The Lord, however, wants us to keep knocking on His door. We are to demonstrate our faith in Him by continuing to bring our petitions before Him. We are to live by faith even when our situation challenges our faith. The difficulties of our lives reveal the strength of our faith and also strengthen it if we respond properly to those difficulties.

* James 1:6 - But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.
* Hebrews 11:6 - But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Our Lord has the ability to unlock closed doors.

The word "knock" also reveals the fact that when we pray, we are not to come before the Lord with pride and cockiness, but with a reverent attitude. There are two words for 'knock' in the Greek, one which refers to an unceremonious pounding and the other refers to a polite knock. The word "knock" used here comes from the Greek word krouo {kroo'-o} which means "to rap or knock reverently." This word does not mean to bang discourteously, or to kick in the door, but to knock courteously. Our praying to the Lord is to be done with respect for Him. We are not to demand, insist, or pray with an attitude that says God owes us the answer.

Keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking. We are to be persistent in prayer. That is how you get the juice, if you please. That is how you get wonderful blessings. We pray for "things" many times, but do we pray for maturity in our Christian life or growth in spiritual traits? Do we pray for a pure heart, a passion for souls? Do we pray for a spirit of humility, a forgiving spirit, or the removal of bitterness? If we would pray for Christian virtues, we would see revival in our own lives and in our churches. God wants us to ask and keep on asking for those things that will make us more like the Lord Jesus Christ. Perseverance is the key to God's treasure, just as it often proves to be with earthly treasures.
When Howard Carter, the British archaeologist, peered wide-eyed into an ancient Egyptian tomb in 1922, at first he saw nothing. For more than twenty centuries archaeologists, tourists, and tomb robbers had searched for the burial places of Egypt's pharaohs. It was believed that nothing remained undisturbed, especially in the Royal Valley where the ancient monarchs had been buried for over half a millennium. With only a few scraps of evidence, Carter carried on his pursuit privately financed because nobody felt there was anything left to be discovered. He was convinced, however, that there was one remaining tomb.

Twice during his six-year search he came within two yards of the first stone step leading to the burial chamber, and finally he found it. "Can you see anything?" his assistants asked, as Carter's eyes adjusted. He was seeing, but he had difficulty speaking because he saw what no modern man had ever seen. Wooden animals, statues, chests, chariots, carved cobras, vases, daggers, jewels, a throne and a hand-carved coffin of a teenage king were in the tomb.

Mr. Carter found the priceless tomb and treasure of King Tutankhamen, the world's most exciting archaeological discovery. Howard Carter's persistence and steadfastness brought him King Tut's treasure. How much greater our rewards when we pray with persistence for God's spiritual treasures! King Tut left his treasures behind after he died, but the treasures that Christ gives to us are ours for eternity.

II. THE CONSEQUENCES OF ASKING, SEEKING, & KNOCKING  7:8

For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

God says when we ask we will receive, when we seek Him, we will find Him, and when we knock, the door will be opened. His promises are generous and liberal, not stingy and leave us with satisfaction, joy, encouragement, and greater faith.

* Ephesians 3:20- Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,
* Psalm 81:10 - I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.
* John 14:13-14... And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.
**1 John 3:22** - And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

**1 John 5:14** - And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

In 1962 a 14-year-old by the name of Robert White wrote to President John F. Kennedy's personal secretary requesting the President's autograph. Within a few weeks Evelyn Lincoln honored the boy's request by sending him a facsimile signature in the mail. That began a relationship of correspondence that lasted 33 years. Impressed with White's passion for presidential history, Mrs. Lincoln gave him thousands of documents and mementos. She saved whatever could be saved including even the doodles JFK drew during meetings. Today, Robert White, now 51, boasts the largest private collection of Kennedy memorabilia, over 50,000 items. Receiving things from the Lord begins with the courage and confidence to ask Him for things.

### III. THE CHARACTER OF GOD  7:9-11

*Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? [10] Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? [11] If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?*

We are able to get things from God because of His character. Jesus' argument is that no father ever refused the request of his son and God the great Father will never refuse the requests of His children. He takes three examples, for Luke adds a third to the two examples listed in Matthew.

**Luke 11:12** - Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?

The little, round, limestone stones on the seashore were exactly the shape and the color of little loaves. If a son asks bread will his father mock him by offering him a stone, which looks like bread but which is impossible to eat? No, any father with any brains would not do that. If a son asks for a fish, will his father give him a serpent? Almost certainly the serpent is an eel. According to the Jewish food laws, an eel could not be eaten, because an eel was an unclean fish. That regulation ruled out
the eel as an article of diet.

*Leviticus 11:12- whatsoever hath no fins nor scales in the waters, that shall be an abomination unto you.*

If a son asks for a fish, will his father indeed give him a fish, but a fish which it is forbidden to eat, and which is useless to eat? Would a father mock his son's hunger like that? No! If the son asks for an egg, will his father give him a scorpion?

The scorpion is a dangerous little animal. In action it is rather like a small lobster, with claws with which it clutches its victim. Its sting is in its tail, and it brings its tail up over its back to strike its victim. The sting can be exceedingly painful, and sometimes even fatal. When the scorpion is at rest, its claws and tail are folded inward. There is a pale kind of scorpion, which, when folded up, would look exactly like an egg. If a son asks for an egg, will his father mock him by handing him a biting scorpion? No!

**God is not deceptive in His giving.** He does not trick the person asking for certain things by giving that person things which look like that which was requested but in fact are not. The character of the normal earthly father is not so mean as to give these deceptive things to his son. If an earthly father would not deceive his son in giving needed supplies for the son, neither will the heavenly Father. God has better character than to be deceitful and play mean tricks on people who come to Him in honest prayer for the basic needs of life. If He promises to answer your request, He will answer it.

God will never refuse to answer our prayers in one way or another and He will never mock our prayers. God will always answer our prayers, but He will answer them in His own time and way, and His way will be the way of perfect wisdom and of perfect love. The bread and fish are good gifts. The stone and serpent, are bad, harmful gifts. If men who are inherently evil can give good gifts, how much more will God, who is infinitely holy, give good gifts. Our Lord is consistent and His gifts will reflect the goodness of His character. His gifts will not corrupt or pollute us.

*James 1:17- Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*

There are some things that we pray for that are not good for us and would ruin us. The Lord in His love and wisdom says “No” to these requests. God's gifts are good and He will not give us something bad even
though we have asked for that which could hurt us unless He wants to
discipline or judge us by granting our selfish requests. Sometimes we
pray for things that would harm us, but God will not answer those prayers
as we have prayed them if it is His will. For example, the prophet Elijah
prayed to die but God did not grant the request.

* 1 Kings 19:4- But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness,
and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for
himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away
my life; for I am not better than my fathers.

It was not good for Elijah to die at that time. All of us can be
grateful to God that His goodness has kept us from having some of our
requests answered as we prayed them. There may be some exception to
this when God grants something which we persisted in prayer for that
which was not good for us. God may answer a bad prayer to discipline
us and turn our life around in the right direction. He will chasten us to
bring us close to Him.

* Psalm 119:67- Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I
kept thy word.

He wants to give us the juice if you please. God wants to give us
good things and has the ability to do so.

We are to ask, seek, and knock on His door with humility, faith,
reverence, and persistence and be prepared to receive His answer. In his
book Beyond Jabez, Bruce Wilkinson shares the story of an old African
woman who demonstrated faith in God's power to provide. Although she
lived in a tiny mud hut, she had taken on the responsibility of caring for
56 orphans. A small group of Wilkinson's "Dream for Africa" volunteers
had arrived in this grandmother's native Swaziland to plant gardens.

On the final day of their visit, they came upon her tiny home,
surrounded by the many children in her care. A number of little gardens
had been dug up all around the hut, but oddly, no plants were growing in
any of them. The volunteers learned that, earlier on the same day, the
woman had told the children to dig lots of gardens. When the children
asked her why, since they had neither seeds nor money, she responded,
"Last night I asked God to send someone to plant gardens for us. We
must be ready for them when they come." Wilkinson's volunteers had
come with hundreds of ready-to-plant seedlings. God sent them to the
very place where one of his servants had begged for his intervening hand.
The faithful grandmother and her children were ready when the answer
came. Are you ready for your answer?
Chapter 12
The Golden Rule
and the Streets of Gold

Matthew 7:12-14

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets. [13] Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: [14] Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Centuries ago in China a teacher would call one of his students to the front of the room. He would hold out both hands and explain to the chosen student that one hand held a valuable gold coin and the other was empty. He would invite the chosen student to choose one hand or the other. If the student chose the coin, he would be allowed to keep it, but if he chose the empty hand, the teacher would strike the boy with his clenched fist. If the student decided not to choose at all, he could return to his seat.

This ritual was practiced each day in the teacher’s classroom. Because the students knew of the teacher’s strength and skill as a fighter, they were afraid to make a choice. They knew that to be hit by him would result in serious injury. On the rare occasion that a student would choose a hand, the teacher would ask, “Are you sure?” As the student looked more closely at the teacher’s hard fist and even harder scowl, he would invariably change his mind and hurry back to his seat.

One day, a boy named Chin was called to front of the room. Chin’s father had died in the war five years before and his family was having
difficulty surviving. Chin needed the gold coin to help his family. The instructor held out his fists. Chin studied both hands for a long time. His classmates stared at him, expecting him to simply return to his seat as each of them had done.

Finally Chin pointed to the teacher’s left fist. “Are you sure?” the instructor asked. Chin nodded. “Would you like to forget about your choice and return to your seat?” Chin shook his head no. The instructor’s fist shot out and struck Chin squarely in the face, knocking him to the floor. Chin laid on the floor looking up at his teacher in a daze. Then the instructor turned both fists over and revealed that each of them held a gold coin. “You cannot expect anything for free,” the teacher told his class. “There is a price that comes with everything.” The teacher helped Chin to his feet, smiled, and placed both gold coins into his hand. He never repeated the exercise again.

That story amply describes the situation of this text. We all must make choices in our lives whether we like it or not. Some choices are very difficult. In fact, we would rather just run away and hide. Hiding however, is still a choice. The choices that we make do have consequences. The reality of this fact is made crystal clear by Jesus in this portion of Scripture. Because our choices have consequences, we want to make sure we make the right choices in our lives, especially when it comes to our treatment of other people and our treatment of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

**Jesus is winding down His message of the Sermon of the Mount.** This section marks the beginning of the end. He has covered a number of topics in this message which deal with such issues as compassion, corruption, contamination, complication, condemnation, dedication, domination, fornication, supplication, subordination, trepidation, tribulation, reconciliation, and jubilation. He now begins a lengthy conclusion to this message. In effect, Jesus was saying, "That's it, my friends. Now what are you going to do with what I have told you? There is no point in listening to the sermon if you are not going to do anything about it. A choice must now be made.”

The remainder of Matthew chapter seven deals with application of truth and choices that must be made, choices which have consequences. Jesus knew that truth without application of that truth leads to spiritual slothfulness and numbness. Many Christians find themselves in this condition because they fail to put into practice Bible truths. True revival is the commencement or re-application of Biblical truths in our lives.
This section of the sermon deals with what is known as the Golden Rule and the choice we must make if we want to walk the streets of gold in Heaven.

I. THE GOLDEN RULE 7:12

*Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.*

This verse is referred to as the “Golden Rule,” and it is one of the most misunderstood statements in the Bible. This is probably the most universally famous command that Jesus ever said. With this commandment the Sermon on the Mount reaches its summit. This saying of Jesus has been called "the capstone of the whole discourse." It is the topmost peak of social ethics, and the Everest of all ethical teaching. This statement is not the sum total of Christian truth, nor is it God’s plan of salvation. I have spoken with people, including my high school principal, who believe obeying this verse is what gets them into Heaven, but it doesn’t.

This principle is to be practiced because we are Christians, not to make us Christians. This is the key to implementing this Bible principle into our lives. The power of the Holy Spirit enables the Christian to put this difficult principle into practice.

*John 1:12-* But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

Notice this verse begins with the word “therefore.” When you see this word, find out what it is there for. Jesus has just finished telling us about God’s care for our lives. He is a loving Heavenly Father. Because the Lord is this way, we are to have the same attitude toward other people. We are to put ourselves in the place of others. We are to treat them the way we would like to be treated. This puts everyone on equal terms in our conduct one to another. We must put other people upon the level with ourselves and reckon we are as much obliged to them as they are to us.

Such an attitude would help us to have more perception and patience in dealing with other people. In fact, this kind of attitude would destroy avarice, envy, treachery, unkindness, slander, theft, adultery, and murder. You will note that the Lord didn’t say that we are to treat others in the same manner that they treat us, but as we would like to have them treat us. Treating people as you would like them to treat you is a very good
guide to keep your conduct toward others as noble as possible. This principle especially emphasizes our actions. Attitudes are certainly involved, but actions are the emphasis. We are to put God’s Word into practice.

* James 1:22- But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

Have you ever heard of a guy named Charles Schwab? He was the president of Carnegie Steel, US Steel Corporation and Bethlehem Steel Company, which became the largest independent steel producer in America. Mr. Charles Schwab was one of the first men ever to earn a million dollars a year. Why did Andrew Carnegie pay Schwab more than $3,000 a day? Was it because he knew more about the manufacture of steel than other people? No. Schwab said that he had many men working for him whose technical knowledge surpassed his.

Schwab was paid such a handsome amount largely because of his ability to deal with people. Here is the secret set down in his own words: "I consider my ability to arouse enthusiasm among men the greatest asset I possess, and the way to develop the best that is in a man is by appreciation and encouragement. There is nothing else that so kills the ambitions of a man as criticisms from his superiors. I never criticize anyone. I believe in giving a man incentive to work. So I am anxious to praise but loath to find fault. If I like anything, I am hearty in my approbation and lavish in my praise." Schwab treated others the way he would like to be treated. The result was success in working with people.

**The Golden Rule is a principle that ought to govern our attitudes and actions toward others.** It applies to believers especially, and it must be practiced in every area of life. Such behavior requires discipline and a yielded spirit to the Lord because it goes contrary to our flesh. We need the help of the Holy Spirit to live this way. If our judgment of others is not governed by this principle, we will become proud, selfish, greedy, irritable, and critical. Our own spiritual character and growth will become weak.

Putting into practice the Golden Rule releases the love of the Lord Jesus Christ in our lives and enables us to help others, even those who oppose and want to hurt us. This is not easy and putting this verse into practice means paying a price sometimes. If we want God’s best for ourselves and other people, but others resist God’s will for their lives, then they may oppose us. The price may also involve dying to self, to our desires and wishes. It may entail being misunderstood by others,
especially when we return good for evil.

Many of us can think about loving our enemy in general, simple, uninvolved terms. Unknown enemies on the other side of the world are easier to love than those we meet face-to-face, day after day. During the war in Iraq in 2005, one American soldier found out how proximity changes things. Stephen Tschiderer, an army medic, met his enemy's bullet before he met his enemy. While patrolling the dangerous streets of Baghdad, Tschiderer was shot in the chest by an enemy sniper. Although he was knocked to the ground by the impact, Tschiderer was saved by his bulletproof vest.

In company with the combat team that tracked down the sniper, the soldier discovered his assailant had been wounded. At this point, loving one's enemy was no longer a theoretical Bible concept. The enemy sniper was directly in front of Tschiderer, wounded, and in need of prompt medical attention. Only moments earlier, the sniper had put Stephen Tschiderer's heart between the crosshairs on the scope of his rifle and pulled the trigger, fully intending to end Tschiderer's life. Tschiderer could have roughed him up. He could have simply walked away and justified his actions. Instead, Tschiderer treated and dressed the wounds of the man who had tried to take his life. He did unto others what he would want others to do to him.

The Golden Rule embodies and summarizes the second table or section of the Ten Commandments. It is that part of the Ten Commandments which deals with our relationship with other people. The two tables of the Ten Commandments were summarized by the Lord.

* Matthew 22:37-40... Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. [38] This is the first and great commandment. [39] And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. [40] On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Coach John Gagliardi ran his football team based on these principles and the Golden Rule. Coach John Gagliardi, of Saint John University, is the winningest coach in college football history with an astounding 421-117-11 record. To say that he's done it in an unconventional way is an understatement. His "winning with no's" approach is noteworthy:

* No blocking sleds or dummies
* No spring practices
* No compulsory weightlifting program
* No football scholarships
* No whistles
* No "Coach" (players call him John)
* No tackling in practice (players wear shorts or sweats)
* No long practices (typically an hour and a half or less).

Donald Miller comments on the genius of his approach, "Players are asked to treat their teammates in the way they would like to be treated, with kindness, graciousness, and respect. The players work as hard as they want to work, and when they come to practice they do exactly as the coach asks them to do, not because their positions are threatened, but because they care about one another, work as a team, and love their coach because they sense his love for them."

**Putting the Golden Rule into practice is not as easy as it sounds.** It is one thing to say, "I must not injure people. I must not do to them what I would object to their doing to me." The laws of our city can compel us to act this way. It is quite another matter, however, to say, "I must go out of my way to help other people and to be kind to them, as I would wish them to help and to be kind to me." That attitude, only love can compel us to do. The attitude which says, "I must do no harm to people," is quite different from the attitude which says, "I must do my best to help people." One attitude requires doing nothing. The other attitude requires action, time, inconvenience maybe, and sometimes financial assistance. This is why it is easy to understand, but difficult to apply.

The easiness of understanding this important principle reminds us that in regards to the important matters of Scripture, they are easy to be understood. God in mercy has declared our duties and our obligations in simple terms so no one has an excuse. It was Mark Twain who said that it was not the difficult parts of the Bible that disturbed him, but it was the parts of the Bible that he understood that bothered him.

For example, if a man has a car, the law can compel him to drive it in such a way that he does not injure anyone else on the road, but no law can compel him to stop and to give a weary and a foot-sore traveler a lift along the road. It is quite a simple thing to refrain from hurting and injuring people. It is a far harder thing to make it the chosen and deliberate policy of life to go out of our way to be as kind to them as we would wish them to be to us. This principle is taught all throughout the Bible.

* Leviticus 19:18- Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself:
I am the Lord.
* Galatians 5:14- For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Treating others the way you want them to treat you may be difficult, but it can yield rich rewards and blessings. Obedience to God’s Word always leads to blessing. In 1999, Kevin Stephan of Lancaster, New York, was a bat boy for his younger brother’s little-league baseball team. During one game, a player who was warming up accidentally hit Kevin in the chest with a bat. Kevin fell to the ground, unconscious. His heart stopped beating. "All I remember," Kevin says, "is that, all of a sudden, I got hit in the chest with something, and I turned around and passed out." Fortunately, a nurse whose son played on the team was able to revive him. Kevin and his family later learned that the nurse, Penny Brown, was supposed to be at work that night but had been given the day off at the last minute.

The story doesn't stop there, however. Seven years later, in January of 2006, Penny Brown was eating at the Hillview Restaurant in Depew, New York, when she began to choke on her food. "The food wasn't going anywhere, and I totally couldn't breathe," said Penny. "It was very frightening." Patrons began screaming for someone to help. One of the restaurant employees, a volunteer firefighter, ran out from the back. He wrapped his arms around the victim, applied the Heimlich maneuver, and saved the woman's life. When the emergency was over, the patron and employee recognized each other. The person who saved Penny's life was 17-year-old Kevin Stephan, the same boy whom Penny had saved seven years earlier. Sometimes doing unto others as we would have them do to us has greater implications than we might think.

Let me ask, “Is there someone in your life that you need to treat differently?” Perhaps you have been argumentative, critical, harsh, rude, cold, or unconcerned toward them. They may be your husband or wife, your kids, or someone at work or school. Since the Lord has brought someone to your mind, you have the opportunity to put into practice the Golden Rule. Now do you understand why it is hard to put this truth into practice? You can do it with the help of the Lord.
II. THE GATE THAT LEADS TO DESTRUCTION 7:13

"... wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat."

On July 20, 1993, while cutting down oaks in a Pennsylvania forest, Don Wyman got his leg pinned beneath a fallen tree. No one could hear his yells for help. After digging for more than an hour to try to free his bleeding, shattered leg, he hit stone. He would bleed to death unless he did something drastic.

Wyman made his decision. Using a wrench and the starter cord from his chain saw as a tourniquet, he cut off the flow of blood to his shin. Somehow he had the fortitude to make the choice to amputate his own leg below the knee with his pocket knife. He crawled to his vehicle and drove to a farmer's home. The farmer got him the help that saved his life.

Life is full of tough choices. The toughest choices are the ones that we make alone, when everyone else is going a different direction than we are going. No one really likes to be in the minority because we like to be accepted by the crowd. Like Don Wyman, men who want to follow Christ face tough choices. We also have sinful habits we want to keep as badly as our leg and also a Lord and Savior who calls us to repent. It takes strength to cut off our wickedness. It takes strength to follow the Lord. We must make a choice on whom we will follow. No one else can make it for us.

There is always a certain dramatic quality about life, for, as it has been said, "all life concentrates on man at the cross-roads." In every action of life man is confronted with a choice and he can never evade the choice, because he can never stand still. He must always take one way or the other. Because of that, it has always been one of the supreme functions of the great men of history that they should confront men with that inevitable choice. Moses, Joshua, and Jeremiah confronted the people with choices.

* Jeremiah 21:8 - And unto this people thou shalt say, Thus saith the Lord; Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death.
* Joshua 24:15- And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.
Nearly 200 years ago there were two Scottish brothers named John and David Livingstone. John had set his mind on making money and becoming wealthy, and he did. This was the choice he made with his life, but under his name in an old edition of the "Encyclopaedia Britannica" John Livingstone is listed simply as "the brother of David Livingstone."

Who was David Livingstone? While John had dedicated himself to making money, David had knelt and prayed. Choosing to surrender himself to Christ, he resolved, "I will place no value on anything I have or possess unless it is in relationship to the Kingdom of God." The inscription over his burial place in Westminster Abbey reads, "For thirty years his life was spent in an unwearied effort to evangelize." On his 59th birthday David Livingstone wrote, "My Jesus, my King, my Life, my All; I again dedicate my whole self to Thee." Two brothers chose to different paths to travel. We too, are making the same kind of choices. Notice what Moses said in Deuteronomy 30 about our choices.

*Deuteronomy 30:15, 19* See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil.... I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:

That is the choice with which Jesus is confronting men in this passage. From here through the rest of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus repeatedly points out two things: 1) the necessity of choosing whether to follow the Lord or not, 2) the fact that the choices are two and only two. In all preaching there must be the demand for a verdict. Jesus makes the choice crystal clear.

* There are two gates, the narrow and the wide;
* Two ways, the narrow and the broad;
* Two destinations, life and destruction;
* Two groups, the few and the many;
* Two kinds of trees, the good and the bad, which produce two kinds of fruit, the good and the bad;
* Two kinds of people who profess faith in Jesus Christ, the sincere and the false;
* Two kinds of builders, the wise and the foolish;
* Two foundations, the rock and the sand;
* Two houses, the secure and the insecure.

**There is a right path to follow and a wrong path.** The Lord describes the characteristics of the wrong path first. The gate that leads to destruction is wide for its path is broad. The broad path has little
resistance and restrictions. You can pretty much live any way you wish and believe all kinds of teachings and philosophies on this path and find little debate. The main motto of this path is “All roads lead to God.” Some religions believe there is no God or Heaven. Other feel there is a Heaven and everyone will go there. There are religions that believe that we go to Heaven because of our good works, our church membership, baptism, or by trusting some false god. The broad way is filled with many different teachings about God and the way to Heaven. It is okay to compare and contrast philosophies, but to say one is better than the other is anathema. The absoluteness of Scripture is rejected. The broad way has room for everyone except the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word. They are not welcome because the standard of truth would change from man’s opinions and philosophies to the Word of God which is totally different from the ideas and ways of men.

People feel secure on Broadway, because so many travel it. This is the path that is popular. Everyone is doing it on this path. The travelers of Broadway find security in numbers or in the majority, but the Bible points out that many times the majority is not always right. The fact that “everybody does it” is no proof that what they are doing is right. Israel proved this when they made the decision the first time to disobey God and not enter the Promised Land. The result was a forty-year trip in the desert and an average funeral rate of one funeral every 20 minutes for forty years.

Being popular with men does not mean you will be popular with God, for His way tends to be much different than men’s ways. The broad way is also deceptive. It is appealing and fun many times ..... at first, but the end result is a ruined life. Satan never wants you to see the end of the path you travel when you are on this path. He camouflages the eventual discouragement, distress, disappointment, depression, destruction, and death with the delights of debauchery and disobedience.

In July of 2006, the world-famous geneticist William French Anderson was convicted of child molestation charges. In a press conference, his attorney said, "Nothing about having a 176 I.Q. means you have good judgment." Here is a man who was a genius, but a fool. Men may think they are so smart, but when they choose to live in sin, they reveal how foolish they are. Fools travel the broad way.

* Proverbs 14:12- There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.
* Proverbs 12:15- The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that
hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.
* Proverbs 30:12- There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.

The broad way leads to destruction. The word “destruction” is from the Greek word 
* apoleia {ap-o-’li-a}. It does not refer to extinction or annihilation, but to total ruin and loss. It is not the end of existence but the end of comfort in existence. It is not the end of living, but the end of enjoyable living. You do not cease to be, but you cease to be well. It is not the loss of being, but it is the loss of well-being that is spoken of here in the meaning of the word "destruction." It is the destination of all religions except the way of Jesus Christ, and it is the destiny of all those who follow any way but His. It is the destination and destiny of perdition, hell, and everlasting torment.
* Psalm 1:6- For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

Broadway leads to the loss of peace. You cannot live wickedly or in disobedience against God and expect to have peace in your life. It’s not going to happen. You not only lose your peace in this life, but you will lose it for eternity if you die without Jesus Christ as your Savior.
* Isaiah 57:20-21... But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.
* Romans 3:16-17 ... Destruction and misery are in their ways: [17] And the way of peace have they not known:

People find that when they travel the broad way and get what they want or do what they want to do, that after a while, their way loses its thrill and satisfaction. It may have been fun for a while, but the thrill sooner or later is gone. Dissatisfaction and emptiness begin to grip the person’s life. Sin’s sweetness soon sours. The writer of Hebrew refers to this truth about the pleasures of sin.
* Hebrews 11:25- Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

The dissatisfaction from sinful living is seen in this story that took place in New York. I love this story because it’s so funny. In New York City, there are eight million cats and eleven million dogs. New York City is basically just concrete and steel, so when you have a pet in New York City and it dies, you can’t just go out in the back yard and bury it. The city authorities decided that for $50 they would dispose of your deceased pet for you.
One lady was enterprising. She thought, I can render a service to people in the city and save them money. She placed an ad in the newspaper that said, "When your pet dies, I will come and take care of the carcass for you for $25." This lady would go to the local Salvation Army and buy an old suitcase for two dollars. Then when someone would call about his or her pet, she would go to the home and put the deceased pet in the suitcase.

She would then take a ride on the subway, where there are thieves. She would set the suitcase down, and she would act like she wasn't watching. A thief would come by and steal her suitcase. She'd look up and say, "Wait! Stop! Thief!" My guess is the people who stole those suitcases got a real surprise when they got home. A lot of us are like those New York thieves. We're chasing after happiness, and we grab what we think will give us happiness; however, when we get it, it doesn't quite deliver.

III. THE GATE THAT LEADS TO LIFE  7:13a, 14

Enter ye in at the strait gate:... Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Jesus tells us to enter the straight gate. The strait gate signifies literally what we call a wicket, a little door in a large gate. Gate, among the Jews, signifies the entrance, introduction, or means of acquiring anything. So they talk of the gate of repentance, the gate of prayers, and the gate of tears.

The Savior also referred here to the roads of the ancient cities. They were surrounded with walls, and entered through gates. Some of those, connected with the great avenues to the city, were broad, and admitted a throng of people. Others, for more private purposes, were narrow, and few would be seen entering them. The public roads were allowed to be sixteen cubits (24 feet) broad, the private ways only four (6 feet). Christ compares the way to Heaven and Hell by using this illustration.

Jesus says, "Enter ye in at the strait gate." That is pretty specific and dogmatic, but such is the nature of truth. Truth is specific and dogmatic. The words in the original Greek are very emphatic. The word "enter" is in the aorist imperative tense, which means it demands a definite and specific action. We are to enter through THIS gate. The command is not to admire or to ponder the gate, but to enter it. It is not enough to listen to preaching about the gate. You must enter through it.
There can be no neutrality.

You will never go through the narrow gate by accident or being unaware. You must enter it decisively, thoughtfully and purposely. Many people admire the principles of the Sermon on the Mount but never follow those principles. Many people respect and praise Jesus Christ, but never receive Him as Lord and Savior. His is in their head, but not their heart. He is just a prophet or a good man, but they do not recognize Him as the Son of God and the Savior of the world. They do not enter the Door of Heaven...Jesus Christ.

*John 10:9- I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

Jesus’ command is not simply to enter some gate but to enter the narrow gate. Every person enters one gate or the other; that is unavoidable. Jesus pleads for men to enter the right gate, God’s gate, the only gate that leads to life and to the streets of gold in Heaven. The person who enters the narrow gate must enter alone. We can bring no one else and nothing else with us. People do not come into the kingdom in groups, but singly. The Jews had the mistaken notion that they were all in God’s kingdom together by racial salvation, signified by circumcision.

Furthermore, God’s gate is so narrow that we must go through it without the things of this world. It is the gate of self-denial, through which one cannot carry the baggage of sin and self-will. When we sing, “Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling,” we are testifying to the way of the Gospel. The way of Christ is the way of the cross, and the way of the cross is the way of self-denial.

*Matthew 16:24-25... Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. [25] For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

The way that is narrow is the hard way, the demanding way, the way of self-denial and the way of the cross. Jesus makes no bones about it. He is above board and tells us it is strait. The word “strait” is sometimes confused with the word “straight.” They are two different words with different meanings.

The word “strait” comes from the Greek word stenos {sten-os'}. It means "pent up, narrow, difficult to be entered." It comes from a root word that means “to groan,” as from being under pressure, and is used figuratively to represent a restriction or constriction. It is the word which forms our English word “stenography” which is writing that is
abbreviated, narrow, or compressed.

**Narrow is the way that leads to life.** The word “narrow” is from the Greek word *thlibo fthlee'-boj* which means “pressured or pressed (as grapes); hemmed in (as in a mountain gorge); crowded.” It is translated in a variety of ways in the New Testament.

* 2 Corinthians 1:6a- And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation.....
* 2 Corinthians 4:8a- We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed...
* 1 Thessalonians 3:4a- For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; ....

All these meanings say the right path is a most difficult path on which to walk, but Christ never said it was easy to be a Christian. Once you trust Christ as your Savior, this path continues to be narrow. Living for Christ is not easy at all. It is difficult to proceed once you are on the path because of the desires of your flesh and the opposition of sinners. However, as we will see more about shortly, being a Christian (being on the right path) is far better than not being a Christian (being on the wrong path).

Gary Richmond shared the story about an Angola giraffe that was giving birth. Here is his story: I stood next to zoo animal keeper, Jack Badal, to watch the birth. The mother giraffe was standing up, and the calf’s front hooves and head were already visible. "When is she going to lie down?" I asked Jack. "She won't," he answered. "But her hindquarters are nearly ten feet off the ground!" I said. "Isn't anyone going to catch the calf?" "Try catching it if you want," Jack responded, "but its mother has enough strength in her hind legs to kick your head off."

Soon the calf hurled forth, landing on his back. His mother waited for about a minute, then kicked her baby, sending it sprawling head over hooves. "Why did she do that?" Gary asked. "She wants it to get up." Whenever the baby ceased struggling to rise, the mother prodded it with a hearty kick. Finally, the calf stood .... wobbly, but upright, but then the mother kicked it off its feet again! Jack said, "She wants it to remember how it got up. In the wild, if it didn't quickly follow the herd, predators would pick it off." Beloved, it's easy for us to view our difficulties and trials as unwelcome intruders in our lives, but they do have a way of prompting us to get up and seek the protection of our heavenly father.

**The narrowness of the gate speaks of the narrowness of the way of salvation.** This does not mean that it is difficult to become a Christian,
but that there is only one way to live eternally with God and only a few that decide to walk that road. Believing in Jesus is the only way to Heaven, because He alone died for our sins and made us right before God. Salvation is restricted to coming through Jesus Christ. There is only ONE way of salvation, not many ways. Christ is the only way if you want to walk the streets of gold in Heaven. If you want to go to God’s Heaven, you will have to go His way.

Finding himself in an elevator with Lee Iacocca, an enthusiastic fan paid a compliment to the Chairman of Chrysler Corporation. "Mr. Iacocca," the man said, "I want to tell you how much I enjoy your television commercials advertising Chrysler." Iacocca replied, "Sir, I could care less of what you think of my commercials. What I want to know is what kind of car do you drive?" Beloved, it is one thing to enjoy the songs, the fellowship of Christians, and the preaching about Jesus Christ, it is another matter in making the choice to trust Him as your Savior. Have you done this?

* Acts 4:12 - Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.  
* John 14:6 - Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

It is very difficult for many folk to accept this fact that Christ is the only way of salvation. There are few that travel the narrow way. They want works or other means to bring salvation, but Christ is the only way. In the Luke text, Christ commanded us to "strive" to enter this strait gate.  
* Luke 13:24- Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

The word translated "strive" in this text comes from the Greek word agonizomai (ag-o-nid'-zom-ah-ee) which forms our English word "agonize." It is translated "laboring fervently" in Colossians 4:12. Thus entering the right path is obviously not easy to do. It requires considerable effort. Why? Our flesh does not want to give up its sin and submit to the Lord.

The phrase “strive to enter the straight gate” does not teach works for the gaining of salvation but rather earnestness in the quest for salvation. You have to earnestly want to be saved in order to come to Christ. There are so many things that prevent people from putting their faith in Christ for their salvation including a love for their sin, apathy, false doctrine, a desire to be popular, rejection of Bible truth, resistance from people, or being deceived by the lies of others.
Those who trust Christ find life. They not only enjoy a fulfilling life on earth when they are yielded to Him, but they also enjoy eternal life in Heaven. They will enjoy the streets of gold.

* 1 John 5:11-13 ... And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. [12] He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. [13] These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

* Revelation 21:16, 18... And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. [18] And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.

In 1903, a mountain fell on a town in the Canadian Rockies. The town of Frank, Alberta, was buried under 100 million tons of limestone. At least 76 men, women, and children were killed. It was the rich seams of coal in Turtle Mountain that caused people to build a town under its shadow. The desire and lust for coal led residents to ignore the regular tremors in the rocks above them. In fact, miners counted on the tremors to knock loose seams of coal and make their work easier. Days before the disaster, the mine had become "virtually self-operating in that all the miners had to do was shovel up coal as it fell from the ceiling."

The local Blackfoot nation, however, did not like to go near the mountain, referring to it as "the mountain that walks," but the town ignored all these warnings. Just after 4:00 a.m., April 29, 1903, an enormous piece of Turtle Mountain, 3,000 feet long and 500 feet thick, broke off and tumbled into the valley below. The exact number of dead will never be known. Of the 76 known dead, only 12 bodies were ever recovered. This town chose the broad or easy way when it came to mining coal. They were determined to have their own way. They had their own ideas of what was safe. They ignored the warnings from the Indians, but in the end, they were destroyed. This is what happens to those who do not enter the narrow way of salvation in Christ. They are destroyed. Do you know Jesus Christ as your Savior? If so, you will enjoy the streets of gold in Heaven. If not, you will spend eternity in a lake of fire. Make the right choice.
Chapter 13  
Wolves in Sheep’s Clothing  
Matthew 7:15-20  

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. [16] Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? [17] Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. [18] A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. [19] Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. [20] Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.
Jesus is beginning to wind down the message of this sermon on the mount. He is calling for a choice from His listeners. They need to make a choice to apply the Word or reject it. There is no in-between or gray area. We either choose to obey the Lord or we don’t. Christ commanded us to choose or enter the strait gate on the narrow way for this way leads to life. We are to beware of the broad way. He proceeds to warn us of the messengers of the broad way. He describes them as wolves in sheep’s clothing. We will note the Lord’s warning and the way to detect a false prophet or teacher.

I. THE WARNING CONCERNING FALSE PROPHETS 7:15

_Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves._

Chuck Swindoll tells the story about an unforgettable evening when a friend of his ate dog food. Contrary to what we might expect, he was not starving, nor was he being initiated into a fraternity. Rather, it happened at an elegant doctor’s home near Miami. The dog food was served on delicate little crackers with a wedge of imported cheese, bacon chips, and an olive, topped with a sliver of pimento. It was _Hors d'oeuvres a la Alpo!_

The deed was not perpetrated by an enemy, but by a good friend. With friends like that, who needs enemies! The hostess had just graduated from a gourmet cooking course and decided she would put her skills to the ultimate test...and did she ever. After doctoring up those miserable morsels of Alpo, she placed them on a silver tray. With a sly grin she watched them disappear. Swindoll's friend could not get enough. He was wolfing them down and kept coming back for more. Evidently the woman's friends were a pretty laid-back group because everyone had a good laugh when she told them what they had been eating.

This story is a classic illustration of what goes on in another realm, namely, the realm of spiritual deception. Phony preachers and teachers continue to market their wares on shiny platters decorated in such a way, that people do not know what they are really getting. Their dishes are topped with pious religious clichés and buzzwords and are being eagerly consumed by the tragically grateful. The duped even pay for these deceptions by the millions of dollars. This should never happen, and certainly the Lord does not want it to happen, but the flock of God is still being fleeced. That is why, as Jesus proceeds with the conclusion of the
Sermon on the Mount, He gives counsel and caution about wolves in sheep’s clothing, otherwise known as false prophets.

Jesus says, “BEWARE of false prophets.” The etymology of “beware” is from the Middle English words been war, (been= to be + war= careful). Here, the word “beware” is from the Greek word prosecho which means “to be on guard, pay close attention or be alert; to hold the mind or ear toward someone.” It was used as a nautical term and meant to steer a ship in a certain direction or on a certain course or to sail toward a certain destination.” Jesus wants us to stay focused on what He is saying here! Like my school teachers, He said, “Sit up straight and pay attention! Steer away from or be on guard against false prophets.”

The word “beware” indicates there is great danger present which will bring much harm to us if we do not keep up a good watch and exercise caution. The Bible tells us to beware of several things.

1. Perverse People

*Philippians 3:2- Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.

2. Pretension or hypocrisy

*Luke 12:1- In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

Hypocrisy hinders our happiness and helpfulness toward others. It leaves us feeling empty and dissatisfied. The Lord instructs us to be on our guard for it because of the damage it does to our Christian testimony.

3. Philosophy that is deceitful

*Colossians 2:8- Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

There are a lot “philosophy and traditions of men” being preached in our Baptist churches today. Such dogma has been creeping into our pulpits over the past twenty-five years. The reason for it stems partly from the worship of preachers with big churches that have been preaching philosophy contrary to Scripture. Another reason is a lack of diligent study of God’s Word. A number of Bible colleges are weak on training preachers in the study of God’s Word and the results are creating chaos and confusion from false teaching and ignorance. Many of these young men do not even know how to preach verse-by-verse through an entire book of the Bible. Why should they when their school teaches them that
expository preaching is bad preaching. I beg to differ!

Brethren, never be ashamed or intimidated for studying the Bible, no matter how many preachers belittle or make fun of such practices. Go ahead and get deep into the Word of God and feed your people a wonderful spiritual meal that will not only help them to mature in Christ, but will energize you and them to serve our King. Preach the Word! Preach the Word!

4. Beware of the Pressure or Powerful influence of the Wicked
* 2 Peter 3:17- Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. The influence and intimidation of those without Christ are very powerful.

5. Persecutors
* Matthew 10:17- But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; Over 160,000 Christians are martyred every year for Christ.

6. Perverted Doctrine
* Matthew 16:12- Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

Unfortunately, when the Lord tells men to beware of something, men tend to ignore His warnings and are defiant and determined to do their own will, only to ruin and destroy their lives. No one is going to tell them what to do, especially God. "Beware" always warns of danger. If I see a sign on a gate that says, "Beware of Dog," most likely, I am not going inside that gate. I learned a long time ago as a boy that "beware" means "WATCH OUT!" People put those dog signs on their gates or doors for a reason. They are not there for decoration or for us to say, "Oh, what a pretty sign." They put them up to warn you of their dog.

The word "beware" also conveys the idea of holding the mind away from something. False prophets are more than wrong; they are dangerous, and we should not expose our minds to them. They pervert thinking and poison the soul. They are more dangerous than a scorpion or cobra, because those animals can only harm the body. False prophets are spiritual beasts and are immeasurably more deadly than the physical ones because the damage they produce has eternal consequences. They are monsters. Both Peter and Jude call them "brute beasts.

* 2 Peter 2:12- But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption;
We are to beware of false prophets because they present themselves in sheep's clothing, but are really wolves. They are not what they claim to be. False prophets are wolves in character, but they like to hide under the disguise of sheep's clothing and portray themselves as sheep. While this “disguise” in our text is figurative language, in olden times this deceit in clothing was actually a literal deception. False prophets wore the garments of the true prophets in order to deceive the people of God.

When the shepherd watched his flocks upon the hillside, his garment was a sheepskin, worn with the skin outside and the fleece inside, but a man might wear a shepherd's dress and still not be a shepherd. The prophets had acquired a conventional dress. That sheepskin mantle had become the uniform of the prophets, just as the Greek philosophers had worn the philosopher's robe. It was by that mantle that the prophet could be distinguished from other men, but sometimes that garb was worn by those who had no right to wear it. There were those who wore a prophet's cloak, but who lived anything but a prophet's life. The prophet Zechariah speaks of this when referring to the judgment of false prophets that were trying to deceive God's people.

*Zechariah 13:4- And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive: The rough garment was the attire of a prophet and it was usually made from the hair of a camel. The prophet Elijah wore this kind of clothing. The messenger of King Ahaziah described Elijah to this king.*

* 2 Kings 1:8- And they answered him, He was an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins. And he said, It is Elijah the Tishbite.*

John the Baptist wore this kind of clothing too.

*Matthew 3:4 - And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.* False prophets dressed in this camel hair apparel of the true prophets in order to deceive the people.

Deception is a vital factor in determining the success of a false prophet. They needed to disguise themselves as something other than what they were, for their wolf-like character and message would offend or scare people away just as real wolves will frighten sheep. They must camouflage what they really are in order to gain acceptance. Being disguised as sheep makes them appear holy and harmless, for "sheep are an emblem of innocence, sincerity, and harmlessness.” This is the way a false prophet will present himself many times.
To be successful, false prophets need to have the approval and admiration of people so they will be accepted and many of them are admired. No wolf is approved or admired, but sheep are accepted. No wolf will be allowed into the sheepfold, but if a wolf is disguised as a sheep, he has a good possibility of being accepted into the fold.

Error rarely comes openly. Evil usually endeavors to come clothed in some righteous robe in order to deceive people and become more influential and effective in leading people astray and defiling them. Error is never so effective as it is when it is clothed in the robes of righteousness. This is a common, strategic tactic of Satan and his servants. Paul warned us about this method of spiritual warfare.

* 2 Corinthians 11:13-15.... For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. [14] And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. [15] Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

False teachers must disguise what they really are in order to be effective. They present themselves as servants of Christ. Paul is not surprised for Satan does the same thing, presenting or transforming himself as an angel of light or righteousness. That word “transformed” is from the Greek word metaschematizo {met-askh-ay-mat-id'-zo}. It means “to change, disguise, masquerade, or transform.” This is what Satan and his servants do.

In whatever form Satan appeared to Eve, his pretensions and professions gave him the appearance of good, and by pretending that Eve should get a great increase of light, that is, wisdom and understanding, he deceived her, and led her to transgress. It is generally said that Satan has three forms under which he tempts men: the subtle serpent; the roaring lion; and the angel of light. He often, as the angel of light, persuades men to do things under the name of religion, which are subversive to the cause of Christ. Thousands of Christians have been martyred and persecuted under the name of religion. People have killed Christians when they thought they were doing God’s work.

Christ exposed the great danger of the false prophets by calling them "ravining wolves." Thus, Christ said they were very cruel people. They were not innocent "sheep," but they were called by the Lord Himself, "ravining wolves." Paul also warned of wolves in the church.

* Matthew 10:16- Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.
* Acts 20:29- For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous
wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

Jesus was in the habit of calling things what they really were. The religious leaders of His day were called hypocrites, blind guides, fools, serpents, an vipers. He labeled sin as sin. Give sin its right names or you do nothing to help people see the peril of sin. You must label poison as poison or it will kill the innocent.

II. THE WAY TO DETECT A FALSE PROPHET 7:16-18, 20

Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? [17] Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. [18] A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit... [20] Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

How do you know if someone is a false prophet? Is there a way to determine this? The answer is “Yes.” The Bible gives us a description of the traits of a false prophet or teacher. The way by which we can discern a false prophet is to check his fruits. This figure or parable which Christ uses here is a common saying even today and it is a very valid one.

Fruit reveals a tree. It helps us to "know" unquestionably what a tree really is. The word translated "know" in our text means "full knowledge.” Fruit discloses the true character or creed of a person. The fruit of each tree reveals its actual character. It is the final test.” One may misjudge what a tree is by looking at its leaves, branches, flowers or other features other than the fruit, but the fruit is proof-positive of the identification of the tree. If the tree has apples, you know that it is an apple tree and not a plum tree, orange tree, walnut tree or a peach tree.

The examination of fruit is ordinary and common, and gives "full knowledge" of many philosophies, people, and programs, but some folk do not want to know the truth so they ignore the "fruit" and then wonder why they are ensnared in some relationship, creed, or activity that causes them much loss and grief.

Those who are wise, however, will avoid the wolves in sheep’s clothing. How do we spot them? How can one determine the character of false teachers? You need only look at the fruit they produce. Grapes and figs do not grow on thorn-bushes or thistles. Good fruit trees produce good fruit, but bad fruit trees produce bad fruit. So what is the fruit of a false prophet? What are their traits?
As we look at these traits, we will find that they will not only describe false teachers, but will also describe people in your family, at work, or at school that tell you how to live and what to do with your life. When they do this, they are teaching or counseling, even though what they are saying is garbage. I have seen plenty of people messed up by the advice of the gals and the guys at work. Plenty of folks have also been messed up by T.V. talk show hosts and secular, anti-Christ psychiatrists.

* Traits of False Prophets

1. False Prophets are Dissolute and Decadent.

False prophets are like a corrupt tree. The word “corrupt” here does not signify, as our translation would seem to indicate, that the tree had been good, but had become ineffective or defected, but that it was a tree of a useless character, of a nature that produces nothing beneficial. They are men that have not been born again by the Spirit of God. There is no life in them. As the thorn can only produce thorns, not grapes; and the thistle, not figs, but prickles; so an unregenerate heart will produce fruits of degeneracy. As we perfectly know that a good tree will not produce bad fruit, and the bad tree will not and cannot produce good fruit, so we know that the profession of godliness, while the life is ungodly, is fraud, hypocrisy, and deceit. A man cannot be a saint and a “lost” sinner at the same time.

False prophets many times are often very immoral and plagued with sex scandals. Women are a great source of temptation to them. This is not true of all of them, but it is with many, because they are very selfish, carnal people. Their selfishness is a key factor in their taking advantage of people, especially beautiful, sensual women. They prey on women that have weak resistance to sexual temptation and a habit of indulging in immorality. Paul referred to this in 2 Timothy 3.

* 2 Timothy 3:5-6... Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts,

* 2 Peter 2:14- Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children:

* Jeremiah 23:14- I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as
Gomorrah.
* Zephaniah 3:4- Her prophets are light and treacherous persons: her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law. The word “light” means “wanton, reckless, undisciplined, sensual.” Their immoral lifestyles manifest the falseness of their ministry. Like the priests in Ezekiel's day, these false prophets "put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they showed difference between the unclean and the clean” (Ezekiel 22:26).

2. False Prophets are Desirous and Devouring People. (Greedy)

False prophets are greedy like wolves. A false prophet is in the business of teaching, not for what he can give to others, but for what he can get for himself. Wolves are interesting animals and very skilled hunters. God has equipped them well for hunting. When a wolf gets hungry his sense of smell is greatly enhanced. In the right atmosphere a wolf can smell prey from up to one and a half miles away. Wolves can also run up to 28 miles per hour in short sprints over open terrain and 22 m.p.h. for approximately 2 miles. Their average pace is about five to nine miles per hour.

The hearing of the wolf is very acute. It is believed that the upper range of a wolves' hearing is upwards of 80 kHz. The upper range of humans is only 20 kHz. It is stated that a wolf can hear up to 6 miles away in a forest and 10 miles in open areas, including some high-pitched sounds that even a human can't hear, in the range where bats and porpoises produce sound. Even when it sleeps, a wolf's ears stand straight up so it can catch sounds made by other animals at all times. This helps the wolf catch prey, and lets it know when danger is near. All of these hunting tools are needed to help the wolf fulfill its appetite.

When it comes to their ravenous appetites, on an average, wolves eat 9 pounds of meat per wolf per day during winter. They have enormous stomachs. Although the wolf is capable of eating large quantities of food in a short time with its 42 teeth, such quantities are not always available. Thus, wild wolves may have to go for several days at a time without eating. Wolves probably could fast for periods of two weeks or more while searching for vulnerable prey.

False prophets are described as ravening wolves which speaks of a specific sin. It speaks of greed for material wealth and guile in obtaining it. In short, it speaks of extortion. The word “ravening” is from the Greek word harpax {har'-pax} which means “to rob, swindle, to be violently greedy.” It also means "rapacious" that is, to seize by force, just like a wolf. This is the only place where harpax is translated “ravening” in the
KJV. The other four times it is translated "extortioner" or "extortioners" (Luke 18:11; 1 Corinthians 5:10, 11; 6:10). They assumed the appearance of holiness, in order that they might the more readily get the property of the people.

An extortioner is one who obtains money or other material possession from people by force, intimidation, deception, or some illegal power. Their methods are wolf-like. Wolves do not pursue their prey in politeness and high principle. They get what they want by cruel force. Ezekiel described evil princes in his day as wolves.

* Ezekiel 22:27- Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain.

The sons of Eli were wicked priests and greedy like wolves. They took excessive amounts of meat from the sacrifices of the people. If the people were unwilling to do this, they threatened to take the meat by force (1 Samuel 2:13-16). This was extortion. The Pharisees were extortioners too, taking advantage of widows. Jesus labeled them accurately.

* Luke 16:14- And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him.

* Matthew 23:14- Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

* Matthew 23:25- Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.

Does this kind of extortion go on today? You bet! False prophets will use pressure, intimidation, and guilt trips to get people to give. They are consumed with the subject of money. When some preacher on television tells you to mail in your money for a splinter of the cross of Jesus or for holy hankies and you will have a miracle, they are guilty of extortion. They cannot guarantee this. The power of any miracle rests with God, not a holy hanky.

When a person says, "Give me so much money and I will pray your relative out of purgatory," they are guilty of extortion and also lying because there is no such place as purgatory. No one has power to affect the destiny of any person, once that person is dead. If a person dies without Christ, he spends eternity in Hell and no one can get him out. If he was saved, he is with the Lord in Heaven.

3. False Prophets are Dishonest and Deceptive.

* Jeremiah 28:15- Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah; The Lord hath not sent thee; but thou
makes this people to trust in a lie.

* 1 Timothy 6:3-5... If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; [4] He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, [5] Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.

* Ephesians 4:14- That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

**Bluntly putting it, false prophets are liars.** They lie a lot. They make promises but do not fulfill them such as, “Give this money and we will do this or that for you,” but it never gets done. A false prophet claims a position, a calling, a commission that is not his. John addressed this problem.

* 1 John 4:1- Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

* Revelation 2:2- I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

Some of them may even claim they are Christ. Others claim they have a special Divine calling and anointing, such as the phony "faith healers.” Whatever the case, they claim a divine calling to preach which they in truth do not have. They pose as men of God when they are nothing of the sort.

**False prophets are also dishonest and deceptive in the sense of what they do not say.** Let me explain. The false teacher or prophet may give the appearance of being fundamental in his doctrine. He may speak favorably of Christ, the cross, the Bible, the Holy Spirit, and so on, and associate with true believers. He may go out of his way to sound biblical. From his looks, vocabulary, and associations, he gives considerable evidence of genuine, sincere belief, but he is not genuine. He is a fake and a deceiver.

Most frequently they show their true colors by what they do not affirm. In other words, they are identified not so much by what they say as by what they do not say. They usually do not openly deny Jesus’ divinity, His substitutionary atonement, the depravity and lostness of man, the reality and penalty of sin, the destiny of hell for unbelievers, the
need for repentance, humility, and submission to God, and other such 
"negative" and uncomfortable truths. They simply ignore them. They just
don't talk about these topics at all. There are other men, however, that
will vehemently deny these things. It depends on the man.

The false prophet usually avoids preaching on such things as the
holiness, righteousness, justice, and the wrath of God. He usually does not
say he does not believe these truths. He just doesn’t mention them. Any
exposition of these truths would be upsetting, especially to the
unbelievers in his church, so he avoids them, and his people are ignorant
of these essential doctrines. The main emphasis of his preaching is God's
love, which he fails to keep in balance with God's justice or wrath.

He also avoids preaching on the doctrine of the final judgment. In
this regard, two of America's most flourishing cults, the Mormons and
the Jehovah's Witnesses — reject the Biblical doctrine of Hell in favor of
a less stringent and less offensive approach.

False prophets also fail to emphasize the sinfulness and depravity
of mankind. The truth that man is sinful to the very core of his being and
that he cannot save himself are consciously avoided. The substitutionary
death and atonement of Christ is also shunned. They may talk about
Christ's death on the cross, but they do not have His substitutionary
atonement in view.

False prophets like to emphasize the positive at the expense of the
destruction of those hearing his message. They lead people into a false
security. His message comforts and soothes and never warns of judgment.
He wants everyone to speak well of him. There is nothing to make anyone
uneasy, but rather only things that make people feel good, content, and
falsely assured. They characterize anyone who preaches otherwise as
negative. The false prophet is like the false prophets in Jeremiah's time.

* Jeremiah 6:14- They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my
people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace. They offer
superficial treatments for people's mortal wounds. They give assurances
of peace when there is no peace at all.
* Jeremiah 23:17- They say still unto them that despise me, The Lord
hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh
after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you.
* Isaiah 30:10- Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets,
Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy
deceits: False prophets speak smooth things. They don't rock the boat.
* Micah 3:11- The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests
thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will
they lean upon the Lord, and say, Is not the Lord among us? none evil can come upon us. They say, “The Lord is with us. Nothing will happen to us.”

False teachers will give people a sense of hope and security, but it is in reality false. The focus of the people is directed toward adoration for the prophet instead of upon God. The false prophet feeds on this attention. False prophets many times are very charismatic leaders. People like to be around them, especially women who are attracted to their power. The popularity of these men leads to the perversion of their preaching as their pride is inflated. Their philosophies take precedence over Scripture. False prophets were praised in Old Testament times by backslidden Israelites.

* Luke 6:26 - Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.
* Matthew 23:5- But all their works they do for to be seen of men: .....
an advantage or make a desired impression. Before his bizarre death, he had managed to gain the admiration and praises of countless church leaders, governors, senators, congressmen, and even the President of the United States.

The greatest tragedy of Jonestown was not that nearly a thousand people died, but that they died believing they were serving God. In truth, of course, they were serving Satan, and were on their way to Hell if they did not know Jesus Christ. Any believers who may have been among them incurred great loss of reward.

* Jude 1:4- For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

4. False Prophets are characterized by Drunkenness.

* Isaiah 28:7- But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment.

False prophets tend to have a lack of self control. They all may not be boozers, but many of them indulge in alcohol. I am amazed at the number of Baptist preachers that endorse “social drinking” and think there is nothing wrong with it at all. The paper this week ran an article of a Baptist church in the St.Louis, Missouri area that is reaching people with beer parties. The church has grown immensely. Yet, you won’t hear any preaching against liquor in this church. In fact, you won’t hear much Bible preaching at all. Time is spent discussing and debating social issues. They are going to have difficulty helping an alcoholic. To make matters worse, their endorsement of liquor may cause someone to indulge in drinking that could lead to their becoming an alcoholic. I would hate to be in their shoes when they stand before God. Just because you have a bunch of people does not mean you have a church that is pleasing to God. Revelation chapter two and three confirm this truth. Not all churches please the Lord, especially when sin is not only tolerated, but also promoted by the ministry!

5. False Prophets Preach Damnable Doctrines.

Their preaching contradicts the Scriptures. This is why it is vital to know the Bible and study it intensely so you can recognize false doctrine when it surfaces.

* 2 Peter 2:1- But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in
damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring
upon themselves swift destruction. False prophets may openly deny the
Lord. Others may be more subtle.
* 1 John 4:3- And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is
come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist,
whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in
the world.
* Isaiah 8:20- To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not
according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. False
prophets walk in the dark.

We have many of those kind around in our day. False doctrines are
being preached by Roman Catholic priests who teach purgatory, Mary
worship, and other doctrines which are contrary to Scripture, to cult
leaders who teach such things as Christ has already returned to earth or
that they are, in fact, Christ themselves.

* Matthew 24:24- For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets,
and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were
possible, they shall deceive the very elect

One of the most recent well-known articles about a false Christ is
from CBS News, Channel 4 out of Miami, Florida. They posted and
article on September 12, 2006, entitled The Man Who Claims to be Jesus.
Puerto Rican-born Jose Luis de Jesus Miranda presides over a world-wide
movement that believes he is Jesus Christ who has returned again to the
earth. The church is called Growing in Grace Ministry. He refers to his
ministry as God's government on earth.

I looked on his website and found that he refers to himself as Christ
Jesus, the King of Kings and Lord of lords and he has returned to the
earth. His followers believe he is God and lavish him with money and
gifts. What De Jesus is doing at more than 300 centers in Central and
South America, Cuba and the U.S. is preaching a message of "freedom to
indulge" because according to this modern messiah, there is no sin, no
devil and no hell to pay. De Jesus says, "It doesn't exist. The devil was
destroyed two thousand years ago."

It is music to the ears of his followers, mostly Hispanic men and
women who believe they are God's chosen people, predestined for
salvation no matter what they do on earth. They also believe all other
faiths are false and must be destroyed, from Catholics to Baptists and
Jehovah's witnesses. His followers have organized marches at which they
destroy religious books and symbols. They also have a campaign aimed
at disrupting other religious gatherings, sometimes with violent
consequences.

The words of Matthew Henry are very appropriate at this juncture. Matthew Henry said, "If the doctrine be of God, it will tend to promote serious piety, humility, charity, holiness, and love with other Christian graces; but if, on the contrary, the doctrines these [false] prophets preach have a manifest tendency to make people proud, worldly, and contentious, to make them loose and careless in their conversations, unjust or uncharitable, factious or disturbers of the public peace;... This wisdom is not from above." If you want to read what well-known false teachers are saying today, get Hank Hanegraaff’s book *Christianity in Crisis*. This book is a real eye-opener of the false teachings of famous television preachers.

III. THE WOE OF FALSE PROPHETS 7: 19

*Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.*

As bad trees are cut down and burned, such is the destiny of false teachers or anyone who does not know Jesus Christ as their Savior. The punishment of false teachers is severe because their damage is severe. They portray themselves to be friends, but they in essence are enemies of men’s souls, for their anti-Christ message condemns men to Hell if it is embraced.

Beloved, the person who endeavors to deceive you by making you feel good when your destiny is judgment and eternal torment, is not your friend. The person that does not warn you of the consequences of sin, but instead, comforts you in your corruption, is not your friend. The preacher that will not warn you about the terrors of Hell and how to escape from its flames is not your friend at all. The false prophet is a soldier of Satan and should be recognized and resisted at all cost. He is a wolf in sheep’s clothing and not your friend at all.

The friendship of Kristofer Walker and George Obourn Jr. is a classic example of what I call genuine, sincere friendship. According to the October 13th, 2006, issue of *USA Today*, these 20 year-old boys grew up in Creve Coeur, Illinois, near Peoria. They were almost inseparable growing up, especially in high school. They were both in the school band, played video games together and loved to eat at Monical’s Pizza together. Their dream was to join the army as Cavalry Scouts and that is what they did together. They went through basic training together and in Iraq they served in the same squadron. They were buds and cared about
each other dearly as Jonathan loved David. You could say they were friends that stuck closer than a brother.

On October 2, 2006, their lives together ended. Kristofer Walker was killed when his Humvee truck hit a roadside bomb in Taji, near Baghdad. As they followed one another in life, so they followed one another in death. Two days later, George Obourn followed his dear friend in death when he was killed clearing a building of insurgents in the same area. Walker was buried today(10/13/2006), and Obourn will be buried tomorrow. Their deaths have been devastating to the entire town of Creve Coeur, Illinois, but their legacy of love, loyalty, and friendship will live on for many years in the memories of the people that knew them.

You never know when death will come. If you died today, would you go to Heaven? Are you ready? You can be prepared by trusting the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior. He is the Lamb of God that was died for the sins of the world and rose again from the grave. He is a friend that sticks closer than a brother. Do you know Him?
Chapter 14
The Day Jesus Says, “Go Away”

Matthew 7:21-23

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. [22] Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? [23] And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

I can’t think of anything more painful to a child than to be told to “Go away,” by the kids he plays with day by day. When I was seven, I vividly remember a day I was told to “Go away,” by the kids in my neighborhood. In fact, they locked me out of the garage where they were playing. So I warned them to let me in or else I would break the door down like Superman. They didn’t heed my warning.

So I went back about thirty feet and started running toward the glass-pane door to knock it down. Both of my arms were outstretched and hit the glass panels of the door. My hands and arms shattered the glass and were torn to shreds. I ran home screaming with both arms covered in blood. My mother was able to wrap the long, deep cuts on my arms with towels while our neighbor drove me and my mom to the doctor.

After two hours of surgery and fifty stitches, I went home. I left the doctor, but the scars from that day have never left me. They are a constant reminder of the perils of playing Superman or pretending to be something you are not. They also remind me of the pain of being told to “Go Away!” This is the issue that is addressed here. Jesus will deal firmly with those who profess to be something they are not and will sadly, but firmly tell them one day, “Go away!”
I. THE CLAIM FOR ENTRANCE INTO HEAVEN  7:21a
Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven;

English is a strange language. For example, there is no butter in buttermilk and no egg in eggplant. There is no ham in a hamburger and no apple in a pineapple. Quicksand works very slowly and boxing rings are square. Inconsistencies of language are common, but not significant. Inconsistencies in life are very common and profoundly significant, especially when the inconsistency is in our lives.

Beloved, genuine Christians must act and live like Christians. Our words and deeds must be consistent with what we profess, lest we become a stumbling block to those who are watching us which include our family, friends, foes, and fellow-students or workers. Paul warned us about our lives being read by others and the peril of being a stumbling block.
* 2 Corinthians 3:2- Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:
* Romans 14:13- Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way.

The previous section in our study of the Sermon on the Mount was about false prophets or wolves in sheep’s clothing. This section is about the issue of those who make a false profession of faith. The previous section was about being deceived by others, but this portion is about being deceived by a more persuasive person, yourself. Jesus turns from the issue of false prophets to false professors, from unsound teachers to unsound hearers.

Self-deception is a serious problem because it eventually condemns men to Hell. Not only can false prophets deceive us about the way of salvation, but we can deceive ourselves. Sinful man is biased in his own favor and, because of pride, he tends to reject Christ, which eventually leads to his eternal destruction.
* Proverbs 14:12- There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

This text from the Sermon on the Mount is not about those who are apostates or cultists. It is about those who think they are saved and yet are not. The people in our text are not those who deny the important doctrines of the faith, but are those whose profession of faith is not real. These people are not intentional hypocrites, who for some personal gain make a profession of faith while they know full well that they are not believers.
Please take note that the Lord is not speaking to irreligious people, to atheists or agnostics. He is speaking specifically to people who are devotedly religious, but who are deluded into thinking they are on the road to Heaven when in reality, they are on the broad road to Hell. These are religious folks who think they are saved but are not. They had a form of godliness, but had no spiritual power. They were religious, but lost. Paul spoke of this problem.

* 2 Timothy 3:5- Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

Jesus said that not everyone who said, “Lord, Lord,” would enter the kingdom of Heaven. A Jew could use the term “lord” simply as a title of respect and honor that was given to any political, military, or religious leader, including teachers. For these people to say, “Lord, Lord,” suggests much more than human respect, as their following comments make clear. The fact that they claimed to have prophesied, cast out demons, and performed miracles in Jesus’ name indicates they acknowledged Jesus as Lord in a supernatural way.

**The word “Lord” was a common Jewish substitute title for Jehovah, which name they considered too holy to utter.** Therefore, to address Jesus as Lord was to address Him as the one true God. To address Him as “Lord, Lord” was to publicly add a spirit of intense zeal to demonstrate their strength of devotion and dedication to the Lord. Let’s be clear that Jesus did not criticize their reference to Him as "Lord." We must profess Christ as "Lord" if we are to be saved. To claim “I will trust Him as Savior but not make Him Lord” would be an indication of the insincerity of your decision. He must be Lord!

* Romans 10:9- That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

On Saturday, June 22, 2002, the scheduled game between the St. Louis Cardinals and the Chicago Cubs at Wrigley Field was cancelled because of an eerie discovery. The Card’s ace pitcher was found dead in a Chicago hotel room. Thirty-three-year-old Darryl Kile, who wore number 57, had been a major league pitching sensation for 12 years and had appeared in three All-Star games. At a recent team physical, the 6-foot 5-inch athlete seemed to be in excellent health. When the medical examiners conducted an autopsy later that day, they discovered that Kile had died from a massive heart attack. His main coronary artery was ninety percent blocked. Darryl Kile appeared to be healthy, but his heart was diseased.
Jesus reminded us here that a person's appearance and behavior can be misleading. The Pharisees, for example, looked impressive, but their hearts were far from God. This is what the Lord is addressing in this portion of Matthew 7. Calling Jesus "Lord, Lord," is not the problem. Christ is to be called "Lord" and one day everyone will do this.

*Philippians 2:9-11... Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: [10] That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth: [11] And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

The problem of this profession in Matthew 7:21 is the lack of genuine sincerity. This profession about the Lord Jesus Christ was nothing but empty words. Lloyd Jones said, “The man who is truly saved and who has a genuine assurance of salvation does make, and must make, these statements, but the mere making of these statements does not guarantee, or assure, a man of his salvation.” Beloved, God is not impressed with our lip service, indicated here by the statements of Christ. He is looking at what is going on in our heart and our obedience to Him.

*Matthew 15:8- This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.*

*John 14:15- If ye love me, keep my commandments.*

The words of an engraving from the cathedral of Lübeck, Germany, beautifully reflect our Lord’s teaching here: “Thus speaketh Christ our Lord to us,

You call Me master and obey Me not,
you call Me light and see Me not,
you call Me the way and walk Me not,
you call Me life and live Me not,
you call Me wise and follow Me not,
you call Me fair and love Me not,
you call Me rich and ask Me not,
you call Me eternal and seek Me not,
if I condemn thee, blame Me not.”

When the Lord looks into your heart, what does He see? Have you been born again?
II. THE CONDITION FOR SALVATION  7:21b
...but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

The condition for going to Heaven is doing the will of God.
What is this all about? There is only one way in which a man's sincerity can be proved, and that is by the practice of his life. Fine words or "God talk" can never be a substitute for fine deeds. There is only one proof of love, and that proof is obedience. There is no point in saying that we love a person, and then do things which break that person's heart. These principles apply in our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

So often Christians confess God with their lips and then deny Him with their lives. It is not difficult to recite a creed, but it is difficult to live the Christian life, especially when you are not a Christian. Faith without practice is a contradiction in terms, and love without obedience is an impossibility. A man who refuses to say "Lord, Lord" will never enter the kingdom of Heaven. All true Christians say, "Lord, Lord," but not all who say "Lord, Lord" are true Christians! Head knowledge of Jesus Christ and His Word does not indicate saving faith. You can be absolutely correct in your belief about Christ's nature and person, His atonement for our sins, His resurrection, and His return and yet, not be truly saved.

Multitudes of religious people are lost because they do not do God's will. So what is Christ referring to when He speaks of "doing the will of God?" Is this salvation by works as some have claimed? No. We are not saved by doing good deeds even though this is important. Some have used this text to teach good works for salvation. Their argument is that it takes more than a confession of Christ to be saved and stay saved. You also have to do good works to be saved. That argument, however, runs into great difficulty when the context of this passage is considered, for in verse 22, great deeds and works are also condemned as insufficient for salvation. These folks were doing supposedly "good deeds" but they were not adequate for salvation. Paul made it clear that we are not saved by our works.

* Ephesians 2:8-9. . . For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: [9] Not of works, lest any man should boast.

When the Lord speaks of doing the will of God, He is referring to a profound heart-obedience that is not only on the surface but permeates our entire inner being. Doing the will of God requires confessing Christ as Savior and Lord. If the confession is sincere, it will also include genuine repentance and obedience to Jesus as Lord which comes from the
heart and being of a person.

It is unacceptable to call Jesus "Lord" but not do what He says. The evidence of salvation will be seen in conduct as well as confession. Our conduct and confession are influenced by what we really are on the inside. One must not always think so much about what one should do, but rather what one should be. When we fail to see a change in the conduct (works) of the sinner who claims (words) to have come to Christ for salvation, we are seeing a phony convert. The phoniness and insincerity is what Jesus condemns. He demands that our decision is sincere and from the heart.

* Ephesians 6:6- Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

III. THE CONFIDENT CLAIMS OF AN UNSAVED CROWD 7:22  

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

The expression "face the music" is said to have originated in Japan. According to the story, one man in the imperial orchestra couldn't play a note. Being a person of great influence and wealth, he had demanded that he be given a place in the group because he wanted to "perform" before the Emperor. The conductor agreed to let him sit in the second row of the orchestra, even though he couldn't read music. He was given a flute, and when a concert would begin, he'd raise his instrument, pucker his lips, and move his fingers. He would go through all the motions of playing, but he never made a sound. This deception continued for two years.

Then a new conductor took over. He told the orchestra that he wanted to audition each player personally. One by one they performed in his presence. Then came the flutist's turn. He was frantic with worry, so he pretended to be sick. However, the doctor who was ordered to examine him declared that he was perfectly well. The conductor insisted that the man appear and demonstrate his skill. Shamefacedly he had to confess that he was a fake. He was unable to "face the music."

In the realm of Christian service, many professing believers go through the motions, but they are only pretenders. Someday they will be called upon to stand before the Judge of Heaven and earth, and their deception will be revealed. No one will be able to hide in the crowd. Many will face the music one day when they stand before the Lord.
They will be confronted with the fact that they have been living their lives by the wrong standard. The standards of men are not high enough for God. When we look at the accomplishments of these folks in these verses, it is nothing to sneeze at, but it is not good enough. Their confident claims will blow up in their faces. Men fall short of God's standard of righteousness.

* Isaiah 64:6- But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

* Romans 3:23- For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

Jesus said, "Many will say to me in that day." The word "many" indicates that the crowd of false professors will be a large crowd. Broad is the way that leads to destruction. Christ did not say that a few people here and there are guilty of false profession, but He said that "many" are guilty of it. There will be surprises in Heaven at judgment time. Some of the biggest surprises will be the great number of professing Christians who will not make it into Heaven because they never were truly born again. That's tragic. They professed to know Christ, but never possessed Him as their Savior. This is the nightmare of any pastor. The dread of having people listen to his Gospel preaching week after week, but never truly trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice that those who are guilty of a false profession of salvation will become very defensive of their "supposed" salvation. They will, in fact, be so defensive of their deeds that our passage says they will argue at judgment time with the Lord about their salvation. They will believe they deserve to go to Heaven, but that is part of their problem. No one deserves to go to Heaven, but because of His mercy we have eternal life. They will think so highly of themselves as to argue with Christ the Judge about their merits for Heaven. Unfortunately, these folks will be confident like the Laodicean church, yet tragically mistaken and duped.

* Revelation 3:17- Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

These claims evidenced that these folk had abundantly deceived themselves into thinking they were safe and secure for Heaven, that what they said and what they did had gotten them a ticket for eternal life. The "have we not" is the language of implied affirmative. It is as if they were saying, "Surely because we have done all these wonderful works—we must be saved." It is the language of confidence. They flatter themselves
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deserved to go to Heaven? Notice their words, "Have we not prophesied in thy name?" Here they refer to their words, particularly to their prophesying or preaching. This matter of prophesying included both foretelling and forth-telling. Prophets predicted the future but they also were God's messengers to bring messages about the present in terms of conduct. Basically, to prophesy means to deliver a spiritual message. So prophesying includes what we know as preaching today.

As unbelievable as it may seem, it is possible for a man to proclaim God's message and still be unsaved, and it is also possible for a man to predict the future correctly and still be unsaved. Balaam did some predicting about Israel and spoke the message of God, but Balaam was not a member of God's family and perished with the ungodly. King Saul was certainly not among the redeemed, yet he prophesied on one occasion.

* 1 Samuel 10:10-11... And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a company of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them. [11] And it came to pass, when all that knew him beforetime saw that, behold, he prophesied among the prophets, then the people said one to another, What is this that is come unto the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?

Caiaphas, the high priest when Christ was on earth, prophesied (John 11:51,52), but he did not believe on Christ.

* John 11:51-52... And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; [52] And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.

It is a terrible thing that a man can proclaim God's message and yet go to Hell when he dies, but that is the warning of our text. It is not the message you preach that saves you, but it is genuinely trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ that saves a person.

These debaters will also base their argument on their works of casting out devils and doing many other wonderful works. Some of these false professors of Christ will have cast out demons. That was a truthful report, for Christ did not call them liars. It is possible for a person to be unsaved and still cast out demons. Judas Iscariot cast out demons but was not redeemed. When Christ chose His twelve disciples, "he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out" (Matthew 10:1). This
included giving Judas Iscariot the power to cast out demons, too, even though Judas was a traitor. There were some unbelievers in Paul's day that were casting out demons.

* Acts 19:13-14 ... Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. [14] And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so.

They also will lay claim to many "wonderful works." The Greek word translated "wonderful works" here is *dunamis*, the word from which we get the English word dynamite. It is the word translated "power" 77 times in the New Testament. These false professors had much power. It was not just a great work here and there, but they had done a great number of them, not in their own name, but in the name of Jesus. They could do great and mighty miracles as we already saw in their casting out demons. The lesson here is it is possible to do many powerful things even in the area of religion and still go to Hell when you die. The power of working miracles has no necessary connection with salvation or righteousness.

God may as well, if He chooses, give the power of raising the dead to a wicked man, as the skill of healing to a wicked physician. A miracle is a display of His own power through the medium of another. An act of healing the sick is also a display of His power through the agency of another. In neither of these cases is there any necessary connection with moral character.

The same holds true of preaching, or prophesying. Many unsaved men have built impressive religious organizations, schools, churches, and missions over the years. You do not have to be saved to perform "wonderful works" and do great miracles, and having this power does not save you either. Grace will bring a man to Heaven without working miracles, but working miracles will never bring a man to Heaven without grace.

The great number of works would really help to deceive these false believers. Just one or two great works would have been written off as coincidence, but to do many great works carries a lot of weight. However, it matters not how many wonderful deeds a person has done, that is not what saves the soul. It is faith in Jesus Christ that saves. If you are keeping a list of your good works, throw it away. It will not do you any good at judgment day. Salvation comes through Christ not through a high count of wonderful works.
On "that day" (the day of judgment), only our relationship with Christ, our acceptance of Him as Savior and our obedience to Him will matter. Many people think that if they are "good" people and say religious things, they will be rewarded with eternal life. In reality, faith in Christ is what will count at the judgment. "That day" is the final day of reckoning when God will settle all accounts, judging sin at the Great White Throne Judgment. Jesus will be the Judge of those whose profession of faith is false on "that day." This is the day of final retribution. Those who are guilty of false-profession will be judged. There will be no more opportunity to correct their problem. There will be no more opportunity to become saved, to make their profession true.

IV. THE COMMAND TO DEPART 7:23
And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

When I went to my high school reunion several years ago, there was a man there that I played football with for two years. I called him by name and asked how he was doing. His response was, "Who are you? I don't know who you are?" I told him we played football together for two years. His response was not, "Oh, I remember now!" No, he said again, "I don't remember you," and walked away. I remember that I felt somewhat disappointed and even humiliated when he said this because I knew this guy all the way through junior high school and high school. I forget the names of folks sometimes and ask their pardon, but this guy wasn't as cordial. Beloved, nothing like this compares to the humiliation that religious people without Christ will feel when they will stand before the Lord one day and Jesus looks at them and says, "Depart from me, I never knew you." Ouch!

The consequence of a false profession in the Lord is eternal judgment. He will say to many, "I never knew you." At the back of this passage is not only humiliation, but also the idea of judgment. All through it there runs the certainty that the day of reckoning is coming. A man may succeed for a while in maintaining pretenses and disguises, but there will come a day when the pretenses are shown for what they are, and the camouflage and disguises are stripped away. We may deceive men with our words, but we cannot deceive God. No man can ultimately deceive the Lord who sees our heart.

* Psalm 139:2- Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.
The term "I never knew you" does not refer to the knowledge of Christ. He is omniscient and knows all things. Therefore, He could not say He did not know of the existence of someone or about someone. Rather, this phrase, "I never knew you" speaks of a relationship with Christ. The phrase, "I never knew you" means "I never approved or regarded you as my friends." When Christ said He "never" knew them, He was not speaking of losing one's salvation. These folks had never been born again in the first place. They had never been true Christians and had never been regarded by the Savior as His true friends.

* Psalm 1:6- For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

* 2 Timothy 2:19 - Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

* 1 Corinthians 8:3- But if any man love God, the same is known of him.

Jesus will not then say to false prophets and false professors of religion, that He had once known them, and then rejected them; that they had been once Christians and then had fallen away. He is saying that He had never known them. Whatever might have been their pretended joys, their raptures, their hopes, their self-confidence, their visions, their zeal, they had never been regarded by the Savior as His true friends.

* 1 John 2:19 - They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

* Matthew 25:41 - Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

Jesus said, "Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you." The word "profess" indicates a publication, an open announcement, and declaration of the doom of those who are guilty of a false profession. What humiliation will take place at the judgment. Sinners who have walked in the praise and honor of men shall have their doom, their guilt, and their sin publicly announced and declared. They will be told themselves of their sins, others will hear their doom, and then all the glory and praise they received of men will mean nothing. Then they will learn that the only praise that counts is the praise that God gives. Never will the sinner be more humbled than when his doom is announced publicly. The redeemed, in contrast, will experience eternal glory as they will be vindicated by the Lord Himself. They may have been shamed, mocked,
or martyred in the world, but Heaven will honor them.

Jesus will say to false professors in Christ, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity." He will say, "Go away!" This sentence speaks of the abhorrence of God for these sinners. All unsaved sinners of whatever kind will experience the same sentence. It is called elsewhere the "second death."

* Revelation 21:8-* But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. The first death is separation of body from soul and the second death is separation of soul from God. The second death involves the great suffering of "fire and brimstone."

* 2 Thessalonians 1:9-* Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;

What a terrible thing to be rejected by God. What a terrible thing to have God say He does not want you in His presence, but the unsaved have no grounds for complaint, for in rejecting Christ as Savior, they have literally said they do not want God in their presence. They will get what they wanted for eternity.

Notice that the Lord labels all these mighty deeds and works as "iniquity." The righteousness of men that reject the righteousness of Christ is considered as iniquity. It is filthy in the eyes of God. When a person is not saved, he is seen by God in all his sinfulness. God sees the heart, and if the blood of Jesus Christ has not cleansed the heart, what He sees will be nothing but iniquity. How important then is it to be certain of our salvation. May God grant us honesty as we face this terrifying truth, this truth we shall have to answer for when all earthly scenes have passed away and we stand before Christ and face Him. If you feel you are lost, confess it to God, hunger and thirst after righteousness, turn believingly to the Lord Jesus Christ.

* 2 Corinthians 13:5a-* Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith;...

John Newton, author of the song "Amazing Grace" said, "If I ever reach Heaven I expect to find three wonders there: first, to meet some I had not thought to see there; second, to miss some I had thought to meet there; and third, the greatest wonder of all, to find myself there." Will you be there or will the Lord tell you to "Go away," because you rejected Him? It is my prayer that when the roll is called up yonder you’ll be there.
Chapter 15
Living on Solid Stone or Sinking Sand
Matthew 7:24-29

Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: [25] And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. [26] And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: [27] And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. [28] And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: [29] For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

Jesus is about to close the curtain on the Sermon of the Mount, leaving the listeners to come to an honest decision on what kind of person they are and how they are going to live their lives. Are they going to live on solid stone or sinking sand? Will they live wisely or foolishly? A person cannot say, “Well, I just won’t make any decision right now.” That won’t work because that is still a decision. There is no neutrality when it comes to obeying the Lord in your life. You will either obey or disobey His will, His Word, or His way.

In this sunset section, Jesus describes the wise person and how they build or live their lives and the foolish and how they construct and live out their lives. He describes the trials that both kinds of people face, but with different results. You and I are making choices every day. Are we going to live our lives on solid stone or sinking sand? Am I like a foolish jester or a wise man? Let’s dig into the message to find out some
wonderful insights on what it means to live on solid stone or sinking sand.

I. THE CONSTRUCTION OF A WISE LIFE 7:24

Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

Jesus says, "Therefore..." When you see this word, find out what it is there for. He has just completed the issue of false prophets and false professors in Christ. He has addressed the issue of people who were very religious, but they were lost, without Christ, and destined to Hell. These were folks who did not obey the Lord and do what He said. He told them to depart from Him because He did not know who they were. They had no relationship with Christ because they did not put their faith and trust in Him for their salvation. With this as the background, Jesus says if you want to be wise, listen to Me and do what I tell you to do.

Are you a wise, prudent, sensible person? Are you building or living your life on solid rock or shifting sands? What are some of the traits of a wise person and how does he live? What does he do to bring stability in his life? The Bible gives us a number of insights.

* Traits and Actions of a Wise Person

1. He Constructs his Life on the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word.

* Proverbs 24:3- Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established:

The word "wise" in Matthew 7:24 is from the Greek word *phronimos* (fron'-ee-mos) which means "prudent, sensible, wise, insightful, intelligent, thoughtful." Jesus says this kind of man listens to what the Lord has to say and puts His commands into practice. He is like a man who builds his house on a rock. His life has stability and strength to weather the storms of life when they come his way. The wise man or woman builds his life on the rock of God's Word and the Rock, Jesus Christ. This kind of life is a life characterized by obedience to the Lord and is empty of self-will, self-righteousness, and pride. Jesus Christ is the foundation of his life for he has realized that wisdom comes from God.

* James 1:5- If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth
to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

* James 3:17- But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

* Proverbs 2:6- For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.

Many successful people have acknowledged in their memoirs that whenever they came to an impasse in their work and were completely baffled, they sought wisdom from the Lord. This was true in the life of the inventor of the telegraph, Samuel F. B. Morse. In an interview, George Hervey inquired, "Professor Morse, when you were making your experiments at the university, did you ever come to a standstill, not knowing what to do next?" "I've never discussed this with anyone, so the public knows nothing about it. But now that you ask me, I'll tell you frankly -- I prayed for more light"

"And did God give you the wisdom and knowledge you needed?" "Yes He did," said Morse. "That's why I never felt I deserved the honors that came to me from America and Europe because of the invention associated with my name. I had made a valuable application of the use of electrical power, but it was all through God's help. It wasn't because I was superior to other scientists. When the Lord wanted to bestow this gift on mankind, He had to use someone. I'm just grateful He chose to reveal it to me."

In view of these facts, it's not surprising that the inventor's first message over the telegraph was: "What hath God wrought!" Every time you face a perplexing problem, seek wisdom from above, and when the answer comes, always be sure to thank God and give Him all the glory. This is what the wise person does. He builds his life on the foundation of Jesus Christ and makes the Lord his rock.

* 1 Corinthians 3:11- For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

* 1 Corinthians 10:4 - And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

* Psalm 18:2a- The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer.....

* Isaiah 33:6 - And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the Lord is his treasure. The Hebrew in Isaiah 33:6 indicates that a better translation for this verse is
"He shall be the stability of your times...." The Lord is our rock, our stability and strength. As the house was secure on the rock, we are eternally secure in the Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot lose our salvation.

* John 10:28 - And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

2. The wise person Concentrates, Considers, and Commits to what he Hears from the Lord.

Erik Weihenmayer is blind, yet on May 25, 2001 (Nepal time), he reached the peak of Mt. Everest. Suffering from a degenerative eye disease, he lost his sight when he was 13, but that didn't stop him. On a mountain where 90 percent of climbers never make it to the top—and 165 have died trying since 1953—Erik succeeded, in large measure because he listened well. He listened to the little bell tied to the back of the climber in front of him, so he would know what direction to go. He listened to the voice of teammates who would shout back to him, "Death fall two feet to your right!" so he would know what direction not to go. He listened to the sound of his pick jabbing the ice, so he would know whether the ice was safe to cross. When we take a perilous journey, listening well can make all the difference. Listening well to the Lord on life's journey is paramount.

* Proverbs 1:5 - A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels:

Jesus said that the wise person hears or listens to His sayings. This is especially needed in our day when many people tend to be unteachable and will not listen to what God has to say because of their pride or preconceived ideas about life or God Himself. Listening is not enough, however, for we must put into practice what the Lord is telling us to do. This has always been a problem with people, even God's people. God wants us to apply or put into practice His commands and truths. We demonstrate wisdom when we make the Word of God a part of our lives. This is what Jeremiah meant when he spoke about eating the Word of God.

* Jeremiah 15:16- Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts.
* James 3:13- Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.
* Ezekiel 33:31-32 ... And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and
they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. [32] And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not.

* James 1:22-25.... But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. [23] For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: [24] For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. [25] But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

* Luke 6:46 - And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

Knowledge must become action; theory must become practice; theology must become life. Beloved, there is little point in going to a doctor, unless we are prepared to do the things we hear him say to us. There is little point in going to an expert, unless we are prepared to act upon his advice. And yet there are thousands of people who listen to the teaching of Jesus Christ every Sunday, and who have a very good knowledge of what Jesus taught, and who yet make little or no deliberate attempt to put it into practice. If we are to be in any sense followers of Jesus we must hear and also do.

3. The Wise Person Contemplates the Future and Prepares for It.

The reason the wise man builds on the rock is he is preparing for the storms that will come in the future and beat on the house. A wise man prepares for the future. He does not have a "Live for Now" mentality. He foresees and plans for what is down the road. The wise virgins did this in the parable told by the Lord. They were prepared for the journey, but the foolish virgins were unprepared. They ran out of oil and were left out in the dark.

* Matthew 25:4 - But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.
* Proverbs 22:3 - A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.

The prudent man sees evil and takes refuge. He prepares for what is coming. Those who are foolish and naive, claiming there is nothing to worry about are punished. The prudent, wise man sees the effects of sin in the lives of others and learns from their mistakes. An old Chinese proverb put it this way, "To know the road ahead, ask those coming
back."

The wise person builds on the rock because he wants his work to have lasting achievement and not be a waste. He wants his efforts to endure. The wise person prepares for eternity. He will trust Christ as his Savior so that he will have eternal life. It is the wise Christian that will live his life for the Lord for he knows he will give an accounting of his life one day to the Lord. Paul warned us of this appointment with the Lord one day at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

* 2 Corinthians 5:10- For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.
* Romans 14:12- So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

The wise Christian does not want to waste his life, but live it in such a way that his labor will have eternal, lasting consequences for good. He wants to fulfill God's purpose and course for his life. Paul spoke of this before he died.

* 2 Timothy 4:7-8... I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

In November 1964, anarchy broke out in the Belgian Congo. Missionary J. W. Tucker knew he was at risk, but he stayed where God had placed him. One day, a mob attacked and killed him with sticks, clubs, fists, and broken bottles. They took his body, threw it in the back of a truck, drove a good distance, and then tossed his corpse to the crocodiles in the Bomokande River in what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo. J. W. Tucker had risked everything, yet he seemingly had nothing to show for it, but 30 years later, John Weidman, a close friend of Tucker's, was in the country (by then known as Zaire) and learned how God used that missionary's sacrifice.

The Bomokande River flows through the middle of the Mangbeto tribe, a people virtually without the Gospel. During a time of civil war, the Mangbeto king became distressed with the violence and appealed to the central government in Kinshasa for help. The central government responded by sending a man called the Brigadier, a well-known policeman of strong stature and reputation who came from the region of Lsiro. J. W. Tucker had won the Brigadier to the Lord just two months before he was killed. The Brigadier determined to reach the Mangbetos
with the Gospel, the only way to peace. Being a relatively new Christian, he did his best to witness, but he was met with no response. Then one day he heard of a Mangbeto tradition that said: "If the blood of any man flows in the Bomokande River, you must listen to his message." This saying had been with the Mangbetos from time immemorial.

The Brigadier called for the king and all the village elders. They gathered in full assembly to hear his address. "Some time ago a man was killed, and his body was thrown into your Bomokande River," the Brigadier began. "The crocodiles in this river ate him up. His blood flowed in your river. But before he died, he left me a message. "This message concerns God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who came to this world to save people who were sinners. He died for the sins of the world; He died for my sins. I received this message, and it changed my life."

As the Brigadier preached, the Spirit of God descended and people began to fall on their knees and cry out to the Lord. Many were converted. Since that day, thousands of Mangbetos have come to Christ and dozens of churches have opened as a result of the message from the man whose blood flowed in the Bomokande River. He fought a good fight and finished his course. He built his life on the solid stone of Jesus Christ.

4. He is Cautious and Considers the Effects of His Choices and Actions
* Proverbs 14:8 - The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way: but the folly of fools is deceit.
* Proverbs 14:15 - The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going.

In Birmingham, Alabama, many years ago, lived a pastor, James Bryan. Throughout the city he was known as “Brother Bryan.” There were many preachers stronger in pulpit oratory, but none preached better sermons than he did with his life. Like Jesus, he went about doing good. It was a common thing for him to come home on a cold day without his overcoat because he had given it to some poor man who had none. One spring day he was driving a horse and buggy through the countryside. He saw a farmer standing dejectedly in the field. It was time for his spring plowing, but his only horse lay dead. Pastor Bryan unhitched his horse and gave it to the man and then he walked home. It was fitting that when his biography was written, it was called A Sermon in Shoes. Of all the commentaries on the Scriptures, good examples are still the best. This is the concern of a wise man.
The wise person will consider his goings or steps. He is mindful of his example and testimony and will be careful about not doing things that will hurt himself, others, or hurt the cause of Christ. He also considers the consequences of the choices that he makes in his life, knowing that his choices can have a drastic impact on the course of his life and those who follow him. Wise people ask, “Is this right or wrong? How will this affect others? Would Jesus do this or want me to do this? Am I going to regret this later on?” The wise person will be cautious also about the type of friends that he picks.

* Proverbs 14:16- A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident.

5. A Wise Man Closes his Mouth at the Proper Time.
* Amos 5:13- Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it is an evil time.

Our little tongue has a way of getting us into big trouble. James, referring to the tongue said, “How great a matter a little fire kindleth.” The wise person knows when to close his mouth and keep his foot out of it. The Arizona Republic (4/25/95) reported that when Steve Tran of Westminster, California, closed the door on 25 activated bug bombs, he thought he had seen the last of the cockroaches that shared his apartment. When the spray reached the flames of the pilot light in the stove, it ignited the fumes, blasting his screen door across the street, breaking all his windows, and setting his furniture ablaze. "I really wanted to kill all of those bugs," he said. "I thought if I used a lot more, it would last longer."

According to the label, just two canisters of the fumigant would have solved Tran's roach problem. The blast caused over $10,000 damage to his apartment building. As to the cockroaches, Tran reported, "By Sunday, I saw them walking around in the apartment." Beloved, our tongue has the capacity to cause the same kind of damage as the bug canisters. We can blow up someone's life with our mouth. The best thing we can do is learn to keep quiet.

* Proverbs 29:11- A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards. The fool will lose his temper and foam at the mouth with angry words, while the wise man keeps himself and his mouth under control at all times.

6. He remains Calm and Conceals Insults

It is easy to blow up and lose your temper when people insult you. That is the natural tendency of our flesh and our pride.
* How dare they say that!
* Who do they think they are!
* I don’t deserve to be treated that way.

The wise man keeps his cool when this happens. He ignores or does not respond to insults. He stays calm and in fact, may not tell others that he has been insulted or dishonored. By doing this he can diffuse the situation quickly, keep himself calm, and others are not poisoned with his anger and bitterness. As a pastor, you need to be keep your mouth closed about trouble-makers in your church. If you spue your anger in front of your kids about these people, they will become bitter with the people of your church. They will grow up with a negative view about church and have difficulty in trusting people in the church family.

* Proverbs 12:16 - A fool’s wrath is presently known: but a prudent man covereth shame. Covering shame can also be rendered “conceals insults or dishonor.”

* Hebrews 12:15- Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

When the darkest clouds of the Civil War were hovering over the capital, many things done by the generals were not approved by either President Lincoln or Secretary Stanton. Lincoln would take a long time to ponder over those situations, but Stanton would, at times, lose his temper and explode. One day Stanton came to see Lincoln about the doings of a certain general. Listening quietly, Lincoln let Stanton show his anger, and when the latter exclaimed, “I would like to write him a letter and tell him what I think of him!” Lincoln remarked quietly, “Well, why not do so? Sit down and write him a letter, saying all you have said to me.”

Stanton was surprised for he thought that President Lincoln would object to this. He declared that he would take the President at his word. Two days later he brought Lincoln the letter he had written, and read it to him. When Stanton had finished, Lincoln smiled and remarked, “That is all right. You have said all you told me you would. Now, what are you going to do with this letter?” Stanton said, “Why, I am going to give it to him, of course.” “I wouldn’t,” replied the President quietly. “Throw it in the waste basket.” “What, after spending two days on it,” exclaimed Stanton. “Yes. It took you two days to write it, and it did you a lot of good. You feel a great deal better now, and that is all that is necessary.” The letter went to the waste basket, and Stanton learned an important
lesson from Lincoln that day about learning to control yourself and keep your cool.

7. The Wise Man Considers Correction as Valuable

What do you do when you are corrected or rebuked when you are out of line? Hopefully, that doesn’t happen often. If you are corrected by a boss, parent, teacher, or even a pastor, do you get offended and bristle or do you respond like a wise man who considers correction as valuable?

* Proverbs 15:5- A fool despiseth his father’s instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent.

* Proverbs 9:8- Reprove not a scorners, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.

The wise man realizes that reproof is for the purpose of avoiding or correcting mistakes and failure. When a man has his pride in check, he will consider wisely the rebuke instead of rejecting it. A person with stability and security can handle rebuke, for his life is grounded on the rock of Christ. It is the proud, unteachable, insecure, unstable person that is unsure of himself who responds to rebuke with verbal attacks and lashing out at others. The result is he continues in his failure and lives like a fool.

* Proverbs 1:7b...but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

8. He is not Cocky and Conceited.

* Proverbs 13:10- Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom.

The state of Illinois gets its name from an Indian word to which a French suffix has been added. It means "tribe of superior men." Certainly modern-day residents of Illinois do not ordinarily boast of themselves as superior men. Yet, throughout history there have been those who regarded themselves as superior to others. The worst example is in Nazi Germany, where Hitler taught his people that they were a superior race. The result was WW2 and the terrible, destructive defeat of Germany.

People will react negatively to a proud, braggadocios, cocky person. Pride creates conflict and the wise man understands this fact. The wise man keeps his pride in check. He does not go around bragging about how smart, how wonderful, and how great he is, unlike a fool. You may ask, “Are there people that really go around and do this?” The answer is “Yes!” We had a few like this in Bible college and they were very annoying. They entered the room mouth first. One of them eventually got kicked out of the school after getting into fights with other students.

* Proverbs 12:23- A prudent man concealeth knowledge: but the heart
of fools proclaimeth foolishness.
* Romans 12:3- For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man
that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to
think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the
measure of faith.


Wise people do not mock knowledge or the gaining of knowledge.
There is nothing wrong in getting a good, sound education today,
especially when it comes to the ministry. Pastors today need training and
need to know how to study the Word of God and preach it in a way where
people can apply it in their lives. Unfortunately, there have been some
preachers today that have belittled and mocked a Bible education. That
is a tragedy. Wise men are teachable and they want to learn in order to
be the best they can be at what they do. It is the fool that says, “I know
it all and you can’t teach me anything.”
* Proverbs 18:15- The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge; and the
ear of the wise seeketh knowledge.
* Proverbs 13:16 - Every prudent man dealeth with knowledge: but a
fool layeth open his folly.

10. He Creates Joy for his Father by loving Wisdom.

A wise man will live his life in such a way that he brings joy to his
parents. Things like honesty, integrity, wisdom, hard work, and character
give parents something to be proud about.
* Proverbs 29:3a- Whoso loveth wisdom rejoiceth his father:.....

Do you bring joy to your parents by the way you live? If you are a
teenager, do you have a good attitude? Whether young or old, do you
honor your parents? I have met many adults that don’t. If you want your
life to be blessed, then be a blessing to your parents.
* Ephesians 6:1-3.. Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is
right. [2] Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first
commandment with promise;) [3] That it may be well with thee, and thou
mayest live long on the earth.

After looking at all these traits, let me ask, “Are you a wise man or
woman? Are you building your life on the solid stone of Jesus Christ?”
II. THE COMPLICATIONS IN A WISE MAN’S LIFE  7:25

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

Israel, to a considerable extent, is a land of hills and mountains. Like other countries of that description, it is subject to sudden and violent thunder storms. The Jordan River, the principal stream, is annually swollen to a great extent, and becomes rapid and furious in its course. The streams which run among the hills, whose channels might be dry during several months of the year, become suddenly swollen with the rain, and will pour down rapidly into the plains below. Everything in the way of these torrents will be swept off. Even a house erected within the reach of these sudden inundations, and especially if founded on sand, or any unsolid foundation, will not stand before them. The rising, bursting stream will shake it to its foundation. The rapid currents will gradually wash away its base. The house will totter, fall, and be swept away. Rocks in this country were common in Bible days, and it was easy to secure them for the foundations of their houses. The illustration Jesus made here would be very understandable to the Jewish people.

Beloved, just because a person is a Christian, does not mean he will be void of storms or problems in his life. If anyone tries to sell you that baloney, mark it down they are lying or don’t know what they are talking about. Trials and storms of affliction and persecution beat around the soul. Suddenly, when we think we are in safety, the heavens may be overcast, the storm may lower, and calamity may beat upon us. In a moment, health, friends, and our comforts may be gone.

There are three general kinds of trials to which God’s people are exposed and to which, some think, our Lord alludes to here in this section. Water, waves, and wind strike a home from all sides. Sometimes we may feel surrounded by problems too. Our trials or afflictions may take several forms.
1. There are temporal afflictions which come in the course of our lives. These may be likened to the torrents of rain which quickly come and go.
2. There are afflictions which come from the passions, anger, or hatred of men, and which may be likened to the impetuous rivers or floods. They are more intense and their effects may last longer because of their destructiveness.
3. There are afflictions which come from Satan and his angels, and
which, like tempestuous whirlwinds, threaten to carry every thing before them. Those who face persecution and martyrdom face the whirlwinds of Hell. They may even lose their lives, but their souls are secure and stable in Christ, even though their lives have been swept away.

He alone, whose life and soul are built on the Rock of ages, withstands all these shocks, and not only stands in, but profits by them. What a blessing then to be possessed of something that our trials or storms cannot reach or ruin! When we put our security in Christ, rely on His strength and put our trust in His promises and confidence in His protection, we will have peace, strength, and courage to face the storms of affliction without being obliterated.

The wise man builds his house on the rock because he knows storms will come. In fact, the storms will reveal the strength of the home and type of foundation. Your trials will reveal the strength of your faith and what your life is based upon, whether it is on the Lord or yourself. When Christ is your foundation, you will not crumble. The wise Christian will build his life on the Lord Jesus Christ and live for the Lord for he knows the true source of peace, strength, and stability in life is in Jesus Christ.

God promises endurance when our lives are pelted with trials and troublesome storms and we anchor ourselves to those promises.

*Job 23:10- But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

* 2 Corinthians 4:17- For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

* 2 Corinthians 4:16- For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

* Isaiah 43:2-3a... When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. [3] For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior:

* Isaiah 41:10- Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

* Romans 8:36-39... As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. [37] Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. [38] For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, [39]
Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Eleven miles off the east coast of Scotland, in the North Sea, stands the Bell Rock Lighthouse. It has endured the ferocious onslaught of the North Sea's violent storms since 1811. It rests upon less than one acre of solid rock. That small reef is covered by seawater for 20 hours of every day. The builder of the lighthouse, Robert Stevenson and his band of 65 skilled artisans, had only four hours each day to chink away the stone and gouge a foundation in the rock. As a result of this painstakingly patient work, the 115-foot-tall lighthouse is still in use today, almost 200 years later.

In a similar way, we have a short period of time in which to live our lives for Christ. Take advantage of the opportunities that come each day to live for the Lord and be a witness for Him. Build your life on the solid rock of the Lord. This kind of life is not wasted, instead the influence of this kind of life will have eternal consequences. It will endure the sands of time.

III. THE COMPOSITION OF A FOOLISH LIFE 7:26

And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

Jesus gets right to the point and tells us that the fool hears the truth of the Lord but will not put it into practice. The word “foolish” comes from the Greek word moros which forms our English word “moron.” He will not obey God at all and it is this choice which will eventually lead to his instability and ruin. He is on a quest for quicksand. He is like a man that has built his home on shifting sand, unstable, insecure, and without strength. He lives his life on the unstable sands of men’s opinions, fads, attitudes, philosophies, and wills. These are constantly changing and lead to constant conflict and stress because there is no stability or solid standard. What was wrong yesterday is OK today. What is right here is wrong there. Talk about frustration that will drive you crazy, this kind of living will do it.

Thank God for the stability of God’s Word. What was wrong yesterday, is still wrong today. What was right yesterday, is still right today. Foolish living leads to instability and ruin. Let me ask you at this juncture, “Are you building your life on sinking sand? Are you living
foolishly, creating instability and ruin?” These are good questions. How do we know the answer? Again, the Bible provides us some insights on foolish actions and attitudes that are unstable, unsound, and will mess up our lives. They are attitudes and actions that will cause us to collapse like a house that is built on sand. What are they? We will look at seven key things.

* The Sands of Foolishness that Lead to Instability, Collapse, and Destruction

1. The Sands of Shortcut Living

   The foolish builder took a shortcut in constructing his house by not digging down deeply to the rock for a foundation. It was, however, a tragic shortcut as we will see later. The construction of his house went much faster than the construction of the house of the wise man. He would get his house built a lot quicker than the wise man, but this speed in constructing the house indicated folly, not wisdom. Speed is not always synonymous with success. Let me say that if you have the fastest growing church in town, it may not be the strongest one. It takes time to ground your people in the truths of God’s Word. A quick influx of people that are not mature Christians can bring a host of new problems into your church that can weaken it, especially in the area of compromises with sin.

   Sin has many shortcuts for men. Sin is always promising shortcuts that appeal to our flesh. The flesh wants everything right now and does not want to wait for God’s best. Sin says you can be rich now instead of later so it tells you to gamble or steal to get rich quickly.

   *Proverbs 28:20- A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent. He will have trouble and shall not go unpunished.*

   Sin says you can have sex now instead of waiting for marriage, so immorality becomes a lifestyle of many. These shortcuts, however, leave out the rock foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word, and instead they build one's life on the shifting sands of worldly thinking which only leads to great loss in eternity as well as great loss in this life.

   Saul got ahead of God and lived his life on the sands of shortcut living. It got him into major trouble. Instead of waiting for Samuel to offer the burnt offering, he took matters into his own hands and did it himself. He stepped out of bounds when he did this and the result was the eventual loss of his throne. He was on a quest for quicksand and sunk.
* 1 Samuel 13:13- And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever.

Shortcut living, which emphasizes living for now and not being concerned about the future, will sometimes cut your life short. It will have serious consequences for you in eternity if you do not trust Christ as your Savior. John Tillotson, of the 1600's said, "He who provides for this life but takes no care for eternity is wise for a moment but a fool forever." It was Thomas Carlyle who said, "He who has no vision of eternity will never get a true hold of time." One of the great indictments of Israel of old was that they would not think about the future. Moses said this in his indictment of the Israelites.

* Deuteronomy 32:29- O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end! Many are still like this today. They live for NOW and do not give much serious thought about eternity. Jesus Christ warned us about this kind of attitude.

* Mark 8:36 - For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? The world, in this text, has to do with the here-and-now, but the soul has to do with the hereafter. To put the main emphasis in life on the world is to lose the most valuable thing of all—one's soul. No greater loss can be experienced. When you lose your soul, you lose everything.

2. The Sands of Slothfulness

Since September 11, 2001, our nation has been on high alert. Although for several years nothing as catastrophic has happened in this country since that terrible day, terrorists have struck elsewhere in the world.

On March 11, 2004, terrorists exploded 10 bombs in Madrid, Spain, killing almost 200, wounding another 1,800. Two months later there was a scare in Philadelphia. It was May 5th, and a conductor for Pennsylvania's transit authority discovered something frightening on the tracks near Philly's massive 30th street station. It was an electronic transmitter, planted alongside the tracks in the commuter rail yard. Agents from the Department of Homeland Security and the FBI soon swarmed the scene.

Investigators discovered that the mysterious gadget was in fact a motion detector designed to send a signal to a nearby receiver. Tension mounted. Finally, a train mechanic stepped forward and admitted
installing the transmitter. Was he a terrorist, or a disgruntled employee looking for revenge? No, the mechanic worked the graveyard shift and had installed the motion detector to sound an alarm in his work area whenever his supervisor was approaching. That way he could safely take a nap; if the alarm went off, he could get up and look busy when the boss showed up.

Unfortunately, this kind of slothful activity goes on every day. Employers are frustrated because they cannot get people to work or who want to work. It is amazing how people will go to great efforts not to do their jobs instead of using their energy and skill to do them. When you are lazy, you are building your life on sinking sand.

* Proverbs 24:30-31....I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down.

The foolish man is slothful and builds his house the easy way, instead of the right way. He chooses the path of least resistance and inconvenience. The wise builder searches carefully for a solid foundation of rock on which to build and the fool simply finds a section of sand in a desirable location and starts to build. The easy way is attractive to the fool for several reasons, the first of which is that it is quick. The foolish person is always in a hurry. He is impatient. His first desire is to please himself, and he takes the shortest route to that end.

The foolish person also likes the easy way because he is basically shallow or superficial. That which is hasty, hollow, sloppy, or empty requires little planning, little effort, little care to detail, and little concern for quality or standards. The person who is superficial looks for what is pleasing rather than for what is right, for what is enjoyable rather than for what is true, for what satisfies himself rather than what satisfies God. He looks to Christianity for instant results, instant pleasure, and instant rewards. He cares much about spiritual "highs" but nothing about spiritual "depths." Emotional trips are relished, but the pain and the maturity that come from sacrifice, suffering, serving the Lord, and standing up for Jesus are rejected.

* Ecclesiastes 4:5- The fool foldeth his hands together, and eateth his own flesh. The idea of this verse is the foolish person folds his hands, does nothing, and has nothing left to eat but his own flesh. He is lazy and suffers for it.
3. The Sands of Scorning or Shunning God

* Psalm 14:1a - The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.
* Psalm 74:18 - Remember this, that the enemy hath reproached, O Lord, and that the foolish people have blasphemed thy name.
* 1 Corinthians 3:19a - For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.

When you shut the Lord out of your life, you are heading for a crash, no matter who you are or who you think you are. God gives us balance and stability in our lives. He is like the lead weights that balance our car tires or the pole that a tight rope walker uses to scale the tightrope in the circus. He gives us balance and stability. When you shut the Lord out of your life, you shut out His strength, grace, peace, love, wisdom, joy, gentleness, goodness, and blessing. All these things are necessary to build a stable life. It is the fool that says, “I don’t want God or what He has to offer.”

As Christians, we scorn the Lord when we are unwilling to do God’s will. Instead, we want to do our will, but then we get convicted, and try to yield to the Lord again. This back-and-forth attitude creates inconsistency and instability in our lives because we have not fully surrendered our heart to the Lord. Our lack of submissiveness to Christ is like building a house on sand. It is unstable. James warned us of the effects of not making up our mind or being double-minded.

* James 1:8 - A double minded man is unstable in all his way. The Africans put it this way, “The man who tries to walk two roads will split his pants.”

4. The Sands of Spurning your Parents

* Proverbs 15:5a - A fool despiseth his father's instruction ....
* Proverbs 15:20 - A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother. This word “despiseth” is from bazah {bawzaw} which means “to hold in contempt, to be despicable or worthless.”

Whether you are a teenager or an adult, when you shut your parents out of your life, you are doing something that will weaken instead of strengthen you. Time and again, God stresses the importance of honoring our imperfect parents. It may be difficult to do this at times, but it is right. No matter what water has passed under the bridge, try to establish and maintain a good relationship with your mother and father. Why would someone want to shut out their parents in the first place? I thought of several common problems.
A. Disagreement:
Some have spurned their parents over an argument or disagreement that has taken place in the past. Is it really worth staying angry? Will it matter a hundred years from now?

B. Disappointment:
Some folks shut out their parents because of disappointment. A father or mother may have done something that was wrong or failed in some way that brought embarrassment. Some children are disappointed because their parents did not meet a certain expectation placed upon them. They may be upset because their mom or dad did not spend time with them on an occasion or did not give a certain gift.

Many parents inform their kids what they are leaving to them in their will and some children get upset because they are not getting what they want or feel they deserve. Let me say this...when the time comes to read the will after your parent’s death, keep you fangs in your mouth, close your mouth, and put your claws in your pockets. Keep your greed in check. Fighting over money and material things is not worth the distress it creates in your life and the wounded relationships it causes with your brothers and sisters. You may get what you want, but lose what you had. If you had a close relationship with your family, you may lose it by being greedy.

C. Discouragement:
Parents may also be shut out because they are difficult to be around. They may be cranky, hot-headed, or swear a lot, making time around them difficult. Many are in this boat. To maintain a relationship, you can make a quick phone call, write them, or send a card or gift. Showing an interest in them by doing these little things may help the next time you visit them.

D. Drifting Apart:
Parents can accidentally be shut out of your life by just drifting away. You can get so busy in your own life that you forget to check up on Mom and Dad. Then you get a call one day and are told the one of them or both of them are gone. All you have left are pictures and memories.

E. Divorce:
There are many children that shut out one or both parents because they are angry with their parents concerning a divorce. Divorce is devastating on children. It tends to make them skeptical and bitter. If this describes you, you are going to have to forgive them and move on
with your life and relationship with them.

5. The Sands of Stubbornness and Self-Conceit

Stubbornness can destroy your own life, but also the lives of others who are dependent upon you. For example, in the 1980's in the state of Colorado, several people begged a trucker to free the CB-channel so that they could put through an emergency call, but he stubbornly refused to cooperate. They wanted to direct a doctor to the scene of a serious accident where an automobile had driven into the rear of a flatbed trailer carrying metal tubing. A piece of pipe had gone through the car's windshield, pinning a woman in the wreckage.

The trucker continued to tie up the channel, frustrating all attempts to obtain help. Finally, this obstinate trucker came upon the scene of the accident himself. To his utter dismay, he discovered that the critically injured person was his own wife! When a doctor did arrive, he said that if he had been notified even 10 minutes earlier, the woman's chances for survival would have been much greater.

Beloved, when we are proud, arrogant, uncorrectable, stubborn, and unteachable, we are building our lives on sinking sand. Foolish people will not listen to instruction or reason. Many times they cannot learn because they won’t shut their mouths. Because they know it all, they tend to debate with people instead of listening to them.

A wise man learns from the experience and knowledge of others. An ordinary man learns by his own experience. A fool learns by nobody’s experience. In fact, if you want an enemy, just try to convince a fool that he is wrong. The biggest fool of all is the person who refuses to learn and profit from his mistakes. He is one whose life is built on sinking sand.

* Proverbs 1:7b—... but fools despise wisdom and instruction. The word “despise” is from *huwz* (*booz*) which means “to hold in contempt or to consider as insignificant.”
* Proverbs 18:2a— A fool hath no delight in understanding ...
* Proverbs 14:16— A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident. The words “rageth and confident” can be rendered as “arrogant and careless or hotheaded and reckless.”
* Proverbs 28:26a— He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool ....
* Proverbs 12:15— The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise. The word “right” is from *yashar* (*yawshar*) which means “straight, correct, or level.”
* Proverbs 9:13- A foolish woman is clamorous: she is simple, and knoweth nothing. A fool empties his head just about every time he opens his mouth.
* Proverbs 30:32- If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or if thou hast thought evil, lay thine hand upon thy mouth.
* Proverbs 24:7- Wisdom is too high for a fool: he openeth not his mouth in the gate.

6. The Sands of a Sinful Lifestyle

Wild, wicked living leads to wild consequences. Such living may involve drugs, alcohol, sex, violence, stealing, etc. When a house is swept away by a flood, the situation is not calm for sure, but wild and destructive. The same holds true when you build your life on the sands of sinful living. It will catch up with you, age you, and haunt you with guilt, regret, and health problems.

*Psalm 38:5- My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness.
* Proverbs 10:23a- It is as sport to a fool to do mischief... The fool finds pleasure in sinful conduct. The word “sport” means “laughter or joy.”
* Proverbs 26:11- As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly. The fool repeats his mistakes.
* Titus 3:3- For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.
* Jeremiah 4:22- For my people is foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge.
* Proverbs 13:19b-... it is abomination to fools to depart from evil.
* Proverbs 14:9a- Fools make a mock at sin .. They do not fear the consequences of their actions. They scorn the guilt of their sin and making matters right with God.
* Proverbs 15:21- Folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom: but a man of understanding walketh uprightly.

God warns us to stay away from people who live a sinful lifestyle.

*Proverbs 13:20- He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed. God tells us to avoid companionship with fools because we are affected by them.
* Proverbs 14:7a- Go from the presence of a foolish man...
* Proverbs 4:14-15... Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. [15] Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass
away.
* Psalm 1:1- Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.
* Proverbs 12:11b - ...but he that followeth vain persons is void of understanding.

7. The Sands of Sexual Immorality and Adultery

Sexual sin will trash your life quickly whether it is pre-martial sex, adultery, or homosexuality. The consequences of such actions create instability and destruction in the marriage and family. It devastates a person spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and physically. Sexual diseases are rampant today because of sexual sins. With the aid of drugs like Viagra, sexual diseases have surfaced in the lives of senior citizens.

Avis Yarbrough of the People’s Media Company stated on October 31st, 2006: The United States Center for Disease Control and Prevention reported that HIV cases are increasing among people in their 60's and 70's. During the last decade, HIV cases have risen 500% among Senior Citizens. Twenty-seven percent of the people living with AIDS in our country are over 50 years old. The Huffington Post stated on May 27, 2006, that STD’s (sexually transmitted diseases) are running rampant at the popular central Florida retirement community known as The Villages. The gynecologist there has treated more STD’s in this community than she did in Miami. Sexual sin will damage your body. Paul warned us of this.

* 1 Corinthians 6:18- Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.
* Proverbs 5:3-6 ... For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil: [4] But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a twoedged sword. [5] Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell. [6] Lest thou shouldest ponder the path of life, her ways are moveable, that thou canst not know them.
* Proverbs 6:32 - But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul.
IV. THE CALAMITY FROM A FOOLISH LIFE  7:27

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

Trials are no respecter of persons. Both wise and foolish people have trouble, but the consequences are much different. The foolish person who builds his house on the sand, who does not have Jesus Christ as the foundation of his life, that person will eventually crumble like a house of cards. Jesus said the fall would be great. This word “great” comes from the Greek word *megas* which forms our English word “mega.” It will be a catastrophic downfall.

* Luke 6:49 -But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.

The word “ruin” comes from the Greek word *rhegma* fhrayg'-mah. This word is a medical term which means “a laceration, rupture, fracture, or collapse of body parts.” This word was used to describe the rupture of veins or fracture of bones. The collapse indicated by its meaning pictures what happens when someone builds their life on the sand. This fall holds true for the believer who will not live his life for the Lord, but instead is carnal and backslidden. You will suffer calamity in your life. For some backslidden Christians in Paul’s time, their indifference toward the Lord shortened their lives.

* 1 Corinthians 11:29-30.... For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. [30] For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. The word “sleep” indicates death. When you survey the Bible, it is interesting to note some of the other things that will cause us to fall.

* What Causes Us to Fall?

1. Diabolical, Detestable Wicked Reasoning and Living

* Proverbs 13:17a- A wicked messenger falleth into mischief: ...
* Proverbs 11:5b-....but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness.
* Proverbs 28:18 - Whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved: but he that is perverse in his ways shall fall at once.
* Proverbs 29:16 -When the wicked are multiplied, transgression increaseth: but the righteous shall see their fall.
* 2 Peter 3:17- Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things
before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness.

2. A Deceitful Tongue
* Proverbs 17:20b- ... and he that hath a perverse tongue falleth into mischief. Perverse means “deceitful.”
* James 5:12- But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.

3. Trying to Destroy the Lives of Others
* Psalm 7:15- He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made.
* Proverbs 28:10- Whoso causeth the righteous to go astray in an evil way, he shall fall himself into his own pit:

4. The Depravity of Adultery
* Proverbs 7:26- For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her.

5. The Depletion of Counsel or Guidance
* Proverbs 11:14 - Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.

6. Dependance on your Riches
* Proverbs 11:28 - He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.
* 1 Timothy 6:9- But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

7. A Difficult, Disagreeable Stubborn Heart
* Proverbs 28:14- Happy is the man that feareth alway: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.

8. Disdain, Derision, or Pride
* Proverbs 16:18 - Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.
* 1 Corinthians 10:12- Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

9. Drivel or Foolish Talk
* Proverbs 10:8 - ....but a prating fool shall fall. Fools who will not listen will eventually come to ruin.
V. THE CONSTERNATION OF THE CROWD AND
THE CERTAINTY OF JESUS’ WORDS   7:28-29

And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: [29] For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

When the Lord completed His message, the people were astonished at His teaching. This word “astonished” comes from the Greek word *ekplesto* {ek-place*-so} which means “to be struck out of oneself; to drive one out of his senses by a sudden shock; to amaze,” and was used figuratively of being struck in the mind, that is, of being astounded or beside oneself.

This crowd was totally dumbfounded by the power of what Jesus said. They had never heard such comprehensive, insightful words of wisdom, depth, insight, and profundity. They had never heard such straightforward and fearless denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees or such a black and white presentation of the way of salvation. These folks had never heard such a fearful warning about the consequences of turning away from God. This crowd had never heard such a powerful and demanding description of true righteousness or such a relentless description and condemnation of self-righteousness. Jesus basically shot them between the eyes.

His teaching was not wimpy and weak. He taught them with certainty, confidence, and authority. The word “authority” is from the Greek word *exousia* {ex-oo-see*-ah} which means “power.” They felt a commanding power and authority in His word and doctrine. His statements were crystal clear. Jesus spoke with authority for He was God. He knows everything. This is a great reason why we should follow Him and do what He says. He knows what He is talking about. Let me ask, “Are you living your life on solid stone or sinking sand?” God help us all to make our lives count for Jesus Christ and not waste the opportunities that grace our path day after day. Don’t throw your life away!
Bibliography for Sermon of the Mount....Volume 2

The following men of God have made contributions to this book.

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2. King James Bible Commentary (very good)
3. The Life Application Bible (very practical notes)
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6. Adam Clarke’s Commentary on John. (very practical and helpful)
8. The Expositor’s Bible Commentary on Matthew by Frank Gaebelein
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11. Perfect Illustrations by Preaching Today. (great illustrations)
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22. Illustrations from Preaching Today website.
Directory of the First 21 Books

If you are looking for a topic, the letter will tell what book it's in and then you can look in the index at the back of that particular book for the page number.

E=Esther;  G=Genesis;  H=Hosea;  J=Judges;  Ja=James;  
JC=Names of Jesus;  Jh1=John:v1;  Jh2=John:v2;  
JO=Joshua;  JN=Jonah;  K1=1Kings;  N=Numbers;  
Ph=Philippians;  Ps1=Psalms:v1;  
R=Ruth;  Re=Revelation;  Ro=Romans;  
S1=1 Samuel;  S2=2 Samuel;  
SM1=Sermon on Mount, V1;  SM2= Sermon on Mount, V2

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