

Serving

in

Grace

Six Lessons

For Every
Servant-Leader

by

David Anderson

Serving in Grace
is a publication of
Church of the Open Door

**Copyright © 2009 by David Anderson
All rights reserved. No part of this book
may be reproduced without permission
in writing from the publisher.**

Printed in the United States of America

Table of Contents

Before You Begin	v
Overview	vii
Lesson One: <i>Cost of a Servant</i>	1
Lesson Two: <i>Power of a Servant</i>	15
Lesson Three: <i>Rest of a Servant</i>	29
Lesson Four: <i>Heart of a Servant</i>	45
Lesson Five: <i>God's Authorship of a Servant</i>	59
Lesson Six: <i>Team of a Servant</i>	73
Review Sheet	86
Prayer Sheet	87

Before You Begin

All of my Christian life I have been paralyzed by the ultimate lie. It's a lie that has been my ongoing excuse to God and myself. It can be summed up in the statement, "*God can't use me!*" I've convinced myself that God can't use me because there are so many others who could do a better job, I am not qualified, I'm not good enough, I don't have enough experience, I'm not holy enough, the list goes on and on. Do you have a list like this?

These excuses make a lot of sense until we discover the type of person God delights in using for His glory. 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 describes God's dream team:

For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the LORD."

God has "chosen," He has "hand-picked for Himself" the "foolish things...weak things...base things...the things which are despised...things which are not." God has selected the "things which are not," the nobodies of this world. Not because He couldn't do any better than us but because He delights in using us. He has chosen us for Himself! As a result, God reverses the roles. Surprisingly, the wise and strong are put to shame while the weak and foolish are exalted. The great irony here is that the foolish, weak, incompetent nobodies are empowered, not the wise and mighty. The eternal consequence is that He, not us, gets all the glory. Our qualifications? We are weak and foolish.

You are God's instrument of choice! With all of your failures, flaws, incompetence, shortcomings, family pathology, wrong choices, pain, and sin, He has chosen you to be a servant-leader in a desperate and pain-stricken world. There is no greater experience in all of the world than to be used by the God of the Universe for His eternal glory.

The discipleship journey on which you are about to embark will be challenging both in the Scripture and your personal life. This study is not for the novice or the faint-hearted but for those who are ready and willing to be God's instruments of glory to His Bride, the Church, and to a Godless and desperate world. To benefit from this study, it must be done in community with those whom you trust and who trust you. May God bless you richly as you begin this wonderful discipleship process of commitment, empowerment, rest, renewal, and discovery.

A foolish, weak, and incompetent nobody,

David Anderson

Serving in Grace

Lesson 1: *Cost of a Servant*

The cost of being a disciple of Jesus Christ is to make Him the priority in your life. Christ is the first love and has first place.

Lesson 2: *Power of a Servant*

Our advantage is the Holy Spirit who indwells, empowers, equips, and sustains our ministry.

Lesson 3: *Rest of a Servant*

We have an overwhelming desire to handle life apart from God and His resources. It is only through God and resting in His provision that we will become the servant-leaders He has called us to be.

Lesson 4: *Heart of a Servant*

Hardship, faithfulness to God's Word, and fear are the primary issues every Servant-leader must face.

Lesson 5: *God's Authorship of a Servant*

God has chosen, equipped, and provided for us in His perfect and holy plan. We are unique individuals with unique experiences that God will use for His glory and good.

Lesson 6: *Team of a Servant*

We cannot accomplish what God has laid before us without a team. It is through genuine humility and trust that we will begin to trust our team and experience all that God has intended.

COST OF A SERVANT

Lesson 1

OVERVIEW

- ◆ Jesus' Ultimatum
- ◆ Jesus' Meaning of Life
- ◆ Wanted: Dead or Alive
- ◆ You Follow Me!
- ◆ It Will Cost You Everything, But You Will Not Miss Anything.

JESUS' ULTIMATUM

Those of us who are in ministry are infatuated with numbers. We measure our own ministries and the ministries of others by how many are involved and attend. We often feel that our ministry is "successful" because people participate and at the same time feel like "failures" when no one shows up.

When we look at the life and teachings of Jesus Christ we realize He was never concerned about numbers, attendance, and crowds. In fact, many of His messages would discourage, alienate, and sift the people listening.

Crowds never impressed or inspired Christ; they never brought security, prestige, or empowerment to Jesus. It was the committed, faithful, and contrite hearts that blessed our Savior.

Jesus is always extremely fair to His audience and potential disciples. Those who are familiar with His Word should not be surprised by the requirements of a disciple. In many passages, Jesus makes it plain what you are getting into and what you will be facing as a disciple of Christ. Luke 14 is one of the clearest.

Turn to Luke 14:25-33 and read through it twice.

◆ **What shocks you as you read this passage? What confuses you? What are your questions?** _____

We naturally orient our life decisions and choices to move away from pain, challenges, and difficulty. We love our comfort zones. It takes great courage to venture outside of these zones even in small decisions.

Jesus is very clear concerning the relationship between discipleship and our comfort zones. It will be very costly. Christ describes the closest and most important relationships of our lives (father, mother, wife, children, etc.), and explains that He must have allegiance over any and every relationship of our lives.

◆ **Why is this difficult for you and me?** _____

A little help...

A Greek authority, Gerhard Kittel says that "hate" (μισει) is a "disowning, renunciation... those who become disciples of Jesus must be committed exclusively to Him...not to love anyone or anything more." It is a term of priority and devotion.

A little help...

In Jesus' day there was a very negative reaction from the family to any Jew who decided to associate with Jesus and His message—similar to what a Muslim might feel who comes to Christ today.

The cost to be a disciple of Jesus Christ is that He is the priority. He is the first love and has first place, even over family.

*** What were some times when your family has been preeminent over Christ?** _____

It's an issue of allegiance. Christ amplifies the cost by explaining more in verse 27, "And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple." Part of the great cost of following Christ in discipleship is bearing our crosses and following Christ in His suffering. We cannot be His disciples unless we bear our crosses.

*** Why is bearing our cross a prerequisite for discipleship to Christ?**

Something you should know:

One of the defining attitudes of the world towards the disciple of Christ is hatred. John 15:18-21 describes this in vivid detail...

"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me."

*** Why can't there be another way?** _____

Jesus chooses two illustrations of counting the cost. Read Luke 14:28-33 again.

*** In Jesus' hypothetical examples, who's embarrassed? Why?** _____

The wise builder or king who is ready to build or battle has assessed the expenses of the project and the battle. Since they are prepared, they will not be embarrassed.

²⁹Lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, ³⁰saying, "This man began to build and was not able to finish".... ³²Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace."

In verse 33 Jesus says, "So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple." This is not only a summary of this whole section, but Jesus adds the subject of possessions. All earthly attachments, both people and possessions, must be secondary to our allegiance to Christ.

✱ **What earthly attachments do you feel may be competing for Christ's rightful place in your life?** _____

This is a difficult message from our Savior and one that is costly to apply. He is probing deeply as He challenges our values, our comforts, and priorities. This section of Scripture does not elicit comfort or peace but conflict and challenge.

Again, the cost of discipleship and service to Him is everything. Christ will never settle for second best, no possession or relationship should rival Him and His rightful place in our lives. There is no middle ground! If Christ is our first love, the absolute priority of our lives, we are His disciples. If we are unwilling for Him to take His rightful place in our lives, we are not His disciples.

One of the most important decisions you will ever make is your decision to be Christ's disciple. In Luke 14, Jesus explains that this decision should not be taken lightly. Much thought and evaluation should go into this decision, because there is great cost and even suffering. As you go through this lesson, prayerfully consider the most important decision of taking up your cross and following Him.

Memory Verses:

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."

(Matthew 16:24-25)

The Cost of Discipleship:

- ◆ *Jesus' agenda over my agenda.*
- ◆ *Jesus is our first allegiance.*
- ◆ *Discipleship to Jesus will cost you everything.*

Something you should know:

Belief in a person and discipleship to that person are different things. This is not a requirement for salvation but a response to salvation. If you confuse the terms, you will not succeed. First comes belief, then comes discipleship. A non-Christian does not have the capacity to be Christ's disciple. One must first trust in Him and then—through the power of the Holy Spirit, His Word and His Body—make the momentous decision to be Christ's disciple.

←←Verses to Memorize

Something you should know:

Your leader cares deeply about your progress as a disciple of Jesus. If you have problems with this study or a personal need, call your leader to pray with you.

My leader's phone number is:

JESUS' MEANING OF LIFE

Imagine you were sitting in a local coffee shop. An average person next to you sips their latte, and you come over and ask, "What would make you happy or satisfied?"

✱ **What are some of the responses you think you would hear?** _____

Here are some common ideas you might hear:

I need money. I need a certain level of income. Once I receive this amount we can get on with our lives. We can get the things that will make our life complete. We can finally be the family I always envisioned.

I need to know that my family will be okay. That my family is safe. I need to know that my children will make wise decisions and not do something that they will be paying for the rest of their lives.

I need a wife, a husband, a relationship where I am respected and valued. Where my needs are met and valued.

I need physical intimacy. I need sexual satisfaction.

I need success or at least the feeling of significance. I need to be perceived as successful. Once I receive the promotion that I need, I will get the respect I deserve and my ideas will finally prevail.

Many, including us Christians, can readily identify with these "needs" and "desires." One of them may be on the forefront of your thought life today. But for the disciple of Jesus Christ, satisfaction, fulfillment and happiness arrive in very paradoxical forms. Jesus defines satisfaction, fulfillment, and happiness in radical terms for His disciple.

✱ **Read Matthew 16:21-27 twice and write down any questions you have about this section of Scripture.** _____

✱ **Why was Peter frustrated with the idea of Jesus' suffering and death in Jerusalem?** _____

A Jewish boy during the days of Jesus would receive an excellent theological education and spend ample time studying the Law of Moses. He would be enrolled in different religious education settings where he would learn to read the Law of Moses and develop an extensive theology. All of this study would culminate in a theological examination. A Jewish boy would be taught all his life that the Messiah was going to establish His kingdom, and it would be a powerful and awesome kingdom flowing with milk and honey. Not only would the Messiah establish this awesome kingdom, but if you were in the inner circle with the Messiah you would be in a great position of authority and power.

When Jesus begins to preview His suffering and death in Jerusalem, there is no wonder Peter is traumatized by this news. Christ's prediction completely challenges his entire understanding of what the Messiah was going to accomplish (during His first coming) and his hope for power and success.

Jesus responds to Peter's frustration by saying in verse 23, "But He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.'"

✿ **Why do you think Jesus is so hostile?** _____

Peter's self-serving agenda is very similar to Satan's agenda and his temptation of Christ in Matthew 4:1-11. For Jesus the "things of God" involved being "killed, and be raised the third day" (Matt. 16:21). Jesus' agenda was very different than Peter's. Jesus in the very next section explains to His disciples that just as He would die, they too will have to die.

24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 25 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. 26 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? 27 For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works." (Matthew 16:24-27)

✿ **What kind of death does a disciple of Christ have to die?** _____

The cross is a dramatic and bloody form of execution. Discipleship to Christ involves executing "our life" in exchange for His life (Gal. 6:14). Our dreams, agenda, and worldly strongholds are put to death. This death begins with self-denial. Self denial in this passage is about "taking up your cross." The very foundation of "taking up our crosses" is making the declaration that we no longer have any personal rights—at least in the sense that the world describes. It's the idea that I no longer govern my life by what I want and desire, rather it is what God wants to do with my life. His plan over my plan. Self-denial is giving up our rights to dictate and organize our lives and allowing God to organize and dictate them instead.

✿ **Why is this idea of self-denial so difficult for us?** _____

Something you should know:

Some believe that Jesus received His theological examination by Jewish teachers in Luke 2:46-47, "Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers."

A little help...

The NKJV translates ψυχην as "life" (vs. 25) and then "soul" (vs. 26). It may be better translated as "life" in both places as the NET Bible does. The "life" that Jesus is asking us to lose is our life that is preoccupied with the values of this world and our flesh. The ψυχην in vs. 26 should continue to be translated "life," but Jesus is describing the true, full, abundant life He wants to give us.

If you're thinking that this concept of self denial is costly, that it will bring loss to your life, you're right. Jesus continues,

For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matthew 16:25-26)

✱ **What type of "life" exchange is Jesus talking about?** _____

We have been trained all of our lives to "hold onto" our lives with all our power and attention. We think, "a quality life and life worth living come to those who work hard, who pursue the things they need, who take care of number one!" The painful part in all of this is that in the process of trying to save our life we are actually losing it. In the process of losing our life for God we find it. Jesus says, you want to save your life? Lose it for Christ and in the process you will find it. Those who invest in the things of Christ for His sake will find true life in the process. But we hold our lives so tightly. We cannot stand to let go of our lives and our agendas.

✱ **What part of your life do you have a "death grip on?"** _____

✱ **How are you "saving" (Matt. 16:25) your life?** _____

As if Jesus has not given enough motivation, He concludes by saying in verse 27, "For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works."

Paul adds, "For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ....So then each of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:10b, 12). 2 Cor. 5:9-10 states, "Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."

Our decision to lose our lives for Christ sends ripples into eternity. Not only do we receive a life of quality and meaning in return, but there will come a day where our beautiful Savior will reward us for the "things done in our body." Every thought, attitude, and action will be judged by the perfect Judge who will delight in rewarding His faithful servants.

✱ **On a scale of 1 to 10 (1—very low, 10—very high), how motivating is your future reward?** _____

✱ **Why?** _____

WANTED: DEAD OR ALIVE

Immediately after Jesus explains to His disciples that they must take up their cross and follow Him, all three synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) transition the reader with a sentence like this....

Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom (Matthew 16:28).

This refers to the dramatic event we call the transfiguration. Jesus briefly manifested His glory to His closest friends (Peter, James, and John). During this event, the three disciples got a glimpse of the majesty and glory of Christ: "His face shone like the sun and His clothes became as white as the light" (Matt. 17:2). Immediately two leaders that personify faith and leadership in the Old Testament appear: Moses and Elijah. We will study Moses in lesson 3, but our focus today will be the amazing life of Elijah.

The prophet Elijah is one who exemplifies the life of a servant leader. He spent his entire life taking up his "cross" and losing his life in order to find it. If you want to study a life that is characterized by these Luke 14 and Matthew 16 principles it is Elijah.

In 1 Kings 16:29-33 God called Elijah into action to lead in dramatic and courageous ways:

²⁹In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab the son of Omri became king over Israel; and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years. ³⁰Now Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him. ³¹And it came to pass, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took as wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians; and he went and served Baal and worshiped him. ³²Then he set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. ³³And Ahab made a wooden image. Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him.

We are going to spend some time in the Elijah narrative (historic stories) but we want to put you to work. We will be practicing some Bible study methods or hermeneutics (study and interpretation of Scripture). There are a number of important steps that are necessary in understanding the Elijah narrative.

Read 1 Kings 17:1-19:18 all the way through, answering the following questions.

● **What are some of your general observations of this narrative?** _____

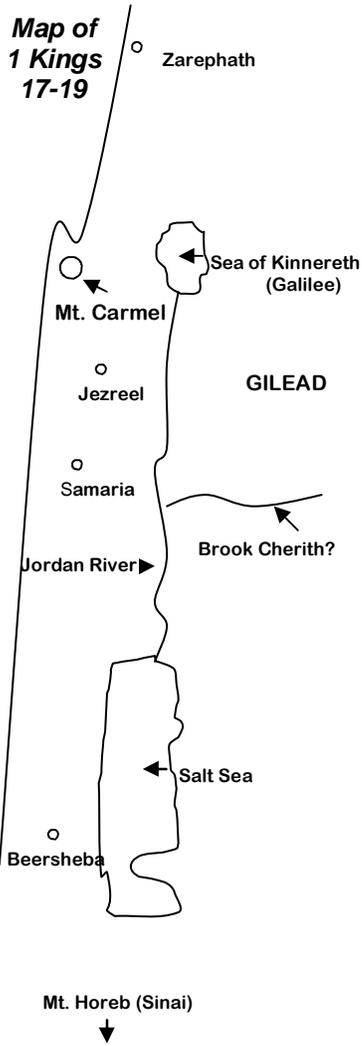
● **What stood out to you?** _____

● **What are some of your questions?** _____

Something you should know:

Studying the Bible is a very challenging and time-consuming process. That's why very few in the church are comfortable with studying Scripture on their own. A servant-leader needs to have growing skills in observation, interpretation, and application of the Bible.

**Map of
1 Kings
17-19**



List as many characters as you can find from 1 Kings 17:1—19:18 (don't include animals or locations but include sets of people, for example 450 prophets of Baal):

Elijah...Ahab...

✱ What are the basic storylines of 1 Kings 17:1—19:18? _____

✱ What verses or phrases advance the story? _____

✱ Major themes? _____

✱ What is the setting and the problem? _____

✱ What did Elijah think the resolution should be? _____

✱ In what ways was he disappointed? _____

✱ What do you see here that tells you how God deals with His servant-leaders (Elijah)? _____

✱ What is personally convicting to you from the story of Elijah? _____

And he said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life."

—1 Kings 19:14

Obviously this is an exceptional story of a unique prophet placed by God in a very difficult and painful situation to carry out judgment and correction on a wicked king, queen, and wayward nation. You may not be called to tell a nation it won't rain for 3 1/2 years because of their wickedness, but God *has* called you to be servant-leader to our culture. Our culture is just as antagonistic to the gospel and God's plan as any Ahab or Jezebel.

Elijah's servant leadership was scary and lonely. His very first assignment was to confront Ahab and inform him that a severe drought would decimate Israel (17:1). 1 Kings 16:33 tells us that "Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all of the kings of Israel who were before him." From this day forward, Elijah was a marked man. He was wanted dead or alive and all the power and influence of Ahab and Jezebel were after him. As a result, he suffered incredible anxiety and fear.

✿ **Why is it comforting to know that Elijah struggled with anxiety and fear?**

Yet the ultimate theme in the narrative of Elijah is the following story of God's provision and supply for His precious prophet.

✿ **After confronting Ahab, God instructs Elijah to go to the Brook Cherith for what purpose?**

God then tells Elijah to go to Zarephath (a stronghold of Baal) and be served by a very poor widow (1 Kings 17:8-16). Not only would God sustain his anxious prophet through ravens at the Brook Cherith, but He would place Elijah in the middle of enemy territory and care for him by an exceptionally poor widow. After the Lord miraculously resurrects the widow's son through Elijah, He instructs Elijah to meet the man who is trying to kill him. After an intriguing interaction with Obadiah, Elijah again encounters Ahab. Ahab begins, "Is that you, O troubler of Israel?"

It is in this conversation with Ahab that the challenge on Mount Carmel is agreed upon.

✿ **How does God dramatically provide for Elijah in 1 Kings 18:20-40?**

Against all odds, Elijah's God prevails. "Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, 'The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!'" (1 Kings 19:39). God provides for Elijah in the subtleties (the ravens and widow) and in the grand events of life (Mt. Carmel). The drought ends but the death threats continue. Elijah's next destination is Jezreel and then quickly to Beersheba.

Read 1 Kings 19:4.

✿ **What is Elijah's response to his current situation and bounty on his life?**

A little help...

- ♦ "I alone am left a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men." (1 Kings 18:22)
- ♦ "And he prayed that he might die, and said 'It is enough! Now, Lord take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!'" (1 Kings 19:4)
- ♦ "I alone am left; and they seek to take my life." (1 Kings 19:10)
- ♦ "And he said, 'I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life.'" (1 Kings 19:14)

Something you should know:

Obadiah sought to please God by protecting 100 prophets from the sword of Jezebel. He is very sympathetic towards Elijah's difficult situation. Yet Obadiah represents many believers who hesitate to "make waves" where "waves" need to be made.

1 Kings 18:40 informs us that Elijah executed 450 prophets of Baal. He may have personally known many of these prophets.

For your reference:

Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel touched him, and said to him, 'Arise and eat.' Then he looked, and there by his head was a cake baked on coals, and a jar of water. So he ate and drank, and lay down again.

—1 Kings 19:5-6

Then He said, 'Go out, and stand on the mountain before the LORD.' And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice.

—1 Kings 19:11-12

Then the LORD said to him: 'Go, return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus; and when you arrive, anoint Hazael as king over Syria. Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place. It shall be that whoever escapes the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill; and whoever escapes the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill.'

—1 Kings 19:15-17,

✱ **How does God encourage His servant-leader in 1 Kings 19:5-18?** _____

In this section of Scripture, God demonstrates some intimate and powerful mercy to His precious and depleted servant-leader. First, God sends an angel to provide for his physical needs (1 Kings 19:5-6). Second, God directs Elijah's eyes to Himself (1 Kings 19:11-12). Third, God explains that his ministry is not finished (1 Kings 19:15-17).

✱ **Has God ever provided for you in any of these ways as He did for Elijah?**

God concludes this section by saying in 1 Kings 19:18, "Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him." In all of Elijah's loneliness and desperation, God reveals a righteous remnant, "all whose knees have not bowed to Baal." Three times Elijah explains that he is all alone but God says this is not accurate, there are others that have not yet bowed to Baal and your ministry is not complete.

One can argue that next to the Son of God Himself, Elijah suffered and endured more pain than any other saint. Yet his glory was not in this world.

Read 2 Kings 2:1-11.

Elijah's departure from this world is one of the most dramatic and magnificent exits anyone could experience. Elijah entered the world's stage when the culture was bent on evil to the extent of executing any voice of righteousness. Yet Elijah courageously and humbly fulfilled his earthly mission. Not only that, but God provided Elisha to take over his ministry when he was gone.

As we consider discipleship to Christ, it is very natural to evaluate how God provides for those before us who have counted the costs and are "losing their lives for His sake." The criteria that Jesus sets forth in Luke 14 and Matthew 16 are daunting. We want assurances that we are committing to a God who loves us and will provide for us. For the prophet Elijah there was much cost but at no point did His God abandon him. His God continually and faithfully provided and encouraged His soul. God was present in the smallest of details (ravens, widow, still small voice) and the grandiose events of lives (Mt. Carmel). Over and over, God proved Himself as One worthy to be trusted.

YOU FOLLOW ME!

I am embarrassed by my failures. I wish I didn't make mistakes, but I do. I struggle, I fail, I am broken. Pretending that I'm okay, that I have it all together, only compounds my sin. In my estimation, one of my greatest obstacles to discipleship to Christ Jesus involves my failures.

✿ **What failures in your life make you feel unworthy to be Christ's disciple?**

I am comforted by the fact that Jesus isn't interested in perfection, He is interested in me. Jesus isn't interested in your perfection, He is interested in you. If Jesus was looking for perfect people, we would all be last on the list.

This truth is dramatically demonstrated in the relationship between our Savior and His beloved disciple Peter. The story begins the night before Christ was crucified (John 13:33-38). Jesus explains that He is going away and Peter replies by asking where Jesus is going. Jesus tells Peter that he can't follow Him right now but that he will have the opportunity to follow Him later. Peter asks again, "Lord, why can I not follow You now? I will lay down my life for Your sake" (John 13:37). Then Jesus explains that Peter will have that opportunity, yet will fail Him three times.

Imagine being Peter, proclaiming to his Savior in front of all the disciples that he will lay down his life for Jesus the first opportunity he gets. Jesus not only predicts three opportunities ahead of time, but predicts his failure three times. At this point, I am sure that Peter was more resolved of his conviction than ever, yet John 18:17, 25-26 tells of his utter failure when he is given the opportunity to prove otherwise.

✿ **After these failures, what would you say to your resurrected Christ?** _____

An even more interesting question is how Christ responds to Peter. John 21:15-25 records Christ's response to Peter's failure. **Read John 21:15-25.**

✿ **Why does Jesus ask Peter three times if he loves Him?** _____

✿ **What is the connection between Peter's love and "feeding" Christ's sheep?**

Jesus is so kind in these moments, delicately forgiving Peter for his failures and restoring Peter to the glorious ministry that the rest of the New Testament records. When Peter cares for the sheep, whom our Lord loves and has sacrificed His life for, he is expressing his love for the Lord. Your love for Christ can overwhelm your guilt and failures. Peter's failures did not disqualify him from a vibrant discipleship to Christ Jesus, rather it prepared him. Your failures do not disqualify you from a vibrant discipleship to Him, they have prepared you. Jesus isn't longing for the perfect disciple, He is longing for the one who will follow Him.

A little help...

First time: "Then the servant girl who kept the door said to Peter, 'You are not also one of this Man's disciples, are you?' He said, 'I am not.'"

—John 18:17

Second time: "Now Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. Therefore they said to him, 'You are not also one of His disciples, are you?' He denied it and said, 'I am not!'"

—John 18:25

Third time: "One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of him whose ear Peter cut off, said, 'Did I not see you in the garden with Him?' Peter then denied again; and immediately a rooster crowed."

—John 18:26-27

Something you should know:

"More than these?" (John 21:15). The disciples' relationships are soaked with prideful competition (i.e. Mark 10:35-45). Throughout John 21, Jesus is trying to get Peter's eyes off the other disciples and onto Him. **Are you ever preoccupied with others over Christ?**

A little help...

“Stretch out your hands” is widely used for crucifixion in the ancient world (Haenchen).

Origen (early church father and historian) reported that Peter “at the last came to Rome and was crucified head downwards.” (Euseb. Hist. III. 1.2).

Something you should know:

Comparison may be the most deadly epidemic in the church today. It’s one of the greatest hindrances of the cause of Christ. Our Savior is not interested in the comparison game, that’s the role of our flesh and enemies.

Reread John 21:18-22.

✿ **Why does Jesus predict the way that Peter will be martyred and then tell him to “follow me?”** _____

✿ **What is Peter’s response?** _____

Peter responds like so many of us do. In the face of such an enormous decision, we wonder who else is with us? Who else is going to follow Christ to death? Am I all alone? Am I the only one who will suffer like this? What about John and the other disciples? Will they too be “stretched out and carried where they do not wish”?

✿ **Who do you compare yourself with?** _____

✿ **What is Jesus’ response to Peter’s question?** _____

Jesus’ invitation for discipleship is personal to Peter. In this passage, Jesus offers His invitation to Peter and no one else, “You follow me!”

You may be at a crossroads with your Savior Jesus Christ. Like Peter, our lives are full of failure, mistakes, and brokenness. Like Peter, Jesus is more interested in us than the sum total of our mistakes. Like Peter, Jesus has enormous plans for our lives. Like Peter, Jesus has a very intimate, personal message for us. At this very moment, Jesus is not concerned with your spouse, your children, co-workers, friends, or family members. His message to you and you alone is: “You follow me!”

IT WILL COST YOU EVERYTHING, BUT YOU WILL NOT MISS ANYTHING

As the Apostle Paul and the Church look back and process Christ's calling to discipleship, Paul describes the decision as one presenting themselves to God as a living sacrifice in Romans 12:1-2.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

✱ **What "mercies" cause me to present my body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God?** _____

Paul devotes eleven chapters of Romans to describing the "mercies of God." Romans 1-8 reveals how God mercifully justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners by grace through faith. Romans 9-11 explains how both Jew and Gentile have been offered God's justifying and sanctifying mercies. In light of these mercies lavished on us by the cross of Christ, Paul explains our reasonable, intelligent response. We make this logical, spiritual decision to present ourselves—our whole lives to God as living sacrifices. Vs. 2 explains the rest of the process.

✱ **Why is the order in Romans 12:1-2 so important?** _____

Paul begins with the right motivation ("mercies of God") and then describes the presentation of our lives to God for His use and glory. Finally, the process of living out His "good and acceptable and perfect will." As those who have presented their lives as living sacrifices, they know they can't continue being molded and conformed to the patterns of this world. Instead we are molded, transformed, remade by Christ as He conquers our tainted and self-centered thinking and mind. In the past we have been shaped and conformed to this world. Now, He has called us to be transformed by God by understanding and desiring God's perfect, holy, and wonderful will.

Our Decision

In this lesson we have rapidly discovered that discipleship to Christ Jesus will be very costly. According to our Savior, He must have allegiance over any and every relationship of our lives. Christ will never settle for second best.

"Taking up" one's cross is an expectation of a dramatic and bloody form of execution. Discipleship to Christ involves executing "our life, dreams and agenda" in exchange for "His life, dreams and agenda."

It will cost you everything, but you will not miss anything. Our decision to lose our lives for Christ sends ripples into eternity. Not only do we receive a life of quality and meaning in return, but we await the day where our Savior will reward us "for the things done in the body."

A little help...

NIV translates verse 1, "in view of God's mercy".

God's assurance is that He loves us and will provide for us. Like Elijah, He will not abandon us and will be present and intervening in the smallest of details and the grandiose events of life. God has proven Himself as One worthy to be trusted.

Like Peter, our lives are full of failure, mistakes, and brokenness. Yet Jesus is more interested in us than the sum total of those mistakes. He has enormous plans for our lives but His message is personal and individual: "You follow me!"

We picture Jesus as a peacemaker, smiling, and holding a pretty white lamb in His arms. We think He unites, mends, and heals. Matthew 10:34-39 describes Jesus not as a peacemaker, but as someone who is intentionally dividing loyalties, intimate relationships, and priorities.

"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.' He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it."

The cost of discipleship is that our life is no longer our own. It is His and His alone to do with as He sees fit. Those who lose their life for Christ's sake will find it.

✿ **Have you counted the cost and is it your desire to take up your cross and follow Christ? Yes or No**

✿ **If yes, when did you make this commitment? Are you making this commitment today?** _____

✿ **If no, what is stopping you from making this commitment right now?** _____

Important!

If you are making this commitment for the first time, be sure to communicate this exciting decision to your leader.

POWER OF A SERVANT

Lesson 2

OVERVIEW

- ◆ Your Advantage
- ◆ Our Enemies
- ◆ Walk in the Spirit, and You Shall Not Fulfill the Lusts of the Flesh
- ◆ Quenching and Grieving
- ◆ The Ultimate Prayer Partner

YOUR ADVANTAGE

Before Jesus' arrest, trial, death, and victorious resurrection, John describes the most intimate time Jesus had with His disciples in the Upper Room Discourse, John 13-17. The night before His death, Jesus laid it all on the line for His disciples. Imagine having Jesus Christ enter your life for over 3 years and completely flipping it upside down (it was Camp Jesus). But then He begins to explain that He's leaving, and the way He is leaving is He's going to be killed. Not only that, but the mission and ministry has been handed over to you. Imagine how overwhelmed and full of panic you would be.

With this panic in their hearts, Jesus brings His disciples together in an upper room in Jerusalem and begins to share with them the most important things He wants them to know and be about. When a friend is on the verge of death, you listen. During this intimate conversation Jesus prepares His closest friends for the greatest gift He will ever give them.

Read John 16:5-15.

◆ **How does Jesus comfort His fearful disciples?** _____

◆ **Why does Jesus consider the Holy Spirit an "advantage"?** _____

I think even as "seasoned" servants of God, we become numb to the fact that we have the Holy Spirit indwelling each and every one of us (Romans 5:5, Romans 8:9, 1 Cor. 2:12, 2 Cor. 5:5, etc.). We actually have God in us! This is such a staggering, breathtaking idea in the history of God's people. Jesus couldn't wait to tell His disciples how amazing this would be. Jesus explains to His disciples that it is to their advantage that He goes away, for if He doesn't go away they won't receive the Holy Spirit.

Something you should know:

In the Gospel of John, the Apostle John tells us exactly why the Gospel was written, "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31).

In the first half of the Gospel, John lays out 7 signs that show how Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Son of God:

1. Water into Wine
2. Healing of the Officer's Son
3. Healing of the Paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda
4. Feeding of the 5000
5. Jesus walking on Water
6. Healing of the Blind Man
7. Raising Lazarus from the Dead.

A little help...

Sympherei (advantage)—profitable, beneficial.

Something you should know:

In lesson 6 we will tackle the Spirit's role in spiritual gifting. This lesson focuses us on the Spirit's indispensable roles of indwelling, empowering, equipping, and praying.

A little help...

Who is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is not a force or a power but He is the 3rd Person in the Trinity, He is God. The way He is described highlights His deity (1 Cor. 6:11, "the Spirit of our God," etc). His characteristics belong to God alone (omniscience [1 Cor. 2:12], omnipresence [Ps. 139:7], omnipotence [Ps. 104:30]). His actions are consistent with His deity (catalyst of the Virgin Birth [Luke 1:35] and inspiring Scripture [2 Pet. 1:21]). In Acts 5:3-4, the Apostle Peter clearly ties the Holy Spirit to God.

Something you should know:

Friends, the Holy Spirit directs us in mysterious ways (pushing us to witness to certain people, to pray for certain people that come to our mind, to do a certain thing that seems out of the ordinary) but the Holy Spirit is not crazy nor weird. He is called the Spirit of truth. He is always directing us to truth.

Jesus has such a high view of the Holy Spirit. Jesus calls the Holy Spirit the Spirit of truth. In this context, Jesus' earthly ministry is coming to a close, but God will not leave the earth without a witness. The Helper, the Spirit of truth, who comes from God the Father will testify of Jesus Christ. Everything the world refused to recognize and testify about Christ, the Holy Spirit will do. The Spirit of truth "will convict of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8-11).

Read John 16:8-11.

✱ **What does it mean that the Holy Spirit will convict of sin, righteousness and judgment? (briefly explain)**

Sin— _____

Righteousness— _____

Judgment— _____

In John 16, the world's sin and willful desire to run their own lives had rejected the Messiah, the Savior, Jesus of Nazareth. Ironically, the world rejects the only provision for their sins. The Holy Spirit reveals sin and convicts of sin.

The Holy Spirit will also reveal who is truly righteous; it is Jesus Christ. Despite His death, suffering, and mockery, it is Christ's righteousness that will prevail.

Christ will be the final Judge. His judgment is the one that matters. The Holy Spirit's judgment will be Christ's judgment. Satan, the ruler of this world, will be judged. He will not get away with anything nor will anyone who follows him.

John 16:13-15 states:

However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.

✱ **How is the Holy Spirit the Spirit of truth to us?** _____

As servant leaders we are bombarded with feelings of inadequacy, fear, and incompetence. In John 16, Jesus explains to His disciples and to us that our marvelous "advantage" is the Holy Spirit who is in each of us.

The Holy Spirit will guide servant leaders in all truth. The Holy Spirit will never direct us to anything that is false or not of God. His priority is truth, God's truth about us, our sin, our hope, our calling.

The Helper, the Spirit of Truth, glorifies Christ and will take Christ and all that is true about Him and declare it constantly to His servant-leaders.

One of the greatest attributes of a servant-leader is humble sensitivity to the Spirit of truth. We all have so many areas in our lives that need to be healed by the powerful and grace work of the Spirit of truth. Take a few minutes and prayerfully answer these questions:

✿ On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being Judas Iscariot, 10 being Jesus), how much access does the Spirit of Truth have in your life? _____

✿ Explain. _____

✿ Are there areas of your life to which you have not given Him access? _____

✿ When someone confronts or corrects you, does the Holy Spirit soften your heart or does your flesh harden it? _____

✿ Why? _____

✿ When someone is teaching you from God's Word, is the Holy Spirit convicting, moving in your heart? _____

✿ What distracts you from His ministry to you? _____

✿ When the Spirit is convicting you of sin, do you block it away because you don't want to deal with your issues or does He break your heart? _____

Our Father has given us this Advantage, our Helper, the Holy Spirit in order to empower, equip, and provide for us because we have many enemies and they do not fight fair. In the next two sections we will discuss what we're up against.

Memory Verses:

However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.

(John 16:13-14)

←←Verses to Memorize

OUR ENEMIES

If you like to have a lot of fun and experience new things, I would encourage you to participate in paintball wars. When you participate in paintball, you generally get your team together right before the referee blows the whistle and you talk strategy about the battle that is about to take place. There are all kinds of strategies you could implement, but there need to be defensive and offensive units. Your "back" needs to be covered, but you also hope to "flank" your opponent and penetrate their area of the field. But the moment that whistle sounds, it is war and the paintballs are flying and your heart rate is increasing. In those moments, you get just a glimpse of what it feels like to be in a real war and engaged in a real battle.

However as servant leaders we do not participate in manufactured, weekend battles; we are engaged in a real battle. A battle where there is much more at stake than we can ever imagine. This battle is fierce, and there is a great deal to fight over. Whoever wins this battle wins your life and in a lot of ways will determine your future. It's ongoing, it never stops, never rests. There is never a time of peace, the battle is on 24 hours a day. In any battle it is very important to know who your enemy is. For the Christian we have 3 enemies:

1) Satan

✿ What do you know about your enemy Satan? _____

✿ What are his main strategies? _____

Something you should know:

It is debated whether Isaiah 14 is describing Satan and the kings of Babylon and Tyre or just the earthly kings (Isaiah 14:12-20). What do you think?

The adversary (Devil/Satan) is a glorious angelic creature who rebelled against his Creator and became the chief enemy of God and man. Read Isaiah 14:12-17. Write down the 5 "I will" statements of Satan (vs. 13-14).

I will... _____

Satan's grand sin was his prideful and blasphemous aspiration to be like God, and His greatest weapon against servant-leaders is deception.

In John 8, Jesus is having an intense discussion with the Jewish leaders. The religious leaders were identifying themselves as Abraham's descendants and in Abraham's blood line, but Jesus explained that they were not true "sons of Abraham," in the spiritual sense. If these Jews were the true "sons of Abraham," they would not have rejected Christ as Messiah and sought to kill Him. Then Jesus identifies their true Father, Satan.

Jesus makes some amazing claims about the character of Satan:

"He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it." (John 8:44b, emphasis mine)

Satan's native language is lying. His primary tool in accomplishing his agenda is through lies. That is why Peter tells us to "be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8)

✿ **What are the consistent lies that Satan keeps telling you?** _____

Our next enemy is Satan's organized society that is more ambiguous but just as real and significant.

2) The World

Satan is the ruler of this "world" (John 12:31), and Satan's hope is to build a counterfeit system that effectively leaves God out (Luke 11:18). Paul reminds us that "we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12). This "world" leads the lives of unredeemed humanity and is characterized by the lusts of flesh, the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:15-17). We are told throughout Scripture not to love the world nor conform to it, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:2).

✿ **Where is your life conforming to this world?** _____

✿ **In the area of priorities?** _____

✿ **In the area of expectations?** _____

✿ **In the area of everyday decisions?** _____

Those of us in Christ are not helpless or unprotected. Paul highlights a number of defensive and offensive weapons in the whole armor of God in Ephesians 6.

✿ **Read Ephesians 6:10-20 and describe the weapons available to all who are in Christ:** _____

A little help...

A few of Satan's lies:

You're on your own, you need to take care of yourself because God won't!

Sin will "open your eyes" to a whole new world, a world of pleasure and excitement and fulfillment that God is keeping you from (see Gen. 3).

You are only as good as your waist size or accomplishments or athletic success. What makes you valuable is what you do, not who you are.

The whole armor of God....

Gird your waist with truth

Breastplate of righteousness

Shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace

Shield of faith

Helmet of salvation

Sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God

Praying always

Let's take a few minutes to understand our armor as servant-leaders:

- ◆ When we gird our waist (probably refers to the leather apron which hung under the armor and protected the thighs) with truth (God's truth as revealed in the Gospel), it will result in the attitude, language, and actions of Christ ("truth of God" [4:24, 5:9]). When we put on the breastplate of righteousness we are imitating our Savior, His righteousness and holiness.
- ◆ Being prepared to share the gospel involves being ready to proclaim and announce Christ and His peace. Christ has made peace through His death: peace between us and God and peace between one another (one humanity—Eph. 2:14-18). In Ephesians 6:19, Paul himself was asking for prayer that he would proclaim Christ boldly and clearly while he was in prison.
- ◆ The large shield carried by the Roman soldiers covered the whole person. The significance of the "shield" is the idea of believers laying hold of God's resources, especially His power, in the midst of the evil one's attacks. Taking the shield of faith involves believing the promises of God and His promises of protection. The Roman soldiers would soak their shields in water in order to quench the flaming arrows that were dipped in pitch (arrows are temptation, ungodly behavior, doubt, despair, eternal assaults, persecution, false teaching, etc.).
- ◆ The helmet of "salvation" is describing our rescue and salvation by God through the Lord Jesus Christ. He has saved us from death, wrath, and bondage and has given us a new life in Christ.
- ◆ The Spirit makes the sword powerful. Penetration and power comes from the Spirit. Remember, the Spirit of Truth convicts of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8). As we access the Word of God through memorization and daily exposure, we give the Spirit of Truth greater leverage and power to conform us to Jesus Christ.

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)

By faithfully speaking God's Word and Gospel in a dark and confused world, people may be liberated.

Paul concludes this section by proclaiming, "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints" (Eph. 6:18).

As we will see in lesson 3, our most effective battle plan is prayer. Prayer is the "energy, cause, catalyst" behind every part of the armor of God. Prayer indicates a life of dependence on God in the battles of life. "Praying always" because the struggle is never-ending. Our prayers need to be guided and inspired by our advantage—the Holy Spirit—and directed for all the saints. Especially in light of our final enemy that will be described in the next section, it is the enemy within us.

WALK IN THE SPIRIT, AND YOU SHALL NOT FULFILL THE LUSTS OF THE FLESH

Let's say that a huge war broke out between California and Arizona. Arizona invaded beautiful California because they were sick of living in the desert with all of the heat and cacti. They wanted to occupy the pacific coast, the Sierras, Yosemite, San Francisco Bay, but mainly San Diego. Let's say the fighting between Californians and Arizonans went on for years, sometimes California was victorious but mostly Arizona dominated. Until one day the people from the north, the Oregonians, came to the rescue. All of the tie-dyed, granola, "woody" people came south to rescue the Californians from the tyranny of the desert people. Eventually the governor of Arizona surrenders and California and Oregon win the war (adobe and cactus décor will have to wait for another time). It was official, Arizona had lost the war, but the state of California is so vast (3rd biggest state in the union) that many of the Arizonian commando groups continued to wage war with the Californians. Not realizing that the governor of Arizona had surrendered, the commando groups continued to cause havoc and destruction as if the war had not been decided. This was very frustrating for the Californians because it was hard to live a peaceful life with all of these desert people causing problems, distractions, and havoc in a situation where things should be resolved.

This silly illustration is indicative of the situation with our third enemy, our flesh. The Arizonian commandos represent *the flesh*. The war has been won through the Lord Jesus Christ (see John 19:30) but the flesh continues to fight on as if nothing has been reconciled. The flesh is that part of us that is the traitor within us. It is that part of us that is oriented towards self and independence and antagonistic towards God and His will for our lives. The flesh ("the saboteur") lowers the draw bridge of our castles to temptation, sin, and everything else Satan and this world wants to throw at us.

Although the Christian has no obligation to the flesh (Galatians 2:20), we are very capable of returning to our sinful passions and desires. Galatians 5 describes this very intense and real battle between our flesh and the Holy Spirit. Read Galatians 5:16-26

Compare and contrast the teaching on the Spirit vs. the Flesh:

Spirit

Flesh

According to Paul, we avoid fulfilling the lusts of the flesh by "walking in the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16).

✱ **What does it look like to walk in the Spirit?** _____

Our flesh and the Holy Spirit are battling for our thoughts, words, choices, and actions. To "walk" in the Spirit involves this step by step dependence on the Holy Spirit, in which He is dictating and directing our every move as leaders.

Circle (or mentally circle) the results or works of the flesh you've struggled with or have struggled with in the past:

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| Adultery | Jealousies |
| Fornication | Outbursts of wrath |
| Uncleanness (impurity) | Selfish ambitions |
| Lewdness (lust) | Dissensions, heresies (factions, hurtful divisions) |
| Idolatry | Envy |
| Sorcery | Murder |
| Hatred | Drunkenness |
| Contentions (discord) | Revelries (drunken improprieties) |

✱ **Why is it so easy to trust the flesh and fall into its bondage over and over and over?** _____

✱ **What does your life look like when the flesh is controlling?** _____

✱ **What needs, desires, or emptiness in your life is your flesh trying to fulfill?**

The antidote to our flesh is the Spirit that indwells each of us Christians. The life of a servant-leader is lived by the Spirit's direction and enablement. Only in the step-by-step dependence on the Spirit can we turn away the lusts of the flesh. Paul states, "I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16).

Not only are the works of the flesh very evident in a believer's life, but so are the fruit of the Spirit.

- | | |
|---------------|--------------|
| Love | Goodness |
| Joy | Faithfulness |
| Peace | Gentleness |
| Longsuffering | Self-control |
| Kindness | |

✱ **As you walk in dependence on the Spirit, which of these fruits has God given you recently?** _____

✱ **Which one do you feel your life lacks?** _____

Something you should know:

Paul describes the day when our flesh will be destroyed forever. "So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body" (1 Corinthians 15:42-44).

✱ **How do you know when you are fulfilling the lusts of the flesh and when you are walking in the Spirit?** _____

Not only do we clearly see the works and results of the flesh (envy, selfish ambitions, etc.) and the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, etc.) in our lives, but it is a difference of prayerful dependence versus self-sufficient independence. When we are walking in the Spirit, we are depending on His resources every minute of our existence—we are talking, begging Him for intervention and supply. All success and credit goes to God, because He is the One who was relied on the whole time. When we fulfill the lusts of the flesh, we live a life of independence and self-focus and self-gratification. The preoccupation is our own needs and wants and very little stands in the way of those desires.

At the end of this section, Paul states, “And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh and with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Gal. 5:24-25).

Read Romans 6:1-8 where Paul clarifies this more.

✱ **According to these verses, how has our relationship to sin and our flesh changed now that we are in Christ?** _____

Both Galatians 5 and Romans 6 describe this huge conflict between the Spirit and the flesh, the tension between the reality of what Christ has done for us and our everyday experience with sin. Scripture clearly states that Christ has ended the flesh’s strangle hold over our lives. We have a new master and we are no longer slaves to sin. Our old man was our life before Christ; that life was crucified with Christ! We have died to sin, and we don’t owe sin anything. Sin is no longer our master, and it no longer dictates and throws us around as if we were its slaves. We have been freed from sin’s dominion and bondage. We have a new employer, a new boss. Our old employer comes around frequently acting as if we are still his, but we have no obligation to sin. Our new employer and boss is Christ, and our duties and obligations are to His new life for us.

When we became Christians we died, were buried and were given a new life. It was Christ’s actions on the cross that enabled us to die to sin. Not only did Christ die for our sin, He also killed sin’s strangle hold on our lives. We have been raised with Christ. The bondage is over, we have a new life.

Yes, we are fully capable of returning to our old way of living life, but Paul states, “And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh and with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Gal. 5:24-25). It is our minute by minute dependence on God’s resources, especially His Spirit, that will determine whether we reap the works of the flesh or enjoy the glorious fruits of the Spirit.

QUENCHING AND GRIEVING

A classic song many of us have grown up singing in the church comes from Psalm 51:10-11:

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

The chorus of this song always included verse 11, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me!" These words always traumatized my adolescent heart. I often thought that if I did not have a clean heart that God would take His Spirit from me. Little did I know the Old Testament context of this Psalm.

Read the story of Saul's anointing in 1 Samuel 10:1-13.

The Spirit of God came upon Saul and empowered him to be the king of Israel. However, Saul committed two grievous sins:

1. The first sin was his unwillingness to wait for Samuel's burnt and peace offerings at Gilgal in preparation for battle against the Philistines (1 Sam. 13:9).
2. The second sin was his disregard of God's orders to destroy all of the Amalekites and their possessions (1 Sam. 15:3, 9).

As a result of his disobedience and unwillingness to follow God, the Spirit of God departed from Saul and his anointing was given to another.

Read 1 Samuel 16:1-14.

Having witnessed the reception of the Spirit and departure of the Spirit from Saul, it is no wonder that David was in a panic after the adultery with Bathsheba, murder of Uriah and deception and cover up. In Psalm 51, David is picturing what has taken place with his predecessor and is fearful that the Spirit of the Lord will depart from him as well.

The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament did not indicate if you were saved or had a relationship with God; it indicated God's special blessing for special ministries. Saul had received and kept it until he disobeyed God. David had it and in Psalm 51 was worried he would lose it because of his sin with Bathsheba.

✱ **For the New Testament believer, how has the Holy Spirit taken on a different role?** _____

Something you should know:

When our parents die, many of us will receive an inheritance of the possessions and money that our parents have left after their deaths. It is possible that prior to their death your parents may come to you and give you a portion of that inheritance. That is what God has done for us with His Spirit. He has given us the Holy Spirit as a promise of what is to come in the future—the rewards and eternity with Him.

When we place our confidence and our trust in the Gospel, that Christ died for our sins and arose, the Holy Spirit indwells us permanently.

Read 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 and Ephesians 1:13-14.

✱ **Why is the Spirit described as a guarantee?** _____

God is saying, "Here is my Spirit and there is more to come!" The Holy Spirit represents God's promise to us of eternal life and our inheritance in heaven.

We are called Christ's "purchased possession."

✳ **How did Christ purchase us?** _____

Jesus explains that when the Holy Spirit comes, He will come and abide (dwell/live) with us forever. John 14:16 states, "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever." Romans 8:9 states, "But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His." It is clear from Scripture that every Christian has the Holy Spirit and the way you can know if you are Christ's is if you have His Spirit.

✳ **If it is scripturally impossible for a New Testament believer to lose the Holy Spirit, then what happens when we sin or disobey the direction of the Holy Spirit?** _____

Turn to Ephesians 4:28-30 and 1 Thessalonians 5:19.

✳ **Study the context and describe the difference between *grieving* and *quenching* the Holy Spirit.** _____

When we sin, we grieve the Holy Spirit within us (in the Ephesian context they were stealing, allowing corrupt words to come out of their mouths). When we resist what He is telling us to do, we quench or "put out" the power that He is offering us. Can a Christian lose the presence of the Spirit? Absolutely not! But we can grieve and quench His power and will for our lives.

One of the ways that we can quench the Spirit and turn back the power that God Almighty is offering us is by neglecting His guidance. There are many decisions that the Word of God gives us specific instructions on.

Look at Romans 12:9-16.

✳ **Name some specific instructions the Word of God gives us.** _____

✳ **What are some decisions that Christians have to make that the Word of God does not give specific instructions on?** _____

With His own blood and body we were purchased. There is no confusion; we are His and when He comes back He will redeem what has always been His.

A little help...

1 Thessalonians 5:19 says, "Do not quench the Spirit." In the Thessalonian church the quenching of the Holy Spirit may have involved resisting the exercising of certain gifts such as "prophecies."

However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.

—John 16:13-15

The truth of Scripture must be applied to all of our lives and everyday decisions, but there are many decisions that the Word of God does not give specific instructions on. The Holy Spirit who indwells us must lead us in each and every one of those decisions. The Holy Spirit will guide servant-leaders in all truth. The Holy Spirit will never direct us to anything that is false or not of God. His priority is truth, living in the truth, and bringing us to truth—God’s truth about us, our sin, our hope, our calling.

At no point does a Christian need to secure more of the Spirit, nor retrieve the presence of the Spirit after sin. The very presence of the Spirit is a guarantee of our salvation and right relationship with Christ, “unto the day of redemption” (Eph. 4:30). As servant-leaders we must faithfully submit to the presence and power of the Spirit in our lives and ministry. This moment-by-moment relationship with the Spirit may be hindered at any time by grieving Him through sin or quenching His power through the neglect of what He is calling us to do. His presence is unconditional, but His blessing is conditional on our obedience.

THE ULTIMATE PRAYER PARTNER

One thing we know from our human experiences is that we are weak, we get discouraged, and easily disoriented. As servant-leaders we get overwhelmed and distracted by the needs and struggles of our own lives and the lives that we minister to. In our anxiety Paul tells us to “be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6).

When suffering hits we know we should pray, but often we do not know what to pray for.

Right in the middle of Romans 8 is found one of the most encouraging passages in all of Scripture.

Read Romans 8:26-27 twice.

✿ **What is Paul saying about our prayer life in those moments of weakness and disorientation?** _____

✿ **What is the Spirit doing while we pray?** _____

The Spirit bears with us the burdens imposed by our weaknesses. At times we are unable to clearly discern God’s will and direction in certain situations, but the Spirit of God overcomes this weakness by His personal intercession on our behalf. The Spirit’s “groanings” are probably the Spirit’s own prayer language, a ministry of intercession that takes place in our heart and cannot be perceived by us.

What an amazing gift that God has given to us, the ultimate prayer partner. Even in our failure to know the will of God and appropriate petitions, the Holy Spirit expresses to God perfect intercessory prayers that match the will of God and circumstance. Effective, powerful prayers are being prayed every time we come to the throne of grace.

Paul states in Romans 8:27, “Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.”

✿ **Who is the “He” in verse 27?** _____

✿ **What is “He” doing?** _____

✿ **With Romans 8:26-27 in view, what is the only way a Christian can mess this process up?** _____

A little help...

Alaletiois (groanings) is translated as “words that cannot be expressed or be uttered.” It is a reference to an unspoken prayer ministry that is exclusive to the Holy Spirit. It is unlikely that it is referring to “speaking in tongues” or an inspired “prayer language” of believers. 1 Cor. 12:30 restricts the gift of tongues to only some believers while this is a ministry the Holy Spirit engages in on behalf of all believers.

There is no reason to hold back on any of our petitions. It is amazing that I have a Person in my life who totally understands my situation, circumstances, and my heart. Even though I cannot communicate it well to God, He is constantly praying on my behalf for things that I truly need. He knows me better than my closest friend.

When suffering hits, we are disoriented, frustrated, and hurting, but in that pain we are called as Christians to pray. We pray our heart and we pray for the things we think we need, and as we do that (simultaneously) the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us. Especially in our suffering, we truly don't know what we need. God says, "Don't worry about it. Pray your heart, pray your pain, and the Holy Spirit will pray simultaneously for you and Jesus will intercede perfectly for you." That's why Jesus can say, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:23-24). That's why James can say, "You do not have because you do not ask" (James 4:2).

Something you should know:

Journaling can be an effective tool to communicate your thoughts and prayers to God. Through the process we are forced to put our petitions into words. It also helps us be good historians of His amazing intervention and provision.

There are many things that are heavy on our hearts today. Conflict and pain in our life and ministry where we become disoriented and "we do not know what we should pray for as we ought." Yet our ultimate prayer partner is ready and willing to intercede perfectly and powerfully on our behalf. Take some time and journal your prayers for:

Your family circumstances

Your personal sin and faith struggles

Ministry difficulties and frustrations

People and circumstances that are heavy on your heart

Our power source as servant-leaders is the Holy Spirit. He is our Helper because He guides in all truth, directing our hearts to Christ at all times and is our advantage over our enemies: Satan, the world, and our flesh. As we walk in the Spirit we experience His fruit, but this moment by moment relationship with Him can be grieved by sin and quenched by neglect. Yet in all our weakness and struggle, our ultimate prayer partner intercedes perfectly and intimately on our behalf. We need all the help we can get as we battle the daily enticement of self-sufficiency and independence in this next lesson.

OVERVIEW

- ◆ Self-Sufficiency
- ◆ Seeing the Unseen
- ◆ Our Most Important Ministry, Part 1
- ◆ Our Most Important Ministry, Part 2
- ◆ The Seduction

SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.'" (Genesis 2:15-17)

"Then the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. (Genesis 3:4-6, emphasis mine)

The serpent promised the woman, "Your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God!" Satan's schemes have not changed at all, he continues to promise each and every one of us, "your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God!" We live in a culture where we eat, breathe, and practice independence and self-sufficiency on so many levels.

Remember, our flesh is very committed to living independently of God. One does not need to train oneself to live independent of God—we do it very naturally, it is instinctual. From the very first sin in Genesis, to Babel, to the golden calf, to Israel's ongoing rebellion, to the Pharisees and Sadducees of Jesus' time we are self-deceived into believing that we don't need God. Our flesh is constantly grasping for control, self-sufficient security, and independence.

As servant-leaders we see these sinful desires played out over and over in ministry. They plague our broken hearts and they deeply affect those we have been given charge over.

◆ **Where do you exert control, self-sufficiency, and independence in ministry?**

Scripture proclaims over and over that we have not, cannot, and will not ever direct our lives. We are not in control, we are not self-sufficient, and we are not independent of our Creator and God. There is no greater lesson in the world for a servant-leader to come to grips with than to realize that it is God who is doing the ministry and we are along for the ride. We have not, cannot, and will not ever accomplish what God has called us to do without His resources and our total dependence on Him for every breath we have.

Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD.

—Jeremiah 9:23-24

O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.

—Jeremiah 10:23

Thus says the LORD: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the LORD."

—Jeremiah 17:5

The prophet Jeremiah's heart broke for the independent, sinful, and self-sufficient people of Israel. Read Jeremiah 9:23-24, 10:23, 17:5.

*** What do each of these passages have to say about self-sufficiency?**

Jeremiah 9:23-24 _____

Jeremiah 10:23 _____

Jeremiah 17:5 _____

This overwhelming desire to handle life apart from God and His resources permeates our ministries. Day in and day out, our ministry focus is our own strength, our abilities, our talents, our experiences, our personal resources (what we can get done in the time available). We so easily forget the very foundation of this ministry that God has given us, that God is the One who is going to accomplish His purposes. Psalm 127:1-2 gives a humbling picture for us "builders" and "watchmen." "Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the LORD guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows; for so He gives His beloved sleep."

Moses is one of the greatest figures in all of Scripture. The last verses of Deuteronomy say this about him,

But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, in all the signs and wonders which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt, before Pharaoh, before all his servants, and in all his land, and by all that mighty power and all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel. (Deuteronomy 34:10-12)

Yet Moses did not begin his leadership journey with this commendation. Moses began his leadership experience filled with a preoccupation of what he was able to accomplish or not accomplish, whether he would succeed or not. Let's look at the foundation of Moses' ministry.

Read Exodus 3:1-22 and 4:1-17.

Initially, we are very critical of Moses at this point in his life, but as we look closer, we so easily identify with his train of thought. Moses had a "checklist" of what needed to be in place for God to use him in delivering the Israelites.

Reread Exodus 3:1-11. In vs. 11 it says, "But Moses said to God, 'Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?'"

✿ **What question is Moses really asking?** _____

Moses is feeling this overwhelming responsibility of leading the children of Israel out of Egypt. What credentials, abilities, or talents do I possess that will enable me to accomplish this purpose?

✿ **How does God respond to Moses' question of "who am I?" (vs. 12)** _____

The next question on Moses' checklist is the important question, Who are You? "Then Moses said to God, 'Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, "The God of your fathers has sent me to you," and they say to me, "What is His name?" what shall I say to them?'" (Exodus 3:13)

✿ **What are the things that God highlights in response to Moses' question? (vs.14-22)** _____

Moses is not finished with his checklist and says in Exodus 4:1, "But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, 'The LORD has not appeared to you.'"

✿ **What is Moses worried about in this question?** _____

The final point on Moses' checklist is found in Exodus 4:10, "Then Moses said to the LORD, 'O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.'"

✿ **How does the Lord respond to Moses in verses 11-12?** _____

Moses pleads with the Lord in verse 13, "O my Lord, please send by the hand of whomever else You may send." The Lord gets angry and says this, "Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. And look, he is also coming out to meet you. When he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. Now you shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth. And I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and I will teach you what you shall do. So he shall be your spokesman to the

So He said, "I will certainly be with you. And this shall be a sign to you that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."

—Exodus 3:12

So the LORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the LORD? Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say."

—Exodus 4:11-12

people. And he himself shall be as a mouth for you, and you shall be to him as God. And you shall take this rod in your hand, with which you shall do the signs." (vs. 14-17)

Moses had lots of fears, insecurities, and feelings of inadequacy. Early on, his crucial flaw was the belief that he needed to accomplish the task, he needed to be independent and sufficient in his own resources and ability. We too have this desire to be sufficient, independent, and successful in our own resources. We too have a checklist of what needs to be in place for God to work and use us.

✱ **What is on your checklist (what needs to be assured or "covered" before God can use you)?** _____

The reason we have these checklists is because we believe that we are the ones accomplishing ministry. We are the ones getting it done. God says, "I AM WHO I AM!" God says, "I have it under control. Trust me! I AM has sent you!"

Memory Verses:

Verses to Memorize → →

Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.

(Matthew 11:29-30)

SEEING THE UNSEEN

According to Hebrews 11:1, faith is the assurance of what we hope for and the certainty of what we do not see. Five verses later, it says, “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” The Bible states that we “live by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7), and our faith involves trusting God for what we cannot see or experience right now. According to Hebrews 11:6 we must believe first that “He is,” that God exists and He is wonderful, glorious, all-powerful, all-knowing, everywhere. We must also believe that at the core of His character, He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. He is the type of God that is intimately involved in the affairs of the universe and our personal affairs as well. Our security, joy, significance, and provision are contingent on Him as a rewarder of those who seek Him.

Read Hebrews 11:23-29. Chart as many faith decisions, consequences, and motivations you can find.

Faith Decision	Consequence	Motivation

✱ Which motivation resonates with you most? Why? _____

Something you should know:

Context: The writer of Hebrews wrote to a church of Hebrew Christians who struggled giving up their past Jewish religion. When it came down to it, Christ was not supreme in their thinking. This church was in a critical state because many Christians had already separated themselves from the main body of believers and were beginning to defect back into Judaism. The pressure was on—not just from those who wanted them to return to Jewish tradition and religion, but also from the reports from Rome about Nero’s program against Christians. The writer of Hebrews focuses his attention not on the Law (that’s what they were fixed on) but on the “faith” of God’s people throughout the ages. Despite trials, difficulties, and death our Christian history is marked by men and women who demonstrated intense faith in God and His promises. His argument against Jewish tradition and religion culminates with the statement that “Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith” (Heb. 12:2).

A little help...

Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob were on a pilgrimage. We might think that all the area during Abraham's time was tough living. Abraham and Sarah left their homeland, the city of Ur. This was a fancy, well-developed city that our wives would be begging us for—indoor kitchens, running water. They left all of this and became nomadic tent-dwellers for the rest of their lives on this earth. Imagine living in a tent all of your life! But they saw the promises of God and heavenly country from a distance, were assured of them, and embraced them. The image is that of "saluting" the promises of God from a distance. They "confessed"—made a public confession and profession of faith. This describes them making a public confession and profession through their decisions that they were resident aliens of this land—strangers and pilgrims passing through.

Instead of enjoying the "passing pleasures of sin" of Pharaoh's court, Moses esteemed "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he looked to the reward...for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible" (Heb. 11:24-27, emphasis mine). Earlier in Hebrews 11, we discover what motivated Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob. Read Hebrews 11:13-16.

- ✿ **What did these men and women of faith confess?** _____

- ✿ **What is their reward?** _____

The believers of Hebrews 11:1-11 did not receive the promises before death. But not even death could separate these saints from the promises of God. These men and women of faith "seek" a heavenly homeland. They organized their lives in such a way that they were longing and living for their homeland. Verse 16 states, "And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return." They desired "a better, that is, a heavenly country" (vs. 18).

Later in the chapter, the writer of Hebrews describes some of the things the saints endured while waiting for this better, heavenly country. Read Hebrews 11:35-40. Look at some of the things that these saints endured.

- ✿ **Why would they endure such things?** _____

They could live the lives they did because they were not living for this world. In their faith, they oriented their lives to their homeland to come. "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Paul explains further in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, "Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal." According to this passage, what are some of the differences between this present temporary world and the eternal world to come?

Present temporary world	Eternal world to come

The job of our faith is to fix our eyes not on what is seen but on what is unseen. It takes careful attention, “eternal eyes”, to see the invisible workings of God.

Let’s look at some practical ministry situations where we must see the unseen.

Case Study #1

You are slugging it out on a ministry team, giving your heart and soul to this ministry. Every day you pour your heart out in prayer for this ministry. One day you discover that you have hurt someone on the ministry team with something you said. This person has gone to other members of your team and has done everything he/she could to put you in the most negative and controversial light. Your ministry team is falling apart and you don’t even know where to begin with this mess.

✿ **What does your “flesh” want to do?** _____

✿ **How can you fix your eyes not on what is seen but on what is unseen?** _____

Case Study #2

Three months ago, you decided to risk and take on a new ministry of watching several neighbor kids after school. None of their families know Christ and they are unable to care for their children in the afternoon. Every night your own kids pray for the salvation of these neighbor kids and you eagerly join with them. However, the children are difficult and the parents often change the subject when spiritual topics come up.

✿ **What does your “flesh” want to do?** _____

✿ **How can you fix your eyes not on what is seen but on what is unseen?** _____

Even in our purest moments, things do not go as planned. We do not lose heart because these afflictions are “light” compared to the work of God renewing our “inward man.” If we just look at the things that are “seen” and “temporary” we will miss all of the “unseen” and “far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Corinthians 4:16-18). The possibilities of this unseen world are what drives us to our most important ministry in life.

Something you should know:

Remember that God is not finished with you yet and your inward man is being renewed day by day. Understand that your faithfulness and integrity has had a deep impact on the group. Focus attention on individuals and the invisible workings of God (those people you have discipled and have been changed by God). Focus attention on eternal ramifications and not the immediate pressing pain of ministry.

A little help...

Embrace the reality of your transformation and eternal destiny. Ask yourself, what is the unseen I am not seeing? What is the eternal reality of what is really taking place in these neighbor kids? How is God producing gain in my faithful ministry to these families?

OUR MOST IMPORTANT MINISTRY, PART 1

Many of these ideas are taken from the teaching and life of Colin McDougall, Jr.

One of the most basic underpinnings of Christianity is that we cannot pull it off. No matter our posturing, our acts of self-sufficiency, our attitude of independence; we are unable to accomplish what we want. Before Christ, we were not able to pull it off. It was because of His amazing grace and sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ that enabled us to be saved and given a new life. There was nothing I did to accomplish or assure myself of my salvation. The Bible says that I was “dead in my trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1). It goes on to say, “For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:6-8). Ephesians continues by explaining that none of us will boast of our salvation because it is not of our works. His grace comes only through faith, it is not of ourselves, it is a gift of God (Eph. 2:8-9). The supernatural, miraculous hand of God receives all the credit and all the glory. It is God who pulls it off! This is Christianity in its most basic form.

After Christ, this basic feat remains unchanged. Spiritual change doesn't come about if we can find some very articulate and clever speakers. It doesn't occur if we devise the perfect outreach plans. Spiritual transformation doesn't happen if we control people and guilt them into certain behaviors. Spiritual change and transformation originates from God's hand and His hand alone.

The night before Christ's death, He brings His closest friends, His disciples, into an upper room in the city of Jerusalem. In this upper room discourse (John 13-17), He expresses His most intimate and significant thoughts to a group of men He invested His life into for over 3 years. He explains to them, that He's leaving and the way He is leaving is He's going to be killed. Not only that but the mission and ministry belongs to them now.

✱ **How would you feel to be in the disciples' shoes?** _____

Remember, Jesus reveals some life-altering truths: servant leadership, loving one another, the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, who is to come, abiding in Christ, the list goes on and on. But I want to highlight three sets of verses in three different chapters that often go unnoticed in the Upper Room Discourse. It is a theme that is strategically scattered throughout this discourse by Jesus Christ.

Read John 14:12-14.

✱ **What are your observations?** _____

Read John 15:7-8.

✿ What are your observations? _____

Read John 16:23-24.

✿ What are your observations? _____

✿ In John 16:23-24, what is Jesus pleading for His disciples to do? _____

✿ Why? _____

In these passages, our Savior is begging His disciples to take on a ministry of asking. "If you ask anything in My name, I will do it....ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you....Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full." (John 14:14, 15:7, 16:24). Scattered throughout this Upper Room Discourse is this amazing exhortation to ask God for provision and supply. Jesus is frustrated with His disciples for their lack of asking.

✿ What keeps you from having a ministry of asking? _____

Scripture is very clear on a number of things concerning prayer. When Jesus taught us to pray, He emphasized the importance of abiding in Him (dwelling intimately with Him) and it is important that we seek His will (*Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*). But when Jesus Christ, our Savior, the co-Creator of the universe, tells us to pray, He also tells us to expect to get what we pray for. The greatest ministry you can have is to take Jesus Christ at His Word and to ask Him for great things in your life, great things at your church, great things for His Kingdom.

Suspend for a moment what you think you know about prayer and just hear our Savior's heart. What does Jesus teach us about prayer? Jesus is teaching His friends to ASK, to ASK with confidence, to ASK knowing that we will receive, that our joy will be full. Jesus is frustrated. He is saying, "You are not asking me! Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full!" Jesus is saying, "The problem is not ME or MY willingness to provide. The problem is you—**you are not ASKING!**"

A little help...

A lot of roadblocks to prayer come from our personal theology.

Now as they went out of Jericho, a great multitude followed Him. And behold, two blind men sitting by the road, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!" Then the multitude warned them that they should be quiet; but they cried out all the more, saying, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!" So Jesus stood still and called them, and said, "What do you want Me to do for you?" They said to Him, "Lord, that our eyes may be opened." So Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes. And immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him.

—Matthew 20:29-34

"Prayer is God's appointed way for obtaining things, and the great secret of all lack in our experience, in our life, and in our work is neglect of prayer."

—R. A. Torrey
(First Dean of Biola & first Pastor of Church of the Open Door)

We have been taught about prayer all of our Christian life. We have been taught biblical and unbiblical things and for the average believer, it is one area where there is a great deal of confusion.

✿ **What confuses you about the ministry of asking (prayer)?** _____

There is so much confusion about prayer, but Scripture is clear on many things about prayer. Prayer is not to pass on information to God as if He doesn't already know what is going on. It is to communicate our heart to Him. To ask Him! Jesus says in Matthew 6:7-8, "And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him." Jesus does not want mechanical repetition, He wants our passionate heart. He wants to hear it over and over. There are times when Jesus interacts with people with blindness or paralysis for 38 years. The person's ailment is right before Him but He still asks, "What do you want Me to do for you?" (John 5:6, Matthew 21:32) It is obvious to everyone involved what needs to be done, but He still wants the person to respond to this question, "What do you want Me to do for you?"

Prayer is not obsolete because God is sovereign. Paul describes our partnership with God as "God's fellow workers" (1 Cor. 3:9). Isn't it probable that God has sovereignly chosen to use the prayers of His "fellow workers" to accomplish His will? He has chosen to partner with us in a way that includes us sharing our heart passionately with Him and begging Him to intervene in our lives, the lives around us and in this world.

Prayer is accomplished through diligence and perseverance. We can pray for something once or twice and immediately get discouraged when we don't see results. The Bible says, "Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving" (Col. 4:2). Jesus wants us to ask and keep asking. Jesus' half-brother, James says, "You do not have, because you do not ask" (James 4:2). There are also certain things that we just cannot pray for. We know it is not God's will that He answer certain prayers.

✿ **Can you think of any examples of things you don't feel you can pray for?**

But there is so much in our lives, in our churches, in our communities, at our jobs that we do not have because we do not ask! God wants to give us great gifts. He wants to show the impossible. He wants us to have total confidence in Him and His provision for us.

OUR MOST IMPORTANT MINISTRY, PART 2

To help us understand our most important ministry of asking, Jesus uses this amazing illustration of parenting. He states in Matthew 7:7-11,

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

✳ **What does this section of Scripture teach us about our asking ministry?** _____

✳ **Why is the illustration of a parent/child relationship so effective in helping us understand prayer?** _____

✳ **How much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him?** _____

As servant-leaders there are so many good, important things in which we can invest our time, energy, and resources. It is significant to get good training, to develop effective outreaches, to spend the time necessary to teach the Word clearly, the list goes on and on. Yet our most significant ministry in life is our ministry of asking. There is no greater investment in all of the world than the investment of asking. Unfortunately, if you are anything like me, it is the ministry that gets the least amount of energy, time, and attention.

Read Mark 4:1-20 and answer this question:

✳ **What is the main point of this parable?** _____

Many of these ideas are taken from the teaching and life of Colin McDougall, Jr.

A little help...

As earthly parents we are broken, imperfect, and in the words of Jesus, "evil." Yet even in the state that we are in, we know how to give good gifts to our children whom we love. God created the parent/child relationship for us to understand Him.

Note to Discipler: *As you do your discussion, don't get sidetracked by which "soil" was saved or not saved or issues of losing one's salvation.*

It is the condition of the “soil” that determines spiritual growth, fruit, and fulfillment of all that God wants for us. The “sower” must scatter the “seed,” but ultimately the sower will not convince or manipulate the seed to take root. It is the condition and preparation of the soil that enables the seed to take root.

Now think about those we minister to...

✿ **How do we prepare and get them ready for the “seed”?** _____

✿ **What happens if we try to prepare someone’s heart for the “seed”?** _____

Anyone who has been serving for any length of time knows that we cannot prepare another person’s heart. When we try to control, persuade, or convince, we end up frustrating ourselves and the person we are trying to help. However, we know someone who can prepare and get hearts ready for His Word. It is through this amazing ministry of asking that we see our God prepare hearts for His Word and His transformation. We aren’t clever enough, persuasive enough, or thoughtful enough to prepare hearts, but God’s Spirit is powerful, convicting, and persuasive. Our job is to beg Him to intervene on behalf of those we love and are serving. The most effective ministry a servant-leader can have is one where we take Jesus at His Word. He tells us to ask. We need to ask! We need to spend the rest of our lives asking Him for great things in our families, great things in our churches, great things in our communities and great things for His Kingdom.

Jesus says, “What do you want Me to do for you?” Take the next 20 minutes and journal all the ways that you want Him to be working in....

If you ask anything in My name, I will do it....ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you....Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

—John 14:14, 15:7, 16:24

A little help...

As we’ve mentioned before, a very effective “asking” tool is to journal your prayers. To actually write them out (or type them out on a computer) and have a history of your “asking” ministry. It is so encouraging, especially as you identify all of the amazing ways that God is providing. I would encourage you to start one today.

Your life and work

Your family’s life

Your church

Your disciples and those you are ministering to

Your neighborhood and community

The Christian church worldwide

THE SEDUCTION

There is a seduction taking place. It is very subtle, yet extremely powerful. It targets one of the fundamental themes of our existence and needs—security. We want to be secure. We want to be safe and sound. We want to trust in something. What this clever seducer does is give us so called security. It gives us something to trust in. It gives the appearance that everything is safe and sound. The sin of self-sufficiency. The idea that I bring security, I should be trusted, I make my life safe and sound.

There is a subtle transformation that occurs in our hearts when we begin to make mortgage payments or when we are able to go on nice vacations and afford expensive things. Something happens to us when we have extra money in our 401k's. Something changes in us when we go from survival to luxury. You see, we begin to listen to that whisper in our ear that says we are in control of our universe. We are sufficient in ourselves. We are the makers of our lives!

The drive for self-sufficiency and independence is most clearly seen in the god of this world. The god of our day is money! The average person on the street determines success or failure in terms of income, bank accounts, retirement plans, financial portfolios, homes, dollars in the pocket. This worship of the almighty dollar permeates every aspect of our culture.

Jesus Christ spoke directly to a group of Christians who thought this way. These Christians were physically rich but spiritually bankrupt. Jesus is not impressed with income, bank accounts, retirement plans, financial portfolios, homes, dollars in the pocket. Listen to what He says. Read Revelation 3:14-20.

Something you should know:

Christ communicates His disgust by an incredible image that His audience would readily identify with. Laodicea had many things going for them, but water was not one of them. They heavily depended on the northern city of Hieropolis—known for their hot springs and located seven miles to the north of Laodicea. The water running from Hieropolis to Laodicea would cool on its way, and during the cooling process it would develop a calcium build-up, making the water sour to the taste as well as being lukewarm. (Ten miles south of Laodicea was Colosse—known for refreshing and cold running streams of water.) This lukewarm, calcium-tasting water was not desirable or easily digested by the residents of Laodicea. Christ uses this vivid imagery to communicate His intense disgust at their condition.

✱ **Why did Jesus want to vomit these Christians out of His mouth?** _____

✱ **What was their true condition?** _____

“Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing!’...” (v. 17)! They had been seduced into believing they were secure, independent, and sufficient in themselves. Their needs were met and their need for God no longer existed. They had worked God right out of the equation.

In the midst of their pride and self-sufficiency they were completely bankrupt. They had nothing! Christ explains: “So you think you are ‘rich, wealthy, and have need of nothing.’ Let me explain your real condition. This is the pitiful reality of your situation. You don’t even know it but you are ‘wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.’” You see, prosperity has a way of blinding us to our need for God. The problem with the sin of self-sufficiency is that we may be physically rich but spiritually bankrupt.

✿ **In what did Jesus want them to invest?** _____

Christ is saying, "You want to be really wealthy, start shopping in my marketplace. 'I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.'" The paradox here is how the "poor" are able to "purchase" a commodity as expensive as gold. The "gold" that Christ offers makes you truly spiritually rich. "And white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed." In Laodicea they were known for their black wool, but Christ says pursue "white garments" that demonstrate your purity and righteousness before God as we see throughout Revelation. The result of pursuing "white garments" is that "the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed."

He says to "anoint your eyes with eye salve that you may see." In the city of Laodicea they had quite a medical contingency that was known for their eye ointment that would heal and medicate troubled eyes. Christ is saying that they are not even seeing what they need to see. "Redefine your pursuit of wealth. Buy from Me."

✿ **How do verses 19-20 connect with the sin of self-sufficiency?** _____

Jesus says, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent." Be zealous; be hot or boil in your repentance. The only way lukewarm people can become hot in their love for the Lord is to repent. Verse 20 is an invitation to intimacy: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me." The solution to the sin of self-sufficiency is intimate, abiding, relationship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We must meet with Him and allow Him to love us and change us through the Spirit, the Word, and His Body. Jesus wants intimate, real life table talk. Fall deeply in love with Christ by opening up that door He is knocking on and allowing Him to intimately dine with you. We must trust in Him and not ourselves. Our fleshly instincts fight against trusting Him.

One area in which we struggle with this is that of finances.

✿ **Why is it so difficult to buy from Christ and trust Him with our finances?** _____

Naturally we think that we can give of our resources only after we have obtained all that we think we need. I tell myself, "I will give once I am assured that I have enough for myself." But I never quite reach the point where I think I have enough for myself, and so I keep postponing any goals of giving. Paul tells me that I must first give, and then after I have given generously, God will cause me to reap in abundance so that I may give even more. I must give joyfully and in faith, looking to God to provide for my own needs, as well as my ability to continue to give.

A little help...

The "gold refined by fire" may involve character that is produced in trials and stress of life or "faith" as Peter describes in 1 Peter 1:7. Whatever it involves, we can confidently say it is true spiritual riches and not physical riches that are at the disposal of Christ and at our spiritual fingertips.

A little help...

The amount of the harvest is determined by the amount of the seed sown.

Turn to **2 Corinthians 9:6-8**.

✳ **What does it mean, “He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully”?** _____

✳ **What’s the difference between a cheerful giver and one who does it grudgingly or out of necessity?** _____

In verse 8 Paul says, “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.”

✳ **What is the purpose of giving to God’s work?** _____

Paul says God will take care of you! Grace will be abundant, overflowing; you will have plenty. But the interesting thing here is that once again He describes the purpose behind the blessing and sufficiency. The purpose is not to give and then when God blesses us to forget about giving. He states the purpose: “so that we may have an abundance for every good work.” So that we can use that blessing once again for His purposes and Kingdom. We give, He blesses us and provides for us so that we can give again. That’s the cycle.

✳ **Are you trusting God with your finances?** _____

✳ **How?** _____

✳ **What is one specific area in your finances that you would like to trust Him more?** _____

From the very beginning our flesh has been committed to living independently of God. Like the beginning of Moses’ ministry, we are preoccupied with what we can accomplish or not accomplish or whether we can succeed or not. In our minds, we have endless checklists that must be covered before God can use us.

However, we have a legacy of faith of men and women like Abraham, Sarah, and Moses who demonstrated radical dependence on God as pilgrims living for another land. They endured afflictions and challenges because their eyes were fixed not on the “seen” and “temporary” but on the “unseen” and “far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Corinthians 4:16-18).

This unseen, uncontrolled world is what drives us to our most important ministry in life, our ministry of asking. There is no greater investment in all the world than to plead with the One who changes hearts, alters circumstances, and does the impossible. *God, please destroy the sin of self-sufficiency in our lives and make us depend on You in every aspect of our lives!*

OVERVIEW

- ◆ Last Will and Testament of Paul to a Servant-Leader
- ◆ Hardships of a Servant-Leader
- ◆ Faithfulness of a Servant-Leader
- ◆ The Word of a Servant-Leader
- ◆ What Are You Afraid Of?
- ◆ My Last Will and Testament

LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF PAUL TO A SERVANT-LEADER

For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3:2-4).

You do not have to be in the faith long to discover the type of world and people Christ Jesus has called us to serve. Our world is full of pain and sin and yearning for the heart of a true servant-leader.

Paul's last will and testament is 2 Timothy. He explains in this epistle to Timothy that he has already gone through a preliminary trial (4:16-18) and it does not look good for him (4:6). It is very possible that this letter can be dated within months, maybe weeks of his death (4:21). Clearly these are Paul's final words to a servant-leader and a generation of servant-leaders who must "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

2 Timothy has only four chapters. The first chapter includes a customary greeting and an extended and inspirational encouragement to Timothy. Chapters 2, 3, and the first part of 4 make up the body and thrust of Paul's heart for this servant-leader.

One of the very best ways to understand the logic and flow of any passage is to do some basic Bible study methods. We must get thoroughly acquainted with the passage.

Read through 2 Timothy three times.

(The text of 2 Timothy is on the next two pages so that you can highlight and mark it up.)

2 Timothy

Using different colored pens, highlight some significant aspects of 2 Timothy.

- ♦ During the first reading, highlight any logic or structural terms (i.e. *therefore, for, that, but, etc.*)
- ♦ During the second reading, highlight the major verbs in each sentence (i.e. *be strong, commit, remember, obtain, be diligent, etc.*).
- ♦ During the third reading, highlight the main ideas of every paragraph. Distinguish between the main ideas of the passage and subordinate ideas (i.e. *But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of....I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ....., etc.*).

1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, ²To Timothy, a beloved son: Grace, mercy, *and* peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. ³I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as *my* forefathers *did*, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day, ⁴greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy, ⁵when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also. ⁶Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. ⁷For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. ⁸Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, ⁹who has saved us and called *us* with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, ¹⁰but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, *who* has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, ¹¹to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. ¹²For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day. ¹³Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. ¹⁵This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. ¹⁶The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain; ¹⁷but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very zealously and found *me*. ¹⁸The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day—and you know very well how many ways he ministered *to me* at Ephesus.

2:1 You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ²And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. ³You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. ⁴No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of *this* life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. ⁵And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. ⁶The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops. ⁷Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things. ⁸Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, ⁹for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, *even* to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained. ¹⁰Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. ¹¹*This is* a faithful saying: For if we died with *Him*, We shall also live with *Him*. ¹²If we endure, We shall also reign with *Him*. If we deny *Him*, He also will deny us. ¹³If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself. ¹⁴Remind *them* of these things, charging *them* before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers. ¹⁵Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. ¹⁶But shun profane *and* idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. ¹⁷And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, ¹⁸ who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some. ¹⁹Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: “The Lord knows those who are His,” and, “Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” ²⁰But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. ²¹Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work. ²²Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those

who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. ²³But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. ²⁴And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, ²⁵in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, ²⁶and *that* they may come to their senses *and escape* the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

3:1 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ²For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! ⁶For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, ⁷always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁸Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; ⁹but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was. ¹⁰But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, ¹¹persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of *them* all the Lord delivered me. ¹²Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. ¹³But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. ¹⁴But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*, ¹⁵and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

4:1 I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: ²Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. ³For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. ⁵But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. ⁶For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. ⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing. ⁹Be diligent to come to me quickly; ¹⁰for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica—Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia. ¹¹Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry. ¹²And Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. ¹³Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come—and the books, especially the parchments. ¹⁴Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works. ¹⁵You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words. ¹⁶At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them. ¹⁷But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and *that* all the Gentiles might hear. Also I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. ¹⁸And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve *me* for His heavenly kingdom. To Him *be* glory forever and ever. Amen! ¹⁹Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. ²⁰Erastus stay in Corinth, but Trophimus I have left in Miletus sick. ²¹Do your utmost to come before winter. Eubulus greets you, as well as Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brethren. ²²The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Grace be with you. Amen.

✱ What are the main themes of 2 Timothy? _____

✱ Write down the main idea of this Book. Do your very best to describe the “heart” of Paul’s message in 2 Timothy.

“Title” These main sections of 2 Timothy 2:1—4:5...

- ◆ _____ (2:1-13)
- ◆ _____ (2:14-26)
- ◆ _____ (3:1—4:5)

Memory Verses

Verses to Memorize → →

“You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit them to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

(2 Timothy 2:1-2)

HARDSHIPS OF A SERVANT-LEADER

Case Study: You have joined the church and are very excited about ministry and serving the Lord with all your heart. Someone has asked you to help lead a ministry that is full of potential yet has struggled for the past 5 years to have any significance. You join the team with joy and enthusiasm and within 3 months you discover why this ministry has struggled. Several members of the “team” quickly put you in your “place.” They shoot down your ideas, and they are easily threatened by your passion. Your fleshly response is to leave this team and ministry. You see very little hope or encouragement in the future and you wonder why you should endure this type of challenge when you can always go somewhere else. You can avoid the pain and be more effective at the same time.

✱ **What do you do?** _____

You do not need to be in ministry long to discover that pain, hurt, disappointment, and discouragement will become longtime acquaintances. Paul introduces a truth to us that has no wiggle room. He states emphatically, “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12). Yet every time you hear that verse recited, in your heart you always thought the persecution would come from outside the church. Some of the greatest pain and disappointment you will every feel as a servant-leader will come from those within the church.

✱ **What are some common responses when hardship, pain, and discouragement come our way?** _____

✱ **What title did you supply for 2 Timothy 2:1-13?(pg. 48)** _____

When you studied 2 Timothy 2:1-13, you probably highlighted some of these exhortations.... “be strong....endure....competes....hardworking....” Paul was very acquainted with the pain of ministry (2 Corinthians 11:22-29), yet on the verge of death, he exhorts his young friend to “be strong, endure, compete, etc.”

✱ **What reasons does Paul give us to endure hardships? (2 Timothy 2:1-13)**

✱ **What is at stake?** _____

Paul makes it very clear what motivates him to get up each and every day and endure what comes his way. He states, “Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (2:10).

A little help...

A basic way to divide 2 Timothy 2:1-4:5 is:

- ◆ Hardship of a Servant-Leader (2:1-13)
- ◆ Faithfulness of a Servant-Leader (2:14-26)
- ◆ Word of a Servant-Leader (3:1-4:6)

✱ **When we are enduring hardships, how often do we think about those to whom Christ has called us to minister?** _____

✱ **Why is this hard?** _____

Write down 5 people that God has put under your care.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

✱ **What is at stake in these individuals' lives if you do not endure hardship?**

In 2 Timothy 2:12b, "If we deny Him, He also will deny us", is Paul talking about eternal life or rewards? What in the context and structure indicates this?

Paul goes on to quote a creed of the early church, "This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself" (2:11-13).

✱ **Why did Paul include this creed in the flow of his argument?** _____

Some verses to help...

Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

—2 Corinthians 4:16-18

✱ **What other motivation does it offer to those who faithfully endure hardship?** _____

Don't underestimate how deeply discouraged even the most mature Christians can get when hardships strike. At any time, our teammates in the ministry can be right in the middle of these frustrating times. Pain, hurt, disappointment, and discouragement will become longtime acquaintances for anyone who decides to take on this glorious ministry and calling of Christ Jesus. The great encouragement that Paul offers is that it is not about us. It is about those who "may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." We are human sacrifices in order that many may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus.

God's generous offer to us servant-leaders:

"If we endure, we shall also reign with Him!"

Our Savior endured great suffering and will one day reign. Those servant-leaders who endure will also reign with Him. Christ promises, "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne" (Rev. 3:21). One of the many promises to those who endure is sharing the actual throne with our Lord and King Jesus and reigning with Him.

FAITHFULNESS OF A SERVANT-LEADER

Why do we celebrate those who have faithfully served the Lord Jesus Christ all of their lives?

We are so excited for those who come to the end of their lives as “approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed” because it is so rare. The unfortunate reality is that many who begin the journey of servant-leadership do not finish well.

The truth is that there are so many ways you and I can be sidetracked! Some of us might be sidetracked as we read these words.

✿ **What did you title 2 Timothy 2:14-26?(pg. 48)** _____

2 Timothy 2:14-26 describes some tempting obstacles that can easily ensnare us.

✿ **What are they?** _____

Paul spends an extended time contrasting the direction that Timothy is going and the direction that the false teachers have gone.

- ◆ Timothy is one moving towards diligently presenting him “approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”
- ◆ The false teachers in Ephesus “strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers....profane and idle babblings for they will increase to more ungodliness.....and they overthrow the faith of some.”

Timothy’s doctrine and adherence to the Word of God is paramount, but his lifestyle is just as effective in combating false teachers. Paul describes how one can become “a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.”

✿ **What does Paul ask Timothy to “flee” and to “pursue”?** _____

The “youthful lusts” that Timothy may have struggled with include prideful and unproductive arguing (vss. 14, 16, 23-25).

✿ **In what ways do you struggle with the same things?** _____

The Apostle John describes other youthful and immature “lusts.”

John describes what “lusts” take down servant-leaders on a daily basis.

Read 1 John 2:15-17.

✿ **What is “the lust of the flesh”?** _____

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

—1 John 2:15-17

What is your besetting struggle with “the lust of the flesh”? Is it...

- ◆ Fantasizing about someone who is not your wife or husband?
- ◆ Feeding the “flesh” with pornographic materials?
- ◆ Overindulging in food or binge eating?
- ◆ Entertaining thoughts and images that are not of God?
- ◆ Talking and interacting with others in a way that is inappropriate sexually?
- ◆ “Medicating” through buying things?
- ◆ “Medicating” through an obsession with sports?

✱ **What is “the lust of the eyes?”** _____

What is your besetting struggle with “the lust of the eyes”? Is it...

- ◆ Coveting someone’s place in life?
- ◆ Coveting someone’s things (house, car, financial situation, etc.)?
- ◆ Coveting someone’s job, occupation, circumstances?
- ◆ Coveting someone’s personality, looks, demeanor, etc.?

✱ **What is “the pride of life?”** _____

What is your besetting struggle with “the pride of life”? Is it valuing...

- ◆ Job/occupation over Christ?
- ◆ Status and popularity over Christ?
- ◆ Finances and assets over Christ?
- ◆ Degrees over Christ?
- ◆ Recognition over Christ?
- ◆ Your children’s success over Christ?
- ◆ “Security” over Christ?

Paul then concludes 2 Timothy 2, describing a servant-leaders attitude towards false teachers.

✱ **What is Paul’s strategy towards those who “have been taken captive?”** _____

✱ **What is the goal of these loving confrontations?** _____

Case Study: You’re sitting in a small group and like any small group there are one or two who really like to be heard. Unfortunately, one of the members who enjoys talking has made some subtle comments that challenge the deity of Christ. Each time he speaks you feel more and more uncomfortable with what he says and the lack of response from the group to confront the error in his thinking. Part of the problem is that people fear his reaction to any correction that may come his way so, in typical Christian fashion, people avoid tension and pretend the problem does not exist.

✱ **What is your next step?** _____

✱ **And the steps after that?** _____

A little help...

Lust of the flesh

Purely human desires, desires characterized only by that which is “flesh” and generally involving sensual pleasure.

Lust of the eyes

What people see and covet

Pride of life

Those things we find “pride” in or security in outside of God. Things of this world that generate sinful pride.

THE WORD OF A SERVANT-LEADER

Case Study: You have a neighbor you have been praying for. She has recently trusted in Christ for salvation and is cautiously excited about her new faith. Now that she is in Christ, your desire is that she would recognize that she is in sin by living with her boyfriend. You are very hesitant to confront this young believer because of all the misunderstanding that could arise. She is entrenched in this relationship and it would be a radical work of God to get her to move out. You are discouraged at how the truth of her circumstance will negatively impact this young and impressionable believer. She may reject you and Christ altogether because of her loyalty to her sin.

✿ **How do you handle this delicate situation? How can it go wrong?** _____

As a servant-leader it is very important to realize that this scenario will be played out over and over in your lifetime. Your life must be characterized by grace and kindness, but one area we must be totally and absolutely resolved in is our commitment to God's truth.

Paul makes it abundantly clear what the result is when a life is not committed to God's truth. He states, "For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3:2-4). This is the world, left to its own devices and ignorant and arrogant towards God's directives and protection. It's a poignant picture of the world in which we live.

✿ **What title did you give for 2 Timothy 3 (pg. 48)?** _____

Several times in 2 Timothy 3, Paul highlights the suffering of those who teach sound doctrine. Paul uses his life as an example of suffering for teaching the authoritative Word of God.

In 2 Timothy 3:10-12, Paul highlights his experiences in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra.

Paul's experiences in these cities are recorded in Acts 13:13—14:26. Read through these three narratives in the Book of Acts and then determine the "price" Paul had to pay for his commitment to God's truth.

◆ **Antioch**

◆ **Iconium**

◆ **Lystra**

Paul exhorts Timothy and all servant-leaders to follow “my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions....” Again Paul describes how we can follow in his footsteps and be an antidote to this type of behavior and world described in 3:1-9. 2 Timothy 3:13-17 describes the uncompromised and authoritative tool in ministry.

✱ **As you think through the “case study” of your neighbor (pg. 53), where does your hope rest according to 2 Timothy 3:13-17?** _____

The primary tool in ministry is the Holy Scripture. It is the authoritative voice of God.

✱ **How is Scripture profitable?** _____

Read 2 Timothy 4:1-5.

✱ **What motivation does Paul give to Timothy to preach the Word?** _____

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables” (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

✱ **Why will people not endure sound doctrine?** _____

A little help...

Doctrine—Truths about who God is and who we are.

Reproof—Truths that expose sin and error (behaviors that need to stop).

Correction—Truths that get one back on the right path (behaviors that need to begin).

Instruction in righteousness—Overall new outlook in life. This may be a summary statement of doctrine, reproof, and correction.

Paul seems to be speaking of a day in the future.

✱ **Has that day come?** _____

✱ **How so?** _____

As was described in the previous section, teachers of the Word must be “gentle... patient....in humility correcting” (3:24, 25). However, we must never compromise the truth of God. As ministers of Christ Jesus, our only hope and security is found in our allegiance to His Word. It is important to realize that this is accompanied by suffering and rejection.

TALKING TO GOD: Pause for a moment and spend some time praying to the One “who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom.” Pray that you will be a man or woman who will “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.”

WHAT ARE YOU AFRAID OF?

It is not difficult to get an accurate picture of how Paul feels about Timothy. Paul's paternal and genuine confidence comes through clearly in 2 Timothy 1:3-7 and in his entrusting of Timothy to the church in Philippi in Philippians 2:19-24.

Read Philippians 2:19-24.

✱ According to Paul, why is he sending Timothy to the church in Philippi?

When we read these types of commendations from Paul about Timothy we assume that this guy has it all together. Yet we know that Timothy struggled with the same issues that many servant-leaders do.

Read 2 Timothy 1:3-7:

✱ What do you think Timothy was struggling with? _____

To the Corinthian church, Paul commands the believers to treat Timothy in such a way that he would not fear: "And if Timothy comes, see that he may be with you without fear; for he does the work of the Lord, as I also do" (1 Corinthians 16:10). Timothy, like many of us, was plagued with fear and anxiety especially in the face of such daunting ministry challenges. The "spirit of fear" is a significant and powerful agent in the life of a servant-leader.

✱ What are your three greatest fears in ministry?

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Paul exhorts Timothy, "Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (1:6-7). Timothy was immobilized by fear to the extent that Paul has to remind him of his ordination and gifting by the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul reminds him that the "spirit of fear" that he wrestles with was not given to Timothy from God. However, the power of the Holy Spirit was given from God and Timothy can be empowered with love and a sound mind.

✱ How is fear outweighed by the power, love, and sound mind that Paul is describing? _____

As a minister of the gospel, it is very important to realize that "fear" is not the sin. As long as we occupy our fleshly bodies, we will struggle with fleshly emotions.

But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel. Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me. But I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly.

—Philippians 2:19-24

A little help...

Sophronismos ("sound mind") describes a man who is balanced and has come to his senses (Mark 5:15), someone who is thinking "straight," with humility (Romans 15:3).

However, these fears are not rooted in God nor His confidence in us. God has given us a Spirit of power. In fact the same power that raised Christ from the dead is working in us (Philippians 3:10). The love of Christ and for His children compels us to do fearful things for the sake of the Gospel. A sound mind speaks truth to our hearts about the eternal reality of our adequacy in Christ. God is totally and utterly confident in us because He is the One who is at work in us. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant (2 Corinthians 3:5-6).

MY LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

- ✿ What do you want your disciples to know about the hardships of a servant-leader?

A little help...

The discipler should fill out this section for the one he is discipling. The one being disciplined should fill it out for someone they listed on page 48. These are life truths and passions that you would like to pass on to your close friend in Christ. Take time to share these personal truths with one another.

- ✿ What do you want your disciple to know about the importance of faithfulness to Christ and His mission?

- ✿ What do you want your disciple to know about the certainty of God's Word in the life and ministry of a servant-leader?

GOD'S AUTHORSHIP OF A SERVANT

Lesson 5

OVERVIEW

- ◆ Sovereign Beginnings
- ◆ Biography of Paul and Jeremiah
- ◆ Who Are You and Where Have You Come From?
- ◆ Life Timeline
- ◆ Our Pain Is Not in Vain!

SOVEREIGN BEGINNINGS

What an amazing truth sovereignty is. To realize that God Almighty has a plan, a good plan, and I am involved in it! The first chapter in Ephesians describes the powerful might and gracious heart of God to include us in His plans.

Read Ephesians 1:3-14.

According to this passage, God's sovereign hand was very active in our salvation and calling.

◆ **How many terms or phrases indicate His sovereignty and control?** _____

◆ **According to this section, what has God done for us?** _____

Despite the truth of your sinful choices, disappointments, and difficulty, it is extremely important to embrace that God has brought you to this point of being His son or daughter in Christ, but also has chosen you as a servant-leader for your church.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-2:5 .

◆ **Who are God's chosen instruments?** _____

◆ **Why?** _____

◆ **How did Paul exemplify this truth?** _____

Is it uncomfortable and unsettling to consider that you are God's choice prize or instrument? When I glory I do not glory in my flesh but in the opportunity to be a part of what God is doing.

A little help....

The Christians in Corinth didn't understand who God's dream team was either. The Corinthians were impressed with the "beautiful," the "powerful," the "noble," and the "strong." Paul had gotten news from Chloe's house that there were divisions arising among the Corinthian believers (1:11). These divisions were rooted in a loyalty to personality rather than a loyalty to Christ and His church. The Corinthians were glorifying men, not Christ. They were inclined as we are to follow strong personalities, charisma, and the beautiful rather than keep our focus on Christ, His mission, and Church. The depth of Greek philosophy combined with their pagan background distorted their view of wisdom, power, and strength. