ONE2won
BOOK TWO
CLIMBING HIGHER
JOE WHITE, LARRY WEEDEN AND TEAM
Introduction by Chuck Swindoll and Samuel Rodriguez
One2Won II
Climbing Higher

Ascending Upward in
Paul-Timothy Discipleship

By Joe White, Larry Weeden and Team
Introduction by Chuck Swindoll and Samuel Rodriguez
Men At The Cross is a discipleship movement that seeks to come alongside the church to empower and equip every man to “love a man to Jesus until he’s ready to love a man to Jesus.”

“The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” - 2 Timothy 2:2

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The One 2 Won online video story and “journal log” menatthecross.org feature interactive and in depth continuations of each discipleship study in this book.

Beginning with video introductions from Joe White followed by provocative video clips from You Tube, God Tube and relative movies, a Paul and Timothy can go deeper electronically and do individual “i studies” between discipleship sessions. Thought provoking questions give the discipleship team a “journal log” to interact with other participants from around the world. Log onto menatthecross.org, Click on One 2 Won online.
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*One2Won Climbing Higher*
Leading others to Christ is one thing. Making disciples is something altogether different.

Conversion occurs in a moment of time. God’s Word refers to that epical moment as being “born anew” or “born from above.” That takes place when a person trusts in Christ alone, by faith alone. Introducing someone to the Savior is one of life’s greatest joys. It marks the beginning of a radical transformation from darkness to light, from enmity to amity, from death to life. It’s wonderful.

But leading a person to Christ marks only the beginning of something great. God’s long-term goal for His children is that we become disciples, close and loyal followers of Jesus Christ. He is also pleased that we make disciples of others. You may recall the words of Jesus just before He left this planet to return to the Father, in what has become known as the Great Commission: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations” (Matthew 28:19, NASB). Literally Matthew recorded Jesus’ words like this: “Going therefore: disciple.”

Pretty clear, isn’t it? Making disciples isn’t merely a nice option. It’s every Christian’s primary mandate. We are called to this mission; it’s the follow-up game plan for life after leading someone to the Savior.

When it comes to pouring our lives into new converts and being a vital part of training them to think like Christ, walk with Christ, and become self-sustaining and mature in Christ, well, we’re talking about a significant investment of time and energy.

While the late Aldon Redpath was serving as the senior pastor of the well-known Moody Memorial Church in Chicago, he wrote a book on the life of David. Though I read this volume many years ago, one line still stands out in my mind: “The conversion of a soul is the miracle of the moment, but the making of a saint is the task of a lifetime.”

Redpath was right; when we assist in another’s spiritual birth, we serve as his spiritual obstetrician. Birthing another soul is amazing but usually doesn’t take very long. It’s the miracle of the moment. But when we step in and help another person get on his feet and learn how to handle life on his own as a believer, we become his spiritual pediatrician, and that’s never a brief task. It is, in fact, the task of a lifetime. Both are our calling as Christian men. So let me urge all of you to be engaged in both responsibilities.

This is exactly what the apostle Paul meant back in the first century when he wrote these wonderful words to a younger disciple named Timothy: “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2, NASB).

Think about what Paul wrote. It’s not difficult to see a process unfolding. One man passes along the things he learned from someone else to someone he knows, and that guy in turn does the same thing with others.

Let me be even more specific. What I am suggesting is a transfer of truth. Practically speaking, it’s a generational relay. This occurs when an older man takes what he’s received and then, while
running alongside someone younger and less experienced, hands those things off to him. As that race continues, that man who was the recipient of the handoff catches up to another man, and while running alongside him he does the same thing. This race in life never stops; it goes on and on from one generation to the next. That’s why I call it a generational relay.

The walk of faith was entrusted by Christ to Paul. Second, what Christ had deposited into Paul, Paul then deposited into Timothy’s life. Third, what Timothy learned from Paul’s discipling, he was urged to entrust to faithful men around him.

But it doesn’t stop there. There’s a fourth step: Those faithful men were to engage in the same process of passing along those principles and techniques to still other men. Truth be told, the process never ends. The spiritual relay that began with Christ’s training Paul continues to this very day. Those who were trained by others are making disciples among the next generation, and so it will be in the next, and even the next. Think of it like this: We stand on one another’s shoulders. What an exciting thought!

When I became a part of the United States Marine Corps, I already knew Jesus as my Savior. Thankfully, I had been converted to Christ at a young age. But I was a novice when it came to walking with Him, knowing Him as my Lord and Master and serving Him in obedience. In the language of the Marine Corps, I was a rookie Christian.

To make matters worse, in January 1958 I was suddenly transferred to the island of Okinawa, where I would live without my wife and apart from all the members of my immediate family. We are talking alone on that island with thousands of other Marines! My family remained in Houston, including my wife, and here I was some 8,000 miles away. No one had ever shown me 2 Timothy 2:2. I didn’t even know that verse was in the Bible. Nor did I realize there was a relay going on around me – until I met a man named Bob Newkirk.

Bob served in the Christian organization known as the Navigators. And wouldn’t you know it, he and his wife and their family had been sent, of all places, to an island in the South Pacific named Okinawa just a few months before I got there. Thanks to Bob’s winsome and magnetic spirit, he and I became friends. And over time the Lord knit our hearts together. Bob became closer than a brother.

Another man by the name of Bob, Bob Foster, had earlier discipled Bob Newkirk. Don’t miss the first part of the relay. Foster entrusted many things to Newkirk, and as Newkirk and I met, he passed along many of those things to me.

That relay went on for months. In fact, for about the next 15 of the 16 months I was stationed overseas, Bob and I had this relationship, and what a transformation occurred in my life! Then I returned to the States, was honorably discharged from the Corps, and reconnected with my wife.

It wasn’t long before we were off to Dallas Seminary, where others continued to disciple me. Some were faculty members, others were older men I met in our church. God was still training me, using one man after another to teach me so much about Christ and the Christian life. Now, for almost 50 years, I have been doing the same thing, introducing truth into the lives of faithful men whom the Lord has brought across my path. And many of them are doing the same thing with many others. The same exciting relay goes on and on and on. Oh, and before I forget the most important part, you’re next!
Vertical and Horizontal Discipleship

No symbol incorporates passion and promise like the cross, a simple sign depicting two pieces of wood, one vertical and the other horizontal. That universal Christian symbol conveys a message not only of what is to come, but also of what life truly is. Jesus said, “Take up [your] cross daily and follow me” (Luke 9:23).

Vertically, we stand connected to God, His kingdom, eternal life, spiritual truths, divine principles, and glory. Horizontally, to our left and right, we exist surrounded by and revealed through community, relationships, family, culture, and society.

Simply stated, the cross is both redemption and relationship, covenant and community, kingdom and society, righteousness and justice, salvation and transformation, ethos and pathos, John 3:16 and Luke 4, Billy Graham and Martin Luther King Jr., faith and public policy, prayers and activism, sanctification and service, the New Jerusalem and Branson, Missouri. For too long, people have lived either vertically or horizontally. Few, even in Christian leadership, have succeeded in living, speaking, equipping, and ministering from both the vertical and horizontal planes of the cross.

To fulfill the mandate of our Lord, to bring hope to a pathetic and hopeless time, we must stand and operate not from fringes but from the strongest part of the cross, where the vertical and horizontal intersect – the center, the nexus of grace and hope.

We need a church committed to saving the lost and transforming our communities, addressing sin and confronting injustice. It’s not either/or, it’s both/and. The nexus has a name. That name is discipleship.

In Matthew 28:19 Jesus told us, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” And in 2 Timothy 2:2 the apostle Paul said, “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.” These two passages serve as a firewall against spiritual apathy, moral relativism, and cultural decay. Jesus discipled 12 men, those 12 discipled 70, the 70 grew to 500, 500 grew to 3,000, and today, the discipleship revolution continues. The Master continues to move on the earth because of men following His model of equipping others.
At the end of the day, Peter and John, two men discipled by Jesus, demonstrate the potential of viable discipleship at the feet of the cross. Together, after they received the Holy Spirit, Peter and John did not hold a press conference and stand before the CNN of their time to market the newly acquired power. What did they do? They approached a crippled beggar (see Acts 3).

Once again we stand before a gate called Beautiful, and a crippled world reaches out, begging for an answer. And once again, under the power of the Master’s Spirit, discipled with biblical truth and carrying the cross daily, men of God stand poised to tell this crippled world one thing: “We do not have gold or silver, but what we do have we give you. In the name of Jesus Christ, get up and walk.”

This book provides a platform for a twenty-first-century discipleship revolution in which men can engage other men at the cross as they grow in righteousness and biblical truth. Use it with passion. Use it with other men. Then together, like Peter, Paul, and John, turn your world upside for the King of kings and Lord of lords.
The Paul / Timothy Covenant

Every college recruit, every professional player of every sport, every groom and every bride, and every successful team endeavor begins with a contract and terms of the covenant.

The “Baton of Faith” that will change the world for the Kingdom rests in your hands. This study is the exchange zone. We will win this race and God’s Kingdom will be known by every person, every tribe and every nation if the Baton is never dropped.

By entering into this “leg” of the race you are entering into a covenant with God and thousands of believers worldwide that you will continue to pass the “Baton of Faith” securely into the hands of others as we “love someone to Jesus until that person is ready to love another person to Jesus.”

I, ____________________, covenant to be your “Paul.” I will pray for you and serve you. I will meet with you, study with you and seek to co-labor with the Holy Spirit to impart these truths into your life so that you will be able to impart these truths into the lives of others.

_________________________  Signature

I, ____________________, covenant to be your “Timothy.” I will pray for you and diligently study with you and pursue this training process until completion. I will further agree to take this “Baton of Faith” and pass it to another and another as I fulfill my calling in “The Great Commission.”

_________________________  Signature
A Man and His Vision

A seventy-five year old fisherman was sitting on the bank of a pond catching a “breather” from a long day of doing nothing when a frog popped his head up in the water and said, “Hello, I’m a talking frog.”

“Wow!” the fisherman exclaimed, “That’s amazing!”

“I’ll tell you something more amazing than that,” the frog retorted. “If you kiss me, I’ll turn into a beautiful princess and I’ll become your wife!”

“That’s OK,” the fisherman responded with a long sigh. “At my age, I’d rather have a talking frog in my pocket.”

You know you’re getting older when you sit down in your rocking chair and you can’t make it move! Or when you get winded dialing long distance or “happy hour” means taking a nap!

I went to the doctor recently and had eye surgery. I thought you were supposed to be 90 to get cataracts, not 61.

I woke up the next morning and had an amazing revelation. I could see! It was as if someone had cleaned the windows to the world with Windex. My wife told me she liked me better half blind because she didn’t have to try as hard to look good. (Trust me, that girl always looks good to me!)

In Matthew 6:22-23, Jesus made an amazing statement: “The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!”

God gives us “cataract-free lenses” through which you and I can see His face, the faces of people we love, the “face of our intentions,” the “face of our motives,” and the “face of our vision.”

When the apostle Paul gave the revolutionary command in Colossians 3:2 to “set your mind on things above, not on earthly things,” he meant “look out through Jesus lenses.”

Pornography, greed, jealousy, bitterness, and fear put vision-killing cataracts in a man’s eyes. You lose the ability to see the beauty and goodness in your wife, your kids, and your outlook on life.

The good news is that you can have “cataract surgery” at any moment of any day you choose. God is always ready to install a pair of Jesus lenses.
But understand that He’ll let you pick the lenses you want. You can choose darkness or light. You can choose the cloudy lens of lust or the clear lens of purity. You can choose the ever-darkening lens of fear and worry or the crystal lens of trusting God’s sovereignty. You can choose the pitch-black lens of bitterness or the transparent lens of grace.

Helen Keller was once asked, “Is there anything worse than being blind?” Her answer was profound: “Yes, to have sight but not to have vision.”

Perhaps that’s one reason Jesus said in His famous Sermon on the Mount, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God” (Matthew 5:8).

Notes
Old Testament Viewpoint

Job 31:1 I have made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I gaze at a virgin?

Psalm 101:3 I will set before my eyes no vile thing. The deeds of faithless men I hate; they will not cling to me.

Psalm 119:18 Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.

Psalm 121:1-2 I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; From where shall my help come? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

Proverbs 28:22 A man with an evil eye hastens after wealth and does not know that want will come upon him.

New Testament Viewpoint

Matthew 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Matthew 6:14-15 For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Matthew 6:22-23 The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

Colossians 3:1-2 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

OBSERVATION: What is God saying?

1) What does it mean to set your mind on things above?

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2) How can something as small as the “eye” illuminate your whole body?

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3) How can you apply Psalm 101:3 to help you keep your “Jesus lenses” in?

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SESSION 1

GO DEEP: More study online - menatthecross.org/one2wononline

One2Won Climbing Higher

4) How does a believer keep God “in focus” and keep the “lust of the world” out of focus?

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5) Name and discuss places for you that the wrong thoughts become your focus and God gets “out of focus.”

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PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: What else of significance do you see God saying in these passages of scripture?

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APPLICATION: How do these passages relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?

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LOCKER ROOM: What lenses have you been looking through lately? What would “eye surgery” look like for you today?

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MEMORY VERSE: Matthew 5:8

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

My Prayers

Adoration: Father, today I praise You for...

Confession: Father, please forgive me for...

Thanksgiving: Father, today I’m thankful for...

Supplication: Father, the people and things that I wish to pray for today are...
A Man and His Lord

My father was a great man, combining strength and self-control. But when he confessed that he once took credit for another man’s heroics, I lost respect for him until I was old enough to forgive.

I was 12 at the time, impressionable as road tar in August. “I was fresh back from the Philippines and World War II,” he told me one night. “It was embarrassing being 28 years old, in a fraternity of boys a decade younger. Friendships were hard to come by, and I had never been so lonely. So, when one of the fellas asked me about the name on my footlocker, all sense of propriety bowed to the possibility of making a friend — or at least an admirer. Immediately, rumors of ‘Captain William E. Cunningham’ and ‘all the horrid things he must have witnessed in the jungle’ began to swirl around the frat house. And because the rumors were in my favor, I did nothing to stop them. The rumors of me as a war hero grew, as did my pride.

“But that wasn’t my footlocker,” he added quietly.

“Then whose — “

“It was my father’s, Son — Captain William Edward Cunningham. I was Buck Private William Alfred Cunningham. He was dead when I went off to war. I didn’t think he’d mind if I took his footlocker. When I came back to college, his locker came, too. I never thought the name on the lid mattered.”

Dad and I never returned to the topic of that footlocker. Though I quickly repolished my image of him, he went to his grave believing himself to be an imposter. But his confession revealed that he recognized a vital truth: Even motives are to be submitted to the lordship of Christ.

A man’s motives are never fully tested until he is faced with death or obscurity. At that fateful moment in the fraternity house, when my father decided to allow a self-aggrandizing rumor to spring up about him, he chose to take things into his own hands and cheat his way to popularity, even if it cost him his integrity. Though God was pleased with my dad as a buck private, William A. Cunningham wanted more for himself. But Christ wants to possess us at our core, down deep where the shadows lurk and the secret things are going on. In other words, He wants to be Lord of all.

Lordship in the 21st century seems historically discrete, doesn’t it? Perhaps a word better suited for a king and his palace. Dress it up in purple with gold trim and it comprehends a little better perhaps.
“Yes, Mr. President,” or “Okay, boss,” or “Yes sir, General,” or “Whatever you say, sir” put today’s cultural understanding a little bit closer to the bulls eye, don’t they? For me, the “Lordship of Christ” aligned itself squarely in the crosshairs when a friend said to me, “You can’t say ‘no Lord’ in the same breath.” To honestly say “Lord” means to say “yes.” Every time. Every single time. Even when it comes to the most difficult issue of all: who is Lord of my motives?

Notes
**Old Testament Viewpoint**

**Genesis 18:27** And Abraham replied, “Now behold, I have ventured to speak to the Lord, although I am but dust and ashes.”

**Deuteronomy 6:5** Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

**Isaiah 40:31** Yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.

**Psalm 24:1** The earth is the LORD’S, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it.

**Psalm 63:1** O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; my soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

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**New Testament Viewpoint**

**Matthew 7:21-23** Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?” Then I will tell them plainly, “I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!”

**Matthew 26:39** Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”

**Luke 6:46** Why do you call me [Jesus], ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?

**John 13:13-14** “You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. “If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet.”

**John 14:15** If you love me, you will obey what I command.

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**Observation: What is God saying?**

1) What is the passage in Matthew 7 saying about lordship and salvation?

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2) How might one’s motives be even more pleasing to the Lord than the good deeds that spring from them?

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3) What does it mean for Christ to be Lord of all our lives?

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____________________________________________________________________________________________
SESSION 2

PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: What else of significance do you see God saying in these passages of scripture?

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APPLICATION: How do these passages relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?

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LOCKER ROOM: How much of your life is fully surrendered to Jesus’ lordship? Where do you struggle the most in putting Jesus as your Lord?

MEMORY VERSE: Deuteronomy 6:5
Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

My Prayers

Adoration: Father, today I praise You for...

Confession: Father, please forgive me for...

Thanksgiving: Father, today I’m thankful for...

Supplication: Father, the people and things that I wish to pray for today are...

4) How does Moses’ awe, reverence and fear of God in Genesis 18 contrast to our 21st century, post-modern flippant view of God?

5) Why is it impossible, in all honesty, to say “No, Lord”?
A Man and His Wisdom

All of us are faced with navigating the rigors of life and its decisions. It’s what guys do. Most of the time we run full speed ahead because we think we can handle it on our own.

I used to think that way, too. As a young boy in a small town, I had a lawn mowing business. I pulled my mower behind my bike, cut yards, and earned cash. After one hot August day, I returned home eager to show my dad the profits. Boy, did my perspective change after talking with him!

When he discovered what I had charged an elderly widow, he sent me back to return most of the money that I thought I deserved. I respected my dad as the local banker and a prominent leader of our community. He knew almost everything about everyone in our one-stoplight town and was always ready to help others in need. And that day he taught me the scriptural principle that my personal gain was not nearly as important as caring for others, especially widows.

As much as we think we can make it and be independent, a life well lived is dependent on the Father’s view in every area of decision making. We need to seek His wisdom, which often flies in the face of what we think is right.

How do we choose the wise thing? David’s son Solomon has some lessons for us. As his father passed on leadership of the kingdom to him, he had to grow up fast. I am impressed that even though he was a youth, he understood he couldn’t be independent. He needed discernment, and when he humbled himself, God made him the wisest man to ever live.

We are called to lead our families, lead business ventures, lead others, and lead in our churches. Knowing how to make the wise call is critical. It starts with coming to our heavenly Father and the counsel of His words to give us firm footing.

The story goes of three mischievous teenage boys who were out to make a fool of a very wise and respected old man. One of the boys had a frail baby bird tucked away firmly in the palm of his hand. He encountered the old sage and held out his hand, “Old man, if you’re so wise, tell me, is this bird dead or alive?” (The boy schemed in his heart, “If he says ‘alive,’ I’ll crush the bird. If he says ‘dead,’ I’ll open my hand and let the bird fly.”) The old man quietly gazed into the foolish young lad’s eyes for a long while and then said, “It is as you will it, boy. It is as you will it.”
Wisdom has been rightly defined as “knowledge applied” or “God’s truths lived out.” The wisdom of God’s Word is so far above the combined wisdom of all the world’s “Einsteins” and Platos” and “Aristotles” that Scripture is on target when it says, “Professing to be wise, they became fools” (Romans 1:22).

**Notes**
Old Testament Viewpoint

Proverbs 3:5-7 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil.

Proverbs 9:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

1 Kings 3:6-9 Solomon answered, “You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day. Now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?”

New Testament Viewpoint

Matthew 7:24-27 Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.

James 3:13-17 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such ‘wisdom’ does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

**OBSERVATION:** What is God saying?

1) What are the starting blocks for wisdom?

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2) In 1 Kings 3:6-9, what were Solomon’s motives in asking for wisdom, and what should ours be?

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3) In James 3:13-17, what does genuine wisdom look like?

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4) What is the meaning of the Scripture statement, “Thinking themselves to be wise they become fools”?
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5) When was that truth revealed most candidly to you?
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**PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS:** What else of significance do you see God saying in these passages of scripture?
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**APPLICATION:** How do these passages relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?
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**LOCKER ROOM:**
Starting today, how can you make decisions that better reflect God’s wisdom?

**MEMORY VERSE:** *Proverbs 9:10*
The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

**My Prayers**

**Adoration:** Father, today I praise You for...

**Confession:** Father, please forgive me for...

**Thanksgiving:** Father, today I’m thankful for...

**Supplication:** Father, the people and things that I wish to pray for today are...
A Man and His Money

An 11-year-old girl named Allison went to the state fair with her daddy. While there, she won a huge stuffed bear on the midway. She’d played the game a few times, spending lots of cash, and proudly carried her prize around for the rest of the day. As they were leaving the fair, her daddy asked if she would consider giving her bear to someone who may not have as many toys as she. Very reluctant at first, Allison eventually decided to give her prized possession to a stranger … a little girl. “If you would like to have it, I would love to give you this bear,” said Allison. The little girl was overcome with joy!

The stuffed bear exchange made two girls very happy that day, not just one. It happened because Allison was willing to “lose” something she didn’t want to lose. As soon as she lost it, though, she found something immensely more satisfying. She told her dad that she felt a sense of satisfaction that no stuffed animal could bring.

Now consider the Christian man who loved to build his wealth. He clung to his money and was reluctant to give to charitable causes or the needs of his church or missionaries. He was building a foundation of financial security for his life on earth, with no thought of heavenly values or rewards.

In each case we see that godly stewardship has little to do with keeping one’s wealth and more to do with letting go of it. Jesus said that we cannot love God and money. A Christian surrenders ownership of his life, including his resources, to Christ. In return, he gains the security of knowing that a loving Father will provide for his needs. “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.” (1 Corinthians 2:9). Clearly, Jim Elliot spoke the truth when he said, “He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.”

God provides many principles in His Word that teach us how to use the money He has provided in ways that honor Him and bless people. They show us how to save, invest, provide for the family, stay out of debt, lend, and — most emphatically — give generously. Stewardship is not about holding on to what you have but employing what God has given to you for His purposes.

As the saying goes, “Cast out a few crumbs and you’ll gain back the whole loaf.” Wisdom aptly proclaims, “You can’t out give God.” Jesus, perhaps says it best in Matthew 13:44, “The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.”
**Old Testament Viewpoint**

**Haggai 2:8** The silver is mine and the gold is mine, declares the LORD Almighty.

**Proverbs 8:17-19** I love those who love me; and those who diligently seek me will find me. Riches and honor are with me, enduring wealth and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, even pure gold, and my yield better than choicest silver.

**Proverbs 19:6** Many will seek the favor of a generous man, and every man is a friend to him who gives gifts.

**Proverbs 21:17** He who loves pleasure will become a poor man; he who loves wine and oil will not become rich.

**Proverbs 28:8** He who increases his wealth by interest and usury gathers it for him who is gracious to the poor.

**Proverbs 28:27** He who gives to the poor will never want, but he who shuts his eyes will have many curses.

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**New Testament Viewpoint**

**Luke 12:15-21, 33 (NASB)** Then He said to them, “Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.” And He told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man was very productive. And he began reasoning to himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?’ “Then he said, ‘This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.”’ “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?’ So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. … Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys.”

**1 John 3:16-18** This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with word or tongue but with actions and in truth.

**1 Timothy 6:6-7, 17-19** But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. … Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

**1 Timothy 6:10** For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many grieves.

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**OBSERVATION: What is God saying?**

1) Who does all wealth belong to?

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2) According to 1 Timothy 6, 1 John 3, and Luke 12, how are we supposed to use our money?
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3) How well does our current financial behavior reflect the biblical values seen in this study?
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4) How do a man’s priorities with his money directly reflect the depth of his love for God?
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MY PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: What else of significance do you see God saying in these passages of scripture?
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APPLICATION: How do these passages relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?
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LOCKER ROOM: In light of this lesson, what changes might you want to consider in managing your finances?

MEMORY VERSE: 1 Timothy 6:18-19
Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.
 Research we've done at the Smalley Relationship Center shows that the thing your wife most needs and wants from you is emotional security. And the best way to give her that sense of security is by showing her honor. If a man wants to succeed in his marriage and go down in his family history as a truly great husband, the greatest gift he can give his wife is the gift of honor. Honoring, simply put, is to place extremely high value on your wife; unsurpassed value of any thing or any other person in your life. Honor means to value her so highly that you’d never do anything that would devalue her or hurt her or discourage her. So how do you honor your wife in practical ways?

Let me illustrate one of the most important by telling you about a time when I managed to both dishonor and honor my wife, Norma, in the space of a few hours. We were in Hawaii, where I had a speaking engagement. (Somebody’s got to do it!) Early one morning, I got up to take a walk by the ocean. I found a trail that took me past some gorgeous scenery and through an amazing forest. I got totally caught up in the beauty of God’s creation and just kept walking, losing all track of time.

Completely understandable, right? Just one problem: Before I left the hotel for my walk, I had told Norma to wait for me for breakfast. So, as I walked back into the hotel lobby, still basking in the glow of Hawaii’s scenic wonders, there sat Norma, glaring at me. “Where have you been for the last two hours!” she demanded.

Two hours! I thought. Was I really gone that long?

Clearly, I had dishonored her by leaving her waiting, hungry, for so long. Even more, I had scared her because I had suffered a heart attack a few years before, and she had been worried that I was lying dead on a path somewhere. I could have called her while I walked, but that thought hadn’t occurred to me at the time.

Realizing now what I had done to her, I said, “I am so sorry. I was wrong to forget the time and the fact that you were waiting for me. You are too important to me to be treated in such a way. What I did does not reflect how much I adore you. You know I think of you as a special gift from God.” Seeing my sincerity, Norma was gracious and quick to forgive.

If you’re like 99.9 percent of the husbands in the world, you’ve done at least one thing to dishonor your wife in the past week (or day). So let me ask: Have you admitted that what you did was wrong and asked for her forgiveness? Few things will honor her more, and make her feel more secure, than your willingness to “fess up” when you blow it and seek her forgiveness.
Old Testament Viewpoint

Genesis 2:23-24 The man said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called “Woman,” for she was taken out of Man.” For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

Proverbs 18:22 He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD.

Proverbs 31:10-12 An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil all the days of her life.

New Testament Viewpoint

Matthew 5:23-24 Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

Matthew 6:21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Smalley marriage paraphrase: “The more highly you value your wife, the more affection you’ll have toward her.”)

Romans 12:10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another [including your wife] above yourselves.

Ephesians 5:25-26, 28-29, 33 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy. … In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church…. Each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself.

Colossians 3:19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.

1 Peter 3:7 Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

OBSERVATION: What is God saying?

1) On a scale from 1 (not at all) to 10 (fantastic job), how well do you honor your wife on a daily basis?

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2) Based on what you know of your wife, what are some practical ways you could honor her – show her that she’s very important to you – that she would appreciate?

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3) In particular, how good are you at admitting when you’ve dishonored her and asking for her forgiveness? Why?

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4) Is there anything you need to change this week to give your wife the gift of honor?

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**PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS:** What else of significance do you see God saying in these passages of scripture?

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**APPLICATION:** How do these passages relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?

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**LOCKER ROOM:** What is something you did recently to dishonor your wife and for which you need to seek her forgiveness?

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**MEMORY VERSE:** *Proverbs 18:22*

He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD.

**My Prayers**

**Adoration:** Father, today I praise You for...

**Confession:** Father, please forgive me for...

**Thanksgiving:** Father, today I’m thankful for...

**Supplication:** Father, the people and things that I wish to pray for today are...
The 2008 men’s college basketball championship game culminated with Kansas University’s Mario Chalmers draining a three at the buzzer to send the game into overtime and cap off a 9 point comeback in the final 2 minutes. But as dramatic as that shot was, the part of the play I appreciate most is something that doesn’t even make the highlight reel. Before Chalmers hit that shot, Coach Bill Self gathered his players in a circle around him and drew up a play that was then executed to perfection.

I’ve been in those huddles as a player, focusing on my coach’s every word. I’ve also been there as a coach, casting vision and surveying the faces of my players. As I reflect on those times and remember the future champion Jayhawks huddled around Bill Self, I see a perfect picture of the circles of influence I have in my life every day – or, as I like to call them, “the arenas” and “the huddles.”

**Arenas** are those large circles like work, church, community, gym, and restaurants I frequent. They’re filled with watchful eyes waiting for me to do something to make them boo or cheer, and in these places I can have a small or gradual influence. **Huddles** are those people on whom I’ve had a more profound and personal impact. Here’s where the life-changing, eternally significant, game-winning or game-losing influence takes place. My wife, family, business partner, the leadership team of college superstars I invest in year round, the small group Bible study I lead, the players I coach – these all circle around me because I’ve earned their trust and respect.

Knowing I have these circles of influence forces me to ask the same questions every day: *What impression am I leaving on the arenas I play in?* and *What game plan am I laying out for those in my huddles?* I’ve drawn up a few buzzer beaters in my day, but I’ve also given my players losing plans. I can shake off losses on the court, but when it comes to God’s game plan in someone’s life … that’s a play I want to make sure to draw up right.

You can make an eternal impact on the lives around you every day. You don’t need a game-winning shot to establish a platform … you already have it as you walk by faith in front of your children, love your spouse in front of other couples, lead with integrity in your work, and attempt to honor the Lord amidst it all. So I ask, “*What’s your game plan, Coach?*”
Notes
New Testament Viewpoint

Acts 8:1-3 And Saul was there, giving approval to his death. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.

Acts 9:1-4 Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”

Acts 9:20-22 At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. All those who heard him were astonished and asked, “Isn’t he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn’t he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?” Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ.

In Prison:

Acts 16:25-31 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody’s chains came loose. The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, ‘Don’t harm yourself! We are all here!’ The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.”

In Athens:

Acts 17:22-23 Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.”

OBSERVATION: What is God saying?

1) Looking at the first scripture above, what was Saul’s influence when we first “meet” him in the Bible?

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2) What happened to Saul (later Paul) in Acts 9 that changed him from a murderer to a message bearer?

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3) What kinds of influence did Paul have on other people’s lives after his conversion?
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4) Describe your “huddle” of greatest value?
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5) What is scripture urging you to do today to improve your game plan?
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**PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS:** What else of significance do you see God saying in these passages of scripture?
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**APPLICATION:** How do these passages relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?
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**LOCKER ROOM:**
With God’s help, how can you have the impact you desire in your arenas and huddles?

**MEMORY VERSE:** *1 Corinthians 11:1*
Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

**My Prayers**

*Adoration:* Father, today I praise You for...

*Confession:* Father, please forgive me for...

*Thanksgiving:* Father, today I’m thankful for...

*Supplication:* Father, the people and things that I wish to pray for today are...
A Man and His Anger

It was a typical day in our home in my teenage years, laughter one minute and bickering the next. Mom had just returned from the grocery store and called us to grab the groceries. My younger sister, Audrey, and I were goofing around, and as I headed to help she smarted off, so I popped her on the back of the head. My brother, Glenn, a Vietnam Marine vet, saw me hit Audrey, and what ensued was not a pretty sight. Never did I imagine that my playful gesture would set in motion what became the fiercest battle my older brother and I would ever have.

Before I saw it coming, Glenn hit me in the eye, then threw repeated blows to my face. In shock and with blurred vision, I frantically swung back. Pounding with intent to hurt each other, we were in a knockdown, drag out fight. Glenn grabbed me to throw me down, but because I was 20 pounds heavier and a high school wrestler, I gained a momentary advantage in our struggle. We rolled all over the living room floor, smashing into mom’s pictures and lamps and destroying anything fragile in our path.

My mother, who was normally a quiet woman, took a broom and struck us until we stopped fighting. I didn’t care in that moment that this was my brother: rage filled my head as adrenaline filled my veins. All I wanted to do was finish the fight he had started. What was going on? Why had my brother hit me? How had our home gone from laughter to a family fight in seconds?

What happened that day is a tragic example of the danger of anger. In a moment, anger became a destructive force erupting like Mount St. Helens into a fight destroying everything in its path. The real damage wasn’t in broken furniture or bruised faces, it was in the damaged relationship this caused in our family. What happened that day when my brother vented his anger (and triggered mine) affected our relationship for years.

Of course, my story is not unique. Beginning with the very first family and continuing to this day, families have allowed anger to destroy relationships and at times even take lives. Genesis 4 shows us what happened when anger erupted in the relationship between two brothers and its deadly results.

Satan promoted strife by tempting men to sin. His first lie is to entice sin. His second lie is to urge you to get revenge and harbor your anger because of that sin committed against you. The second sin can be more destructive than the first!

What triggers your anger? If this is a problem area for you, begin now to make it a matter of daily prayer and growth, with God’s help.
Old Testament Viewpoint

**Genesis 4:3-8** In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.” Now Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.” And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

**Proverbs 15:1** A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

**Proverbs 19:11** A man’s wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense.

**Proverbs 29:22** An angry man stirs up dissension, and a hot-tempered one commits many sins.

New Testament Viewpoint

**Matthew 5:9** Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

**Matthew 6:14-15** For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.

**Ephesians 4:26-27** In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.

**James 1:19-20** My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.

**OBSERVATION: What is God saying?**

1) Scripture tells us to be slow to anger, but does that mean it’s okay to become angry? Why or why not?

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2) What are some of the results of uncontrolled anger?

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3) What’s the best way to keep ourselves from giving in to anger?

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4) How do Jesus’ words on forgiveness speak to you today?

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5) A “peacemaker” is one who promotes reconciliation. Describe a relationship in your life that Matthew 5:9 speaks to you today.

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**PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS:** What else of significance do you see God saying in these passages of scripture?

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**APPLICATION:** How do these passages relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?

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**LOCKER ROOM:** If you feel you need help getting your anger under control, who are three people who could help you (e.g., a pastor, friend, or family member)?

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**MEMORY VERSE:** Ephesians 4:26-27

In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.

**My Prayers**

**Adoration:** Father, today I praise You for...

**Confession:** Father, please forgive me for...

**Thanksgiving:** Father, today I’m thankful for...

**Supplication:** Father, the people and things that I wish to pray for today are...

**GO DEEP:** More study online - menatthecross.org
One2Won Climbing Higher
I love the game of golf. Ever since I was a young boy and the great Arnold Palmer was in his prime, I’ve followed the game avidly. I love the beauty of a well-maintained course, the challenge of hitting that little white ball that’s just sitting there, the honor code that governs the game, and the fact that it’s a sport you can play well into old age.

I remember the night my dad took me to the only sporting goods store in our small town and bought my starter set of clubs. The sound of their rattling together as I carried the bag to our car made me feel like a real golfer. When I began practicing with the putter that night, I imagined myself to be Arnie, “the king,” making a clutch putt to win another Masters.

The most I could ever afford to play was once a week, nine holes after work or on the weekend. But I tried to play that half round regularly, often with friends from church.

And then something happened that forever altered my attention to golf: My wife and I had a son, and he grew old enough to want my time and attention. Gradually, I realized I had to make a choice. Would I continue to spend an evening or half a day on Saturday every week on the golf course – and the money for greens fees, balls, gloves, and so on – or would I spend that time and money on my boy? And so I decided to park my golf bag in the garage and spend the time and cash on my child.

Oh, I tried to interest my son in golf, but he wasn’t athletically inclined, and it quickly became clear that he would never share my love of the game. He would much rather hike a trail and hear Dad make up a funny story.

Now, I don’t mean to suggest that we men have to give up all our hobbies to be good dads. And it’s true that we need times of relaxation to counter life’s stresses. (If you have a hobby that your children genuinely enjoy along with you, that’s great!) But it’s also true that we have only so much time, money, and energy, and we need to ask ourselves every now and then if we’re making the best use of them.

May I suggest, then, that time with your kids – having fun, getting to know them, listening to them, and modeling Christian manhood for them – becomes your new #1 hobby? Based on my experience, that’s a recreational decision you will never regret.

The story goes of a boy who had a deep longing to spend some time with his dad. The father was a “Type A” driven, goal-oriented man to the max. After lengthy cajoling over a period of weeks upon weeks, the boy was delighted when his dad agreed to a weekend fishing trip. Both the father and the son agreed to journal about the highlights of the weekend.

When the father and son arrived at the remote mountain lake, the skies turned grey and it began to rain. The rain persisted for a day and a half. In frustration, the dad piled all the camping gear into the trunk of the car and began to drive hastily home. On the way home, there was a terrible accident with a semi-trailer and both the father and son were killed.
While searching through the wreckage for things of value, the mom found the two journals. In the father’s journal she read, “Rained all weekend. Total waste of time.” The son’s journal expressed a totally different perspective. It read, “Went fishing with my dad. Best day of my life.”

Notes
Old Testament Viewpoint

Psalm 39:4 Show me, O LORD, my life’s end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting is my life.

Psalm 90:12 (NLT) Teach us to realize the brevity of life, so that we may grow in wisdom.

Psalm 127:4-5 Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one’s youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them.

Proverbs 17:22 A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

New Testament Viewpoint

John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.

Ephesians 5:15-16 Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.

James 4:14,17 What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. … Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins.

**OBSERVATION:** What is God saying?

1) Do we tend to think of children as a blessing in today’s culture? Why or why not?

2) What are five good reasons for thinking of our children as blessings?

3) Besides wanting to spend more time with our kids, what could be other reasons to rethink our recreational activities?

4) Jesus spent three years building into the lives of His Twelve Disciples. After He gave his life for them, they lived the remainder of their days glorifying Him and making Him known to the world. Undoubtedly, they recreated together, learned together, laughed together, and wept together. How does Jesus’ investment into His men inspire you to invest your time into your family?
5) For a man, time management is certainly one of the “trickiest” and most difficult dilemmas he faces in life. What reprioritizations has God been communicating with you over the past few months?

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PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: What else of significance do you see God saying in these passages of scripture?

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APPLICATION: How do these passages relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?

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LOCKER ROOM: In light of this study, what changes, if any, might you want to make in your recreational pursuits?


MEMORY VERSE: Psalm 90:12 (NLT)
Teach us to realize the brevity of life, so that we may grow in wisdom.

GO DEEP: More study online - menatthecross.org
A Man and the Women in His Life

In my early childhood, people thought my family was living the all-American life. My dad had a great job as a semi-pro golfer. We lived on a golf course and seemed happy. But on the inside there was a lot of pain. Dad was an alcoholic and an obsessed gambler. I watched my mom cry many tears. She was fearful and grieved much, but she wanted the best for her children.

I saw my mom pray day after day for her kids. I was about 10 years old when Dad finally left us. He had been destroyed by alcohol. He made the choice to leave his family, but my mother made the choice to love her family. Unfortunately, my self-esteem left with my father, but my mother told me that I was the most handsome and gifted young man in the world. Day after day she made me believe I was a champion. She believed in me, gave me her time, and made me into the man I am today.

I will never forget one day in ninth grade football. I was really too small to be playing, but I came running up to make a tackle. Two blockers hit me and knocked me unconscious. As the coaches came running onto the field to help, my mother beat them to me! They told her she couldn’t be on the field, but she insisted, “I can be on the field, I’m his mother.”

They carried me over to the sideline, where they laid me on the bench and she put my head in her lap. In case you’re wondering if I’m a momma’s boy, you should know for certain that I am! I often write her letters to remind her that she’s my hero.

A girl or woman of any age craves affirmation. It’s the #1 need of every daughter, wife, or mom. A boy needs to hear from his dad, “You can do it, buddy! I believe in you! Go for it!” A girl needs to hear, “You are the most beautiful girl in the world to me. You are lovely in God’s eyes and mine.”

The second great need hidden in the heart of the women in your life is empathetic listening. Advice and “quick fix” solutions are murder to a woman’s heart. God gave a man two ears and one mouth for a reason. A discerning and wise husband and father is a skilled listener. You’ll hear him say, “Tell me how you feel about that.” “Ouch! That sounds so sad. Tell me about your sadness when that happened.” Joe White’s dad, Spike, wrote his wife a love note almost every day. No wonder they were happily married for 66 years! I know of a few other men who write, call, or text their daughter every day.
My daughter, Callie, my wife, Karen, and my mom, Bettie, know that I’d drop anything and sacrifice anything for them, prioritizing them above all others. My wife is #1; no doubt about that. But just being *mindful* that all three want to be adored and affirmed reminds me to do or say something special to each of them regularly. A dozen roses are cheap compared to the impact! As a great football coach used to say, “Make something happen!” C’mon, men. What are we waiting for?

Notes
Old Testament Viewpoint

**Exodus 20:12** Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

**1 Samuel 1:9-11, 18-20** (NASB) Then Hannah rose after eating and drinking in Shiloh. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the temple of the LORD. She, greatly distressed, prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly. She made a vow and said, “O LORD of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and a razor shall never come on his head.” … So the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad. Then they arose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD, and returned again to their house in Ramah. And Elkanah had relations with Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her. It came about in due time, after Hannah had conceived, that she gave birth to a son; and she named him Samuel, saying, “Because I have asked him of the LORD.”

**Proverbs 31:10-11** An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain.

**Proverbs 31:28-29** Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: “Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all.”

<table>
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<th>New Testament Viewpoint</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>John 19:26-27</strong> When Jesus [hanging on the cross] saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Dear woman, here is your son,” and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.</td>
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**Ephesians 6:4** Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

**Ephesians 5:25-29** Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church.

**OBSERVATION:** What is God saying?

1) Why is the gift of affirmation so important to the women you love?

2) What kinds of praise would your wife, mom, or daughter like to hear from you?
3) What do you most appreciate about how your mother raised you? What would you most like to have been different? Why?
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4) What does it mean in practical terms to “rise up and call her blessed”? 
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5) 1 Peter 3:7 tells husbands to “grant her honor” in respect to loving your wife. In practical ways, how can you do that? 
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PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: What else of significance do you see God saying in these passages of scripture?
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APPLICATION: How do these passages relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?
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LOCKER ROOM: Who are the most significant women in your life? How do you show them honor?

MEMORY VERSE: Proverbs 31:28-29
Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: “Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all.”
A Man and His Humility

I started playing football at the ripe age of eight years old in Arlington, Texas. I remember being in class and counting down the hours, minutes, and seconds until I was out of that classroom and on the field, taking the perfect angle and slashing by my opponents into the end zone.

As I grew to learn the game, I saw it as a great training ground for developing humility. This was especially true in college when I played a position that rarely finds itself in the limelight but humbly works to make the offense succeed. The fullback, known by some as a “glorified lineman,” lines up in the backfield with the quarterback and the halfback. Though he’s capable of running the ball or even catching passes in short-yardage situations, the fullback’s primary job is to pave the way for the halfback. Each down he takes off with all his might, like an angry charging ram, intent on running completely through the opposing team’s defense. The goal is to create a clear path for the halfback to dash through untouched, to take on the hits and sacrifice his body. It was one of the most exhilarating experiences ever. It also was the most painful.

I recall many Sunday mornings, after an action-packed Saturday night game, feeling as if I had been in a car wreck. But that’s the fullback’s job. I trained, lifted weights, ran sprints, dragged sleds, and submitted my body to regular punishment so I could make the way for another coming behind me; and his position could be considered greater than mine.

In the game of life, God asks us to give up our position for someone or something else that is greater than ourselves. He desires that we give our lives for Him and humbly serve others. Accepting this call demonstrates the ultimate posture and position of a man: humbly imitating his Savior. There is no greater position.

There are five seasons in a man’s life: winter, spring, summer, pride, fall. (Can you relate?) If you don’t humble yourself daily, the Lord will humble you. Humble men are loved by their co-workers, cherished by their families, and lifted up by the Lord.

In practical ways, a man can increase his humility before the Lord and his fellow man in five ways. First, he can get on his knees before the Lord and recite Psalm 51 and let that Psalm meld into every cell in his body. Second, a humble man can seek as many ways as possible to “pass the credit” to others when credit is given. Third, he can become a praise giver to people who are dear to him and receive praise with a humble heart. Fourth, he can make a list of positive attributes he sees in those he loves placing the
focus on those qualities while never mentioning the good things he sees in himself. Finally, he can give all the glory to God both in his heart and with his words whenever he does something successful or receives praise for something well done.

Truly humble men are admired and remembered long after their days on this earth are gone.

Notes
OBSERVATION: What is God saying?

1) Why was Christ’s coming in the form of man the ultimate example of humility?

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2) The opposite of humility is pride and arrogance. How can these traits hinder our relationships with others?

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3) Philippians 2 says Jesus became obedient to the point of death on the cross. What are some areas in which we may need to die (deny ourselves and our rights) in order to walk humbly before God, family, and friends?

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4) Specifically, what are some practical ways you can increase your humility?
   A. With your family __________________________
B. Before the Lord ____________________________________________________________
C. At work ________________________________________________________________

5) Why do you believe “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble”?
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PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?
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APPLICATION: How does this passage relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?
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LOCKER ROOM:
Is walking in humility a priority in your life? Why or why not?

MEMORY VERSE: Philippians 2:3
Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.

My Prayers

Adoration: Father, today I praise You for...

Confession: Father, please forgive me for...

Thanksgiving: Father, today I’m thankful for...

Supplication: Father, the people & things that I wish to pray for today are...
A Man and His Friends

For three straight years, I ran the streets of Houston and indulged in every worldly opportunity that came my way. I was a mess, fighting addictions, recovering from stab wounds, and serving time in the Harris County jail. Then I got saved. And as a baby Christian, full of naive zeal, I was ready to save the world, starting with my old buddies.

I told some of my new Christian brothers my plan to evangelize my lost friends, and they told me to be careful, warning that I was vulnerable because I was new in the faith. But I couldn’t let my friends die and go to hell. I thought that if they could just feel what I was feeling, they would want Jesus, too. So, ignoring my Christian brothers’ warning, I planned to go home and win over my old gang.

A week later when I got there, I learned that everyone was going to a big party that weekend, so I made plans to attend. When some friends at the party said they’d heard I found religion, I saw my opportunity and replied, “It’s not a religion, it’s a relationship.” I thought that was a deep theological answer that would make them believe and fall to their knees in repentance.

Instead my friends said, “Man, we don’t want to hear that stuff!”

I instantly got mad and discouraged, to say the least. The next night, still hurting, I went out with some old friends, gave in to temptation, and fell back into my old ways. I found myself in the middle of a fight, got arrested, and went to jail. I was so humiliated. What was I going to tell my mom, who was so excited about my new faith? What was I going to tell my Christian friends, who were praying for my weekend and with whom I had to ride back to school?

That day in jail, I had a one-on-one with God. I made up my mind that I was going to have to release my old group of friends. And I understood that my Christian brothers had just been trying to protect me when they warned me about going home.

When I got back to school, I told them what happened. They embraced me, prayed for me, and got me back into God’s Word daily. In the process, they taught me a valuable lesson about friendship: A true friend challenges you to grow and use your abilities in Christ, cares no matter what the cost, and makes right the greatest wrongs.

Biblically, the term friendship was a far deeper connotation than our use of the word today. Friendship, in Biblical reality, is a covenant term. It comes
through the word “loving-kindness,” which means, “I love you based on what I do for you.” (As opposed to the way we more often base our friendship on “what you do for me.”)

Surely Jesus said it best the last night of His life before his crucifixion, “Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).

Notes
A Man and His Friends

Old Testament Viewpoint

Proverbs 13:20 He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm.

Proverbs 17:17 A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

Proverbs 27:6 Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.

Proverbs 27:9 Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of one’s friend springs from his earnest counsel.

Proverbs 27:17 As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.

New Testament Viewpoint

2 Timothy 1:6-8 For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God.

2 Timothy 1:15-18 You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes. May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he searched hard for me until he found me. May the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day! You know very well in how many ways he helped me in Ephesus.

OBSERVATION: What is God saying?

1) What happens when a man hangs around “fools”?

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2) What are some ways in which Christian friends can sharpen one another?

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3) Paul challenged Timothy to “fan into flame” his spiritual gift. What friend of yours could use that kind of inspiration, and how can you encourage him?

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4) To have a good friend, you’ve got to be a good friend. Jesus actually calls his family of believers his friends. Reflecting on His commitment to us, how can you be a more Biblical friend to the ones you call your friends?

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5) What quality of friendship did Paul find in Onesiphorus that you can better apply to your friendships?

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PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?

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APPLICATION: How does this passage relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?

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LOCKER ROOM: How does your circle of friends help you grow in your faith?

MEMORY VERSE: Proverbs 27:17
As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.
A Man and His Beliefs

I came to faith in Jesus Christ at the age of 12, and the circumstances before my conversion were difficult. My father had acute paranoid schizophrenia, which caused him to hear voices in his head and experience extreme mood swings. I didn’t understand, and I got fed up and decided I would stop trying in school and sports to mask the pain of my father’s illness. Then one Sunday I got saved, and God opened my eyes to see my dad’s illness for what it was. His circumstances didn’t change, but my perception did. Even more, I got on the path of P.E.A.C.E.

Every man is on a journey to discover his Purpose, Exact truth, Allegiance, Community, and Eternal reward. Every man needs Purpose for his life, Exact truth to measure his success or failure, Allegiance to something bigger than himself, Community with people who love him unconditionally, and Eternal reward as the driving factor to keep him persevering in tough times. The only true way on this journey is through Jesus Christ, who was fully God and fully man, who lived to do the will of His Father, who died bodily and was resurrected, and who sent the Holy Spirit after Him to instruct, guide, convict, and conform us to His image. Jesus is also our model of discipline, discipleship, doctrine, and devotion to God.

This path of P.E.A.C.E. has God the Father as the director, Jesus the Son as the example of how to walk, the Holy Spirit as our compass to keep guiding us in the right direction even when the road seems uncertain, the Bible as our map, and prayer as life-giving water to help us survive the journey daily.

A man’s purpose is wrapped up in Jesus’ exhortation to love God and love others. It’s that simple. Paul echoes Jesus’ words in Ephesians 2:10 when he boldly exclaims, “We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Whether you’re a dad, a firefighter, a CEO, an athlete, a farmer, a soldier, a student, wherever you are, make Jesus look good. If you’re feeding the hungry, visiting the sick, caring for the homeless, being a light in the locker room, discipling another man, make Jesus look good! Become God’s best version of you. All to the glory of God! Every hair on your head, every cell in your body, all to the glory of God!

Exact truth, no surprise, is God’s Word uncompromised. Paul told Timothy, “Be diligent (D-I-L-I-G-E-N-T) to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the Word of Truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). When God says through David, “I’ll put nothing unclean before my eyes” (Psalm 101:3), He’s got no gray. Nothing means nothing. When God says through Paul, “Your body is a temple of the Holy
Spirit, therefore glorify God with your body” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20), it is crystal clear what we should and should not put in our body! When God says to Moses, “Put no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3), He means the Internet, money, O’Reilly, football, a girl, a hunting rifle, a bag of golf clubs... nothing. God’s Word is always Truth. God’s Word trumps everything.

**Allegiance** is a Labrador retriever. That species of dog, whether he’s a hunting dog, a “seeing eye” dog, a drug sniffing dog, or just a lay-on-the-living-room-floor house dog is loyal to the core. He’ll stand by you with his life until he or you dies, whichever comes first. Allegiance says, “God I am Your guy! You can absolutely, implicitly count on me.” Allegiance is the late Walter Payton. Give that man the ball and he’ll give his body to get that ball across the goal line! He made the Chicago Bears look good. He made Mike Ditka look good as a coach because that man gave E-V-E-R-Y-T-H-I-N-G he had every play, every day. Allegiance may be the most powerful word to ever flow from the pen of a writer. When it refers to how you represent God, it probably is just that.

**Community** is a Paul and a Timothy. Community is a Christian coach who wakes up every day committed to serve his team and lead those young men to the Cross. Community is a group of guys who’ll love you no matter what and then love you enough not to believe a word of your bologna and care enough to call you out when you try to use it on them. Community is why you smile when you put your Sunday clothes on and get your family in the car to make church the most important item in your week. Community keeps you off of inappropriate visits to your computer. It’s Jesus who paves the road to heaven. It is community that keeps your feet out of the bar ditch and firmly planted on the pavement. Community makes your yes mean yes and your no mean no. Community is essential. Don’t leave home without it.

**Eternal reward** begins today. A life of P.E.A.C.E. brings heaven to earth and makes a man on earth a recipient of living forever with God. Living in P.E.A.C.E. is a life well spent. Living in P.E.A.C.E. will allow you to say, when your days on this planet have come to a close, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7).

**Notes**
Old Testament Viewpoint

Isaiah 1:18-20 (NASB)
“Come now, and let us reason together,” says the LORD, “Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool. If you consent and obey, you will eat the best of the land; But if you refuse and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword.” Truly, the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

Habakkuk 2:4 (NASB)
Behold, as for the proud one, his soul is not right within him; but the righteous will live by his faith.

New Testament Viewpoint

John 20:31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

1 Corinthians 2:9-16 (NASB) But just as it is written, “THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND which HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.” For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:33 Do not be misled: “Bad company corrupts good character.”

Hebrews 11:1, 6 Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. … And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

James 1:2-4 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

OBSERVATION: What is God saying?

1) How has God’s Spirit been speaking to you lately? How open are you to heeding the Spirit’s voice in your decisions?

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2) How can trials help to develop our faith?

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3) Why is our faith, our belief system, so important to God?
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4) What do God’s words through Isaiah communicate to your heart about your personal allegiance to God?
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**PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS:** What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?
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**APPLICATION:** How does this passage relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?
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**LOCKER ROOM:** What part of your P.E.A.C.E. is most in need of strengthening, and how can you do that?

**MEMORY VERSE:** John 20:31

But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

**My Prayers**

**Adoration:** Father, today I praise You for...
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**Confession:** Father, please forgive me for...
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**Thanksgiving:** Father, today I’m thankful for...
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**Supplication:** Father, the people & things that I wish to pray for today are...
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One2Won Climbing Higher
The highlights of my week are the three precious hours I get to spend One2Won with the Timothys God has entrusted to me. Troy, Greg, Aaron, Cameron, and Ross are men I long to meet with Paul-Timothy style. I feel so fortunate to get to grow Biblically with these dear men. Now I pray for future Timothys that I hope God will entrust to me. There are so many ways you and I can use, waste, or invest our time. I can’t imagine over the course of eternity any more valuable way to invest myself. I can only imagine what God can do to multiply these Timothys into the lives of their Timothys and their Timothys and their Timothys, etc.

The community around you is filled with “Timothys.” They meander aimlessly through life in every neighborhood, every family, every church and every place of business. Young and old, rich and poor, churched and un-churched, self confident and insecure, the Troys of this world are spiritually dying and craving a mentor.

In a few short weeks, you’ll graduate from “basic Timothy training” and be prayerfully committed to finding a “Timothy” of your own to pour the principles of this book into their life the way your “Paul” has poured into you.

Who is my next Timothy? To whom will I give the blessing of discipleship training?

1. Name three to five people in your extended family, neighborhood, church, or place of business who need someone in their life to bring them to Jesus and to mentor in their faith? (Your Timothy may be a believer already and needing someone to equip him or perhaps a person who needs to “come to Jesus” in the process.)

   A. ____________________________________________

   B. ____________________________________________

   C. ____________________________________________

   D. ____________________________________________

   E. ____________________________________________

2. Pray for these people daily and ask God for discernment and opportunity to pick one to approach.

3. Realize that your own personal adequacy is in Christ and Christ alone. “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13). This is your promise from God.
4. Rejoice in the calling that “making disciples” is God’s command for every believer. It’s our highest calling, greatest privilege, and immeasurable eternal reward.

5. If no one drops the baton, by discipling and sending two people each year, in 16 years, you and your Paul can create a down line of 8,589,934,592 discipled people (that’s actual math)!

6. Log on to our website (www.menatthecross.org) and download for free two more “One2Won” books to use as study guides or mail $12 (includes shipping and handling) for two printed and bound books (with two additional Paul Timothy covenant coins) to Men at the Cross, 1353 Lakeshore Drive, Branson, MO 65616.

**MATC Multiplication Chart**

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If no one drops the baton, in just 16 years we can reach the world.
A Man and His Forgiveness

At the age of 5, I lived through the nightmare of having a stranger come to the front door of my family’s home and announce that my father had been murdered. I watched my mom fall to the floor in tears. I stared into space, and then I had to explain to my brother that our father had been killed.

Twenty-plus years later, after going through some personal struggles, my sister decided that she did not have complete peace about our father’s death. So she wrote a letter to the men who killed him, and the only question she asked was “Why?”

Two of the men wrote back, but one letter sticks out the most. It said, “I was the one that killed your father; your father was killed by me.” Those words leaped off the page. Bennie had been in prison since 1985 for the murder, and for the first time I came face-to-face with his crime and confession.

All the emotions I did not display on the day of my father’s funeral began flooding out of me at that moment. “Lord, what do I do?” I cried as I continued to read. Bennie explained that every day he woke up wishing he were dead because of the choice he’d made. He even believed that my family wanted him dead. As I continued to read, I felt in my heart that I needed to tell him how to be free. I needed to tell him that this would always haunt him unless he chose to give his life over to the Lord. He could be free of his sin because God forgives.

But more than sharing God’s forgiveness with Bennie, I needed to set my heart free. I needed to forgive him. If the Lord forgave me of my sins, no matter the sins, how could I not do the same? So I wrote Bennie and told him that I truly forgave him. I even hope one day to meet him face-to-face.

Can I forgive those who sin against me? It isn’t easy, but the freedom that comes from forgiveness is necessary for my life as a disciple of Christ. As followers of Christ, we also must forgive others for our sins to be forgiven. Although the pain of losing a father when I was young was great, the pain of unforgiveness is greater, but it’s one I do not have to bear because Christ bore it all on the cross.

Scripture implores us to forgive others in the same way as God forgives us. “As far as the east is from the west”… “If you forgive others as I forgave you”… “Mercy triumphs over judgment”… “Though your sins be as scarlet, I will make them as white as wool”… “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do to me.” Pause for a moment and look at God’s heart on forgiveness. Ponder the completeness and the finality of His forgiveness of our sins and consider those in your life who have wounded you or perhaps are wounding you today.
What a responsibility “God-like” forgiveness is! Imagine how great it would be to turn those responsibilities into opportunities to “make God look good” in a lost and dying world!

**Notes**
New Testament Viewpoint

**Matthew 18:21-35** Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servant. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. The servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded. His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.’ But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.”

**Mark 11:25-26** And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.

**Colossians 3:13** Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

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**Observation:** What is God saying?

1) What do the Scriptures say about why we should forgive others?

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2) What happens when we choose not to forgive those who have wronged us?

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3) How often should we forgive others, and what implications does this have?

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4) What does forgiveness allow us to do in regard to the offender?

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5) In Psalm 103:11-13, David writes, “For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His love for those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on His children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him.” How can you apply that attitude to the person in your past who has most deeply grieved you?

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**PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS:** What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?

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**APPLICATION:** How does this passage relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?

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**LOCKER ROOM:** Who is someone in your life whom you have not forgiven, and are you now ready to do so? Why or why not?

**MEMORY VERSE:** Matthew 6:14-15
For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.
Bob Hora was the finest example of a Christian man I have ever known. He walked out his faith between rows of soybeans, tool sheds, and church pews. Bob taught Sunday school for much of his life. But most of his spiritual lessons happened during the week and without words.

Instead of teaching about loving your neighbor, Bob did it ... every time he drove his tractor to my grandmother’s farm to clear away the fresh-fallen snow ... and every time he got up at the local café where the old guys gathered every morning and served them coffee. That daily silent act taught those guys more about serving than any Sunday lesson. Then there were the Lifesavers. All the kids (and grown-up kids!) knew that Bob kept wintergreen Lifesavers in his pocket. Wherever Bob went, a child would rush up to him, grinning. Always with a twinkle in his eye, Bob would hand over a sweet, round mint.

Bob was most famous, though, for giving away his sweet corn. If you have ever been near a Midwest farm at harvest, you know the pure joy, the honeyed bites, the pale golden kernels of nectar that are called sweet corn. There is nothing like it.

Sweet corn was Bob’s real-life allegory for the fruit of the Spirit. Seriously. With love, he pulled the stubborn weeds. With patience, he set up irrigation systems and sprayed for bugs. With faithfulness, he checked the corn daily to see when it would be ready for picking. With gentleness, he picked the corn in the early morning, when dew was heavy on the stalks, so that it would be freshest. And with joy, he placed it into the hands of his grateful neighbors, brown paper bags overflowing.

Bob delighted in planting and growing that special once-a-year crop, just so he could share it with everyone around him. On top of all his morning-to-night farming duties, Bob took special care of his small sweet corn field. His soybean and regular cornfields provided his family with income. But his sweet corn field provided them with a living example. All the people around town fondly called Bob the sweet corn Santa Claus. And let me tell you—he didn’t earn that title from a couple of years of giving. He earned that title from decades of serving, planting, sweating, watering, picking, and sharing.

Bob’s example is still talked about. And like a true legacy, it has lived on: Bob’s children and grandchildren are now serving and giving to their neighbors. If I’m not mistaken, one of his sons carries those tasty wintergreen Lifesavers, too.

“Heroes.” That’s what we call men like Bob. “Heroes of the highest order.” Men who serve humbly are heroes when they live and legends when they die. Hollywood will spend $150 million creating a Batman or a Superman that, in reality, is no hero at all. For Bob, the cost was only a few ears of corn and the loving labor it required to ripen it.
Can you name the 10 most recent Cy Young award winners?...The last 10 “Best Actors” at the Oscars...the past 10 years’ MVPs in the NBA or NHL? How about naming the 10 coaches, teachers, and spiritual coaches who served God devoutly and poured themselves into you. Not a difficult job is it?

There’s a little bit of Bob in every man. Cultivating that will increase the harvest of your life a thousand-fold.

Notes
A Man and His Service

Old Testament Viewpoint

Exodus 9:1 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go to Pharaoh and say to him, ‘This is what the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, says: “Let my people go, so that they may worship [serve] me.’”

Deuteronomy 8:19 If you ever forget the LORD your God and follow other gods and worship [serve] and bow down to them, I testify against you today that you will surely be destroyed.

Job 42:12-17 The LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; and he had 14,000 sheep and 6,000 camels and 1,000 yoke of oxen and 1,000 female donkeys. He had seven sons and three daughters. He named the first Jemimah, and the second Keziah, and the third Keren-happuch. In all the land no women were found so fair as Job’s daughters; and their father gave them inheritance among their brothers. After this, Job lived 140 years, and saw his sons and his grandsons, four generations. And Job died, an old man and full of days.

New Testament Viewpoint

Matthew 20:26 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant.

Luke 16:13 No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

Romans 7:6 But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

2 Corinthians 11:23-26 Are they servants of Christ? – I speak as if insane – I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren.

OBSERVATION: What is God saying?

1) How can we serve God by serving the people around us?

2) Matthew says that whoever wants to be great must be a servant. How does that work?

3) What does it mean to serve in “the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code”?

Mark these Key Words: servant God Christ Holy Spirit
4) We read and talk about and focus on Job's afflictions, but the “last half” of his life was extremely blessed. What did Job do well in the first half of his life that brought such abundant blessings in the last half?
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5) Serving is easy when “it’s all good!” What do the lives and service of Paul and Job teach you personally about being a servant when it’s not “all good”?
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PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?
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APPLICATION: How does this passage relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?
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LOCKER ROOM: How can you serve God by serving others today?

MEMORY VERSE: Mark 10:45
For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.
A Man and His Dreams

All of us had dreams at one time of things we wanted to accomplish. Hopefully, all of us still do. Perhaps, however, our dreams have faded with the passage of time and the accumulation of responsibilities (and debt!). But God made us dreamers, and it’s never too late to pursue them.

Consider James Michener, for example. His dream was to be a novelist, and military service in the Navy during World War II gave him plenty of grist for his storytelling mill. But he spent years as a teacher and college professor, then as an editor, nurturing the dream. Finally, his first book was published when he was 40 years old. He went on to write more than 40 titles, selling more than 75 million copies altogether. And that first book, Tales of the South Pacific, won a Pulitzer Prize in 1948.

Or consider the famous Harland “Colonel” Sanders, the founder and pitchman for Kentucky Fried Chicken. He worked a lot of different jobs for much of his life. He didn’t even start cooking chicken until he also was 40. And the business that put him on the map – planting KFC restaurants all over the U.S. and the world – he began doing that at age 65!

My friend Steve was senior pastor of one of the largest churches in a city of half a million people. A caring man and skilled preacher, he likely could have stayed there and prospered until retirement. But travels abroad had grown in Steve and his wife a heart for the spiritually poor land of New Zealand. Gradually, a dream took shape to move there and train pastors to reach their communities more effectively. Finally, in their mid-40s, Steve and his wife followed the dream, made the move, and have never looked back.

The best dreams, of course, are those that come from God and honor Him. Do you have a dream like that? If you don’t, start by asking, “If I knew I had only five years left to live, what would I want to accomplish of eternal significance?” If you do, ask, “What first step can I take today, however small, to start making that dream come true?”

The distance between “wishers” and “dreamers” is light years! Dreamers are willing to pay the price in sweat, toil, and pressure. Jesus wasn’t a wisher. He gave His life for His dream. True dreamers are willing to do that. Dreams spill your blood! Dreams are not for cowards. Neither do they come true for the lazy or complacent. Wishers are a dime a dozen. Dreamers are pure gold. Wishers would love to see it happen. Dreamers will die to see it happen. Wishers are all about success. What will it do for me? Dreamers are all about significance. What will it do for God? Wishers seek to build personal acclaim. Dreamers seek to build an effective team. Wishers build houses of cards and monuments to their ego. Dreamers build invisible towers that point clearly to the heart of God.

A great dream will inspire you to take consistent action in pursuit of it. And it will be big enough to require all you’ve got and then some – namely, the help of our omnipotent God.

What’s your dream?
**Old Testament Viewpoint**

**Psalm 37:4-5** Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this.

**Psalm 145:18-19** The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them.

**Proverbs 3:5-6 (Message)** Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don’t try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God’s voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he’s the one who will keep you on track.

**Proverbs 16:2-3** All a man’s ways seem innocent to him, but motives are weighed by the LORD. Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.

**Jeremiah 29:11-13** “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”

**New Testament Viewpoint**

**Ephesians 3:20 (Message)** God can do anything, you know – far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us.

**James 4:13-16** Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.” Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.” But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.

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**OBSERVATION: What is God saying?**

1) Do you have a dream that you believe God has given you? If so, what is it?

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2) If you don’t yet have a God-honoring dream, what interests or passions of yours might give birth to such a dream?

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3) How can pursuit of a dream add meaning to our daily lives?

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4) According to James 4, when do a man’s dreams lead to arrogance?

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5) How can you be sure that your dreams will be dreams of eternal significance and bring glory to God when accomplished?

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**PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS:** What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?

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**APPLICATION:** How does this passage relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?

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**LOCKER ROOM:** What can you do today to find a dream or to help your dream grow?


**MEMORY VERSE:** Psalm 37:4-5

Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this.

**My Prayers**

**Adoration:** Father, today I praise You for...

**Confession:** Father, please forgive me for...

**Thanksgiving:** Father, today I’m thankful for...

**Supplication:** Father, the people & things that I wish to pray for today are...
A Man and His Legacy

I recently attended a funeral for a friend’s mother. I had not met the lady, but I got to know something about her during the service. Bits of her personality came through the stories told. A picture of her resolve, of the things that were important to her, and of her positive influence on others all emerged. As I thought about this lady, I remembered another friend who had lost his father. His stories were much different. Through his tears, he told me about the abuse and neglect he had suffered under the hand of this man. My friend had struggled to be loved and accepted by his father – without success. What a tragedy!

Legacy is defined by Webster’s as “anything handed down as from an ancestor.” That means that the two parents mentioned above left a legacy in the memories of those who knew them. I began to ask myself, what kind of legacy am I leaving? Will I make a positive difference in anyone’s life? How can I be intentional about my legacy? Most importantly, what does God say about my legacy? A familiar verse in Proverbs reminds us, “A good man leaves an inheritance for his children’s children” (13:22). I want to provide physically for my family when I leave them behind. There are ways I can plan for that. But material provision is not the only thing I will leave.

Over and over we are reminded of what’s important in life: bringing glory to God by living a godly life. The Bible says those things are important for our lives and for the life to come. We have the power to pass on our faith to our children and grandchildren. Even our attitudes about the opposite sex, about integrity, about work and play, and about personal responsibility are all passed on. That’s a huge responsibility! I need to start now to impart my beliefs to my family.

My legacy will affect others as well. In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus said, “Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (5:16). Lots of promises follow that kind of instruction, such as “Those who are wise will shine like the stars for ever and ever” (Daniel 12:3).

Josh McDowell aptly states that “You don’t leave a legacy to your kids, you are your legacy.” Kids are built with great big baloney detectors in their brains. They can spot a phony a mile away. Our kids crave authenticity and long for a dad who walks his talk…a dad who models integrity and “Christ firstness.” They will become so much like you it’s scary! For single men and dads who want to extend their legacy beyond their kids, there is nothing more eternally significant than Paul-Timothy legacy investment in another man.

It isn’t too early for you and me to plan for the legacy we will leave. In fact, it’s past time! Let’s start today and work toward this goal for the rest of our lives.
Notes
Old Testament Viewpoint

II Chronicles 7:14 If my people, who are called by my name, humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from the heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

Psalm 78:1-7 (NASB) Listen, O my people, to my instruction; incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old, which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not conceal them from their children, but tell to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wondrous works that He has done. For He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers that they should teach them to their children, that the generation to come might know, even the children yet to be born, that they may arise and tell them to their children, that they should put their confidence in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments.

Psalm 127:3-5 Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one’s youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their enemies in the gate.

Isaiah 54:13 All your sons will be taught by the LORD, and great will be your children’s peace.

New Testament Viewpoint

1 Thessalonians 2:11-12 For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

2 Timothy 2:2 The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

1 Peter 1:24-25 All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever.

OBSERVATION: What is God saying?

1) How were the works of the Lord passed down to the generation to come?
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2) Since children are a blessing, what is our responsibility to God concerning them?
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3) What three things did Paul do so the Thessalonians would walk in a worthy manner, and how do we apply those to our children?
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4) What, in your own words, is Paul communicating to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2?

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5) What adjustments do you need to make in your life to ensure a legacy of eternal significance?

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PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?

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APPLICATION: How does this passage relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?

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LOCKER ROOM: What legacy did your father leave you?

MEMORY VERSE: 1 Peter 1:24-25

All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever.

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One2Won Climbing Higher
My father is almost 60 at the time of this writing and still in great shape. He used to work for the Cincinnati Recreation Committee, lifeguarding and teaching diving at downtown pools every summer. These pools were flooded with rowdy teenagers and children. Dad and his lifeguards would often have to kick kids out for the day for fighting, cursing, or taking swim trunks that didn’t belong to them.

One day a teenage boy wanted to take things further. He had pulled a girl’s bathing suit down, and Dad banned him from the pool. Predictably, the boy threw a fit and spewed curse words. Once Dad escorted him to the gate, he told him not to come back that summer. Then the boy did the unthinkable: He spit in Dad’s face and took off running.

The boy ran down the street in full confidence. But when he looked back, there was my 40-something dad within arm’s reach. Dad grabbed the boy by his shirt and threw him to the ground. “You disrespect a man, you get ready to deal with a man like a man!” he barked.

The boy jumped up and ran through an alley. Dad came back inside the gates and wasn’t even breathing hard.

A few hours later, after the pool had emptied for lunch, the teen reappeared with reinforcements. Dad looked around and saw at least 12 teenagers gesturing for him to come outside. Dad told me to get in the deep end of the pool, and he opened the gate for the boys to come in. He took his shirt off to show them this was probably going to be their worst summer. Barely 5’10” and every bit of 210 pounds, he jumped into the shallow end and asked the boys to come in for a swim. They looked at each other and walked away. Visions of the bottom of the pool weren’t too appealing.

My father’s body could function well because he took care of it. Who knows what would’ve happened if he couldn’t run or swim? What if his physical appearance didn’t make people think twice about harming him?

I realized then that I had to keep my body in working order. I may need to protect someone with it.

First Corinthians 6:19 tells us we are not our own. Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Pause with me for a minute and swallow that gigantic statement. Your body is a temple. To the Jews, the temple is where you meet God. That place was holy; a place worthy of God’s dwelling. “Beware, Jehovah God lives here.” Wow! This is as big as it gets! Then, to fill that temple with the highest ranking member of this earth sphere we live in,
Scripture says, “The Holy Spirit dwells in this temple of yours.” Not school spirit or a good spirit or a spirit of victory…far from it! **THE HOLY SPIRIT** lives in here. God takes *your* body and places the CEO of the cosmos in there. No wonder God exhorts us to take **really** good care of that temple of ours. A man fills his temple through five highways, his mouth, his eyes, his ears, his nose, and his touch. Garbage in; garbage out! Our body was never meant to be a garbage disposal. Our food, our media, our drink, our exercise, our conversations, our reading. An excellent temple of the Holy Spirit puts *only* the best through those five gates. Will your temple be made of wood, stone … or gingerbread? In asking this question, however, we must be careful. Some people neglect God’s gift. Others worship it. Both views are irresponsible. We should think about our bodies with humility and care.

Notes
Old Testament Viewpoint

Proverbs 3:1-8 My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity. Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man. Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.

Proverbs 14:30 A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.

Proverbs 16:24 Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.

Proverbs 17:22 A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

New Testament Viewpoint

1 Corinthians 6:12-20 (NASB) All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything. Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of them. Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be! Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? For He says, “THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.” But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

1 Timothy 4:8 For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

OBSERVATION: What is God saying?

1) What things did the author of Proverbs 3 urge us to do that will help us physically?

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2) Is your body currently more like stone or gingerbread? How did it get that way?

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3) How might you get more peace, cheerfulness, and “pleasant words” into your daily life?

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4) What do you need to do to rebuild your temple to make it “fit” for the Holy Spirit’s dwelling?

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5) How does a man actually “glorify God” with his body?

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**PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS:** What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?

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**APPLICATION:** How does this passage relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?

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**LOCKER ROOM:** Which physical and spiritual habits might you want to change to improve your body’s ability to function?

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**MEMORY VERSE:** 1 Timothy 4:8

For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

**My Prayers**

**Adoration:** Father, today I praise You for...

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**Confession:** Father, please forgive me for...

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**Thanksgiving:** Father, today I’m thankful for...

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**Supplication:** Father, the people & things that I wish to pray for today are...

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**SESSION:**

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4) What do you need to do to rebuild your temple to make it “fit” for the Holy Spirit’s dwelling?

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5) How does a man actually “glorify God” with his body?

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**Confession:** Father, please forgive me for...

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**Thanksgiving:** Father, today I’m thankful for...

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Hodding Carter aptly stated, “The two greatest gifts a parent can give a child are ‘roots’ and ‘wings.’” When a man fathers his children well, both processes are fantastic.

Giving our kids roots takes a lot of time and energy, but man is it fun! The very best way to do that is to read and memorize Scripture together every single day. When kids have God’s Word tucked in their heart, they’ll be a whole lot more likely to think God’s thoughts and act in God’s ways. It’s a dad’s #1 job to memorize Scripture with his children. Deuteronomy 6 implores us to do just that! “Lay by times” just before bed are the best time to memorize with our kids. Start with key verses and then move on to Psalms like Psalm 1, 23, and 100. After that, patiently move on to passages like James, Philippians, Matthew 5-7, and John 13-16.

Giving our kids wings happens as we teach our kids the importance of leaving home. They must understand that “you will not be with your mom and dad forever, so plan accordingly.”

Here are three reasons for adopting a “leave and cleave” parenting style: First, it starts children on their spiritual journey and prepares them for adulthood – for taking personal responsibility for their thoughts, emotions, actions, and reactions.

Second, it guards parents from becoming overprotective and controlling. Hovering parents communicate through word and deed that their children cannot be trusted. The parenting implications of the “leave and cleave” texts, however, continually remind us that our children need to take chances, make mistakes, learn, and go on. We become monitors of their progress rather than just controllers of their behavior.

Third, the “leave and cleave” parenting style establishes order in the home. It constantly reminds kids that they are a welcome addition to the family but that they won’t be there forever. It reminds them that Mom and Dad will stay married and enjoy life long after they’re gone.

My parents were definitely not the hovering kind. Mom always told me to go for it. She wrote a letter when I was four in which she released me to the Lord. It said, “Lord, wherever he goes, use him for your kingdom. If you send him to Africa, Asia, or a remote island, please use him. I am not going to hold him back.”

My dad taught me a strong work ethic. He had me earning money by the age of seven, and if I wanted something special, he would help me develop a plan...
to earn it. Later, if I had to get the car fixed, he kept a ledger, and I paid him back. He would give me an allowance, after I worked for it, then sit me down and say, “Here’s the money going to savings, here’s the money going to the church, and here’s spending money.” I still tithe today because I picture my dad doing that.

My parents enjoy being empty nesters. Mom even turned my childhood bedroom into a reading room – without asking! But this I know, they have definitely released me.

How about you? Have you released your kids to the Lord?

Notes
Old Testament Viewpoint

**Genesis 2:24** For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

**1 Samuel 1:11**
And she [Hannah] made a vow, saying, “O LORD Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant’s misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head.”

**Proverbs 3:12** Because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.

**Proverbs 13:24 (Message)** A refusal to correct is a refusal to love; love your children by disciplining them.

New Testament Viewpoint

**Ephesians 6:4** Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

**Hebrews 12:1-2** Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

**OBSERVATION: What is God saying?**

1) Are we hovering parents or “leave and cleave” dads? Which of our behaviors support that conclusion?

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2) How will our children be affected if we don’t release them?

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3) How can a dad who’s overprotective and controlling start to release his kids?

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4) Of all the races a man runs, none is as significant as the race to be a good dad! How does Hebrews 12 inspire you in this race?

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PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?

APPLICATION: How does this passage relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?

LOCKER ROOM: What are two practical things you can do in the next week to become a better dad?

MEMORY VERSE: Ephesians 6:4

Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

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One2Won Climbing Higher
A Man and His Discipline

A huckleberry pie of wisdom about discipline sits inside my brain, one sliver of which I owe to Mr. Floyd Cottle of West Nichols Hills Elementary School. With flame-red hair and a voice like a megaphone, Mr. Cottle employed a form of discipline that involved math. When a student misbehaved, Mr. Cottle would call out his name and assign a random number of what he called “sets.” A “set” was a sheet of paper filled with 12 neat columns of long-hand multiplication. So, beginning with 1x1=1...1x2=2... all the way up to 1x12=12, and then however many more sets he was assigned, the offender painstakingly wrote each column.

Hand cramping, brain smoldering, the student knew that if he made one miscalculation, one slip of the pen, he was doomed to start the whole process over. I once saw the school’s meanest bully reduced to tears under the sentence of “15 sets.” The following morning, he had the audacity to turn in one set and 14 sets of carbon copy. “That’s 30 sets!” bellowed Mr. Cottle, pitching the counterfeit assignment in the trash. The boy walked back to his chair mumbling incoherently, and even though I was not a Christian at the time, I attribute my deep faith in the reality of hell to the look on his face.

We cannot talk about discipline without also talking about math. Translated mathanos (discipline) from mathetes (disciple), both words are rooted in the Greek word math.

A disciple’s journey with Christ must be methodical, “by the numbers” — just like those days when we sat at our desks, learning 2 + 2. And like math for most men, journeying with Christ can be slow and uneventful, annoying and unnatural. This explains why we constantly look for shortcuts. We substitute podcasts for Sunday mornings in church. We give money to missionaries, fooling ourselves into thinking we have paid the high price of discipleship. Yet many of us have never helped a neighbor shovel his drive of snow or empty her van of groceries. We are lousy mathematicians—and lazy disciples.

Jesus once said, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Luke 9:23).

Crosses were never meant to be light weight or soft and comfortable. With my wife, discipline means I try to be the first to say, “I’m sorry. Please forgive me.” It is as simple as taking out the trash and as complex as taming my tongue to never be sarcastic or derogatory in my comments towards my wife and kids.

Do you want to be a man of discipline, a disciplined disciple-maker? You must learn to make daily decisions to follow Christ and deny self. No shortcuts.
No carbon copies of someone else’s work. Then your knowledge of God will grow ever greater, and your friendship with Him will follow suit. Now, that’s a slice of pie too good to pass up.

Notes
Old Testament Viewpoint

Genesis 39:7,10 It came about after these events that his master’s wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, “Lie with me.” As she spoke to Joseph day after day, he did not listen to her to lie beside her or be with her.

Psalm 1:1-3 Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

Daniel 1:8 But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king’s choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself.

New Testament Viewpoint

Matthew 28:18-20 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Luke 9:23 Then he [Jesus] said to them all: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

Hebrews 12:6-8 “Because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.” Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons.

OBSERVATION: What is God saying?

1) Of the common Christian disciplines (prayer, Scripture memory, taking care of those in need, fasting, worshipping God, etc.), which are the most difficult to do? Why?

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2) What does it mean to “deny yourself,” and how does that fit into the category of discipline?

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3) What are some similarities between a successful athlete and a man who is leading a disciplined Christian life?

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4) How does the discipline of Daniel speak to you today?

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5) How does the discipline shown by Joseph apply to your circumstances today?

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PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?

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APPLICATION: How does this passage relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?

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LOCKER ROOM: What’s one thing you can do today to start becoming more disciplined in following Christ?

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Then he [Jesus] said to them all: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”

My Prayers

Adoration: Father, today I praise You for...

Confession: Father, please forgive me for...

Thanksgiving: Father, today I’m thankful for...

Supplication: Father, the people & things that I wish to pray for today are...
A Man and His Mind

We were training on a snow-packed football field in late January, working out as if preparing for the national championship game. I had a badly sprained ankle and was reeling in pain. Our S.M.U. coach was not deterred. His speech that day was one of those “You’ve gotta eat football, drink football, think football, live football, and die football” talks that every sane player hates.

That coach taught us, though, that you become what you think about. I think about being a granddad all the time, and as a result, I’m self-proclaimed “all world” at it. I think about those precious grandkids so much, I “bleed tears” when they’re gone!

Likewise with you, what you think about, you will become. Your mind is your greatest attribute or your greatest enemy.

Lust and pornography force men into slavery worse than any other mental entrapment. Porn (of any kind, no matter how “mild”) destroys a man in nine ways:

- Prints an image on your mind that can last for life.
- Turns women into animals, objects, slaves, and smut.
- Is instantly addictive, like crack cocaine.
- Escalates into higher forms of degradation.
- Often escalates into child abuse.
- Becomes a roadblock to God’s richest blessing!
- Causes a married man to continually cheat on his wife; causes a single man to cheat on his future wife.
- Makes a man’s wife appear unattractive and unsatisfying.
- Destroys marital intimacy.

A life of freedom from porn comes in 11 ways:

- Continually bathe your mind in Scripture.
- Memorize and meditate daily on Psalm 51. Make Psalm 101:3 your life motto!
• Use your will, the strongest “muscle” in your body. Make your “no” a “no.” Make your “never again” a “never again.”

• Repent: Confess your sin and change your course.

• Believe in God’s grace. Cling to Romans 8:1-2 and 1 John 1:9.

• Flee! Run for your life!

• Get accountability into your life. Put a Covenant Eyes (www.covenanteyes.com) filter on your computer. Meet with a solid brother weekly, and open yourself to tough, honest questions.

• Make a firm covenant with your eyes. See Job 31:1 on page 81.

• Pray through your temptations.

• Recognize the author of porn, Satan himself.

• Hate sin with all your heart and run like crazy when it crosses the threshold of your mind.

Notes
OBSERVATION: What is God saying?

1) Why is sexual sin the sin “against his own body”?

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2) Why does Scripture say “flee”? Why not “stand and fight”?

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3) What is your standard for porn usage now? Why?

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4) Which of the “results of pornography” described do you relate to the most?

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Old Testament Viewpoint

Job 31:1 I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl.

Psalm 101:3 I will set before my eyes no vile thing. The deeds of faithless men I hate; they will not cling to me.

Proverbs 23:7 For as he thinks within himself, so he is.

New Testament Viewpoint

Romans 8:1-2 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.

1 Corinthians 6:15-19 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, “The two will become one flesh.” But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit. Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.
5) Why is porn the most destructive drug on earth?

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6) What does your accountability look like?

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PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?

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APPLICATION: How does this passage relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?

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LOCKER ROOM: What specific plan do you have to eliminate pornography from your life forever?

MEMORY VERSE: Psalm 101:3
I will set before my eyes no vile thing. The deeds of faithless men I hate; they will not cling to me.

My Prayers

Adoration: Father, today I praise You for...

Confession: Father, please forgive me for...

Thanksgiving: Father, today I’m thankful for...

Supplication: Father, the people & things that I wish to pray for today are...
A Man and His Possessions

“T

hings are to use and people are to love,” my dad would say, “and don’t get the two turned around!” Those words took on a whole new meaning the summer of 1993. Earlier that spring, Dad had spent considerable time restoring a 1950 Chevy Flatbed that his dad had bought in ’53. He had it looking great! The once-dull black cab had a pretty sheen to it, and the old wood of the flatbed even looked good with a fresh coat of paint.

I had just turned 15, and in rural Kansas that gives you a license to drive for work-related purposes. As you can imagine, I considered a lot of things to be work-related! My buddy Eric and I had landed a job with a local store owner who needed us to clear a bunch of junk from one of his buildings. Eric and I piled debris high on the bed and made our first trip to the landfill on the gravel country roads.

We weren’t far into our return trip when the now-light back end began to fishtail on the loose gravel. I tried to maneuver out of the skid, but the truck lunged through a ditch and came to a stop with the help of a barbed wire fence. With the exception of a few scrapes and bruises, Eric and I escaped unscathed. The truck, however, wasn’t so lucky. The barbs of the fence had dug deep gashes across the hood, and a metal fence post gouged through the windshield.

A farmer pulled us out of the ditch, and we limped back into town. I barely pushed on the gas, partly because I didn’t want to put it in the ditch again, but mostly because I was nervous to tell my dad about the truck. This truck had sentimental value, and he had also put a lot of time into it. I walked into the house with tears in my eyes and explained what had happened. When I had finished, though, I didn’t see anger or even disappointment in my dad’s eyes, but love. What he showed me that day spoke so much louder than the hundreds of times he had told us to love people and use things.

My dad never bothered to fix that old truck. Its paint is fading once again, and rust is forming around the scratches I left in the hood. In contrast, my relationship with my dad is the furthest thing from rusty; he’s my hero and best friend.

Loving people and using things is a formula for peace and joy in the Lord. Loving things and using people is a formula for failure and a surefire way to miss life’s greatest blessings.
OBSERVATION: What is God saying?

1) Where do our possessions come from, and how should this affect our view of them?

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2) Why can’t we serve two masters?

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3) Describe the contrast between seeking after riches/possessions and seeking after righteousness?

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Old Testament Viewpoint

Proverbs 11:4 Wealth is worthless in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.

Proverbs 11:28 Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf.

Proverbs 23:4-5 Do not wear yourself out to get rich; have the wisdom to show restraint. Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle.

New Testament Viewpoint

Matthew 6:19-33 “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money. Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”
4) Correlate fear and anxiety with an improper view of wealth and possessions.

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5) What does it mean to “store up treasures in heaven”?

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**PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS:** What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?

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**APPLICATION:** How does this passage relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?

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**LOCKER ROOM:** Where are your treasures being stored?

**MEMORY VERSE:** *Proverbs 11:4*

Wealth is worthless in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.

**My Prayers**

**Adoration:** Father, today I praise You for...

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**Confession:** Father, please forgive me for...

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**Thanksgiving:** Father, today I’m thankful for...

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**Supplication:** Father, the people & things that I wish to pray for today are...

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A Man and His Identity

Growing up with six siblings in a single-parent home was tough for him. It didn’t help that everyone in his immediate family was a couple of shades lighter; he was literally the black sheep. Feelings of not fitting in kept him yearning for attention, approval, and acceptance.

When he picked up a basketball and stepped on the court in third grade, he finally felt “at home.” He thought, This is what I was looking for! Basketball soon became the one thing that brought the acceptance and affirmation he craved. He put all his time and energy into the game and became very good. He went to church every Sunday with his family, but even there he faced an uphill battle for acceptance. Basketball, on the other hand, brought more than he could ever imagine: status, popularity, camaraderie, and, most importantly, identity.

The game led him to Chicago State University, where he had high hopes of helping rebuild their team. His redshirt freshman year couldn’t end soon enough, and then he was ready to “help the program.” But he was really concerned about helping himself.

The following season brought a new coach, however, and with him came a new direction that did not involve the young man. One undesired event led to another and left him furious, frustrated, and growing all the more selfish. When it was over, all his bridges to true friends and family were burned to the ground.

On July 21, 2002, he found himself back in his mother’s basement. He yelled at the top of his lungs, “Why did You do this to me, God? Why did You take everything away? I hate You!”

Then a still voice responded, “I didn’t do this to you, you did it to yourself. Did you forget when ...?” And he was reminded of every proud and selfish decision he had ever made. Sometime during that process, the tears of anger and hate turned into tears of sorrow and repentance. He realized how spiritually filthy he was, and he cried out for forgiveness. He felt as if he had nothing to offer, but the Lord said, “All I want is you.” At that very moment, a huge weight was lifted off his shoulders, and he was free! Over the next few months the Lord changed everything about him, giving him a new identity.

If you desire to know who you are, you must first know whose you are. Your identity must start with the truth, and Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6).
Notes
Old Testament Viewpoint

**Genesis 1:26-28** Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over ... every living creature that moves on the ground.”

New Testament Viewpoint

**Romans 6:11-13** In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.

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

**Galatians 2:20** I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

**1 Peter 2:9-11** (NASB) But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God’s OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY. Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.

**OBSERVATION: What is God saying?**

1) If our identity is in Christ, how should we live our lives?

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2) How does the truth of 2 Corinthians 5:17 apply to our identity in Christ?

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3) How does knowing “who” we are directly depend on knowing “whose” we are?

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4) How does a true understanding of being “crucified with Christ” revolutionize your perspective of your personal identity?

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5) How does 1 Peter 2:9-11 identify you, and what does that Biblical identity mean to you?

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PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?

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APPLICATION: How does this passage relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?

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LOCKER ROOM: What are some identifying characteristics that people know you for?

My Prayers

Adoration: Father, today I praise You for...

Confession: Father, please forgive me for...

Thanksgiving: Father, today I’m thankful for...

Supplication: Father, the people & things that I wish to pray for today are...

MEMORY VERSE: Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.
A Man and His Successes

A young professional quarterback enjoys rare success on the playing field, winning championships and individual honors. In the process, because his skills are so much in demand, he also makes millions of dollars. And because of all that, he earns the admiration and even adulation of an entire community.

Fans of all ages buy jerseys with the quarterback’s name stitched across the top of the back. They stand in line for hours to get his autograph and tell him how great he is. Men buy him drinks when he goes out on the town, and women offer him their phone numbers.

Sadly, all this success and popularity goes to the young man’s head. He comes to believe that he deserves to be treated like a king. He can say anything, do anything, and get away with anything.

The day eventually comes, however, when his ego and his excesses catch up with him. His bullying, bragging and mistreatment of others finally becomes so great and so public that his image is severely and permanently tarnished. The community that once worshiped him is finally ready to be rid of him.

One particular 21st century NFL quarterback was being interviewed by CBS after winning the Super Bowl and being named Most Valuable Player. The commentator said, “After all you’ve accomplished, what’s next for you?” With an empty look on his face and a noticeably unfulfilled tone in his voice, the quarterback said, “There’s got to be more.”

In stark contrast, it is refreshing and winsome to recollect Men at the Cross faculty member Kurt Warner’s post Super Bowl interviews when he was exceedingly deliberate to give the glory to God and his relationship with Christ.

Few of us win Super Bowls or make millions of dollars. But most all of us enjoy at least occasional successes of various kinds – at work, in our kids’ lives, on the ball field or the golf course. And the question we all need to address is, how do we let our successes affect us? Do we, like the young quarterback, allow them to puff up our egos and lead us down a path toward disaster? Or do we lay them at Jesus’ feet and get back to work?

Success can make us lazy, and it can make us arrogant. It can make us feel as if we’ve got it all together and don’t need God’s help so much anymore. It’s actually easier to learn from our failures than it is from our successes.

This is not to say we shouldn’t enjoy our successes when they come, whether it’s making the big sale on the job or winning the round with our favorite foursome. But we should always be wary of how success affects us, remembering who and Whose we are, keeping a healthy perspective and giving Him the glory.

How do you handle success?
Notes
Old Testament Viewpoint

**Genesis 39:2-4** The LORD was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned.

**Joshua 1:7** Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go.

**Proverbs 11:2** When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.

**Proverbs 16:18** Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.

New Testament Viewpoint

**Matthew 5:4-11** Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

**Matthew 5:16** In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

**James 4:10** Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

**OBSERVATION:** What is God saying?

1) How, practically speaking, does obeying God contribute to our success?

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2) How do you suppose Joseph’s Egyptian master knew that it was the Lord who gave Joseph success? What does this suggest about how we should live?

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3) In what ways does pride lead to bad results?

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4) In the famous Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter 5, identify and define six different mindsets or attitudes that God is interested in blessing with His kind of success.

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**PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS:** What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?

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**APPLICATION:** How does this passage relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?

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**LOCKER ROOM:** How would your wife or best friend say you handle success? What evidence would they cite?

**MEMORY VERSE:** Matthew 5:16

In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

**My Prayers**

**Adoration:** Father, today I praise You for...

**Confession:** Father, please forgive me for...

**Thanksgiving:** Father, today I’m thankful for...

**Supplication:** Father, the people & things that I wish to pray for today are...
A Man and His Battle

Visiting our troops in Afghanistan, I heard the commanding general welcome “newbies” with these words: “I need three things from each of you. I need you to be physically fit. I need you to be tactically fit; the man next to you is relying on you. And I need you to be spiritually fit. You’ve got to know who you are, what you believe, and what you’re willing to die for.”

The Bible is replete with the vocabulary of war. Scripture refers often to attacks, wounds, blood, swords, battle, sacrifice, and victory. The first hint of Christ portrays Him as a wounded warrior (see Genesis 3:15b), and one of the last scenes of Jesus pictures Him as a victorious commander, spattered in blood (His own) and making war “with justice” (Revelation 19:11-16). Yes, life’s a battle, and every Christian faces the fight every day of his life.

How are you doing in the battle? Standing firm? Hit hard? Bleeding a bit? Most importantly, are you training every day or living as if life’s a trip to Disneyland? Those who take a cavalier attitude inevitably prove weak and ineffective on the battlefield.

At the end of his life, Paul called us to join him in battle: “Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. … I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 2:3; 4:7). The great apostle got it—the Christian life isn’t easy. If you don’t stay on your toes spiritually, you could easily become a battlefield casualty.

The warrior-king David understood this well—“Praise be to the LORD my Rock, who trains my hands for war, my fingers for battle. He is my loving God and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield, in whom I take refuge” (Psalm 144:1-2). David knew better than to face a single day of battle without his heart tuned to his High King. But he learned that lesson the hard way. When he got sloppy spiritually, the enemy wounded him badly, and he fell into adultery and murder (see 2 Samuel 11). “Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life” (Proverbs 4:23).

So how’s your heart, soldier? Are you guarding it? Are you fit to fight? Can you be relied upon in the battles in and around you? Or will you be victimized by the enemy’s “flaming arrows” (see Ephesians 6:16) – the pressures and distractions of life: pride, money, sex, power, prestige, and personal pleasures?

Stay strong. Stay faithful. And stay in the fight.
Old Testament Viewpoint

Psalm 119:9-16 How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. Praise be to you, O LORD; teach me your commands. With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth. I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.

New Testament Viewpoint

1 Corinthians 9:26-27 Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

Ephesians 6:10-18 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

1 Timothy 6:11-12 But you, man of God, flee from all this [the love of money], and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith.

Hebrews 5:12, 14 Though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! … But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

OBSERVATION: What is God saying?

1) How well are you guarding your heart these days? How do you know?

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2) Which piece of your spiritual armor (see Ephesians 6) is strongest at present? Which is weakest?

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Mark these Key Words: strong, God, Christ, Holy Spirit
3) How well do you distinguish good from evil? How can you train yourself to do it better?

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4) Do you find yourself too busy to pray? Why is prayer such an important player in a man’s battle to guard his heart?

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PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?

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APPLICATION: How does this passage relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?

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LOCKER ROOM: How can you improve your fitness for the spiritual battles of daily life?

MEMORY VERSE: Psalm 119:9, 11

How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. ... I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.
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The Apostle Paul had seen a vision of the portals of eternity and proclaimed the imperishable prize for himself and all insightful believers. “Who is my hope, my joy, my crown of exultation? Is it not even you at the coming of our Lord Jesus? For you are our glory and joy.” His “victor’s crown” would be those he led to Christ and discipled to be standing with him worshiping Jesus at His second coming. Those men and women and children in whom he had invested his life and God’s Word would be his imperishable crown of victory to celebrate for all of eternity.

And so it will be for you as you devote your life to “Timothy” after “Timothy” and those “Timothys” go on to humbly receive their “victor’s crown” with their “Timothys.”

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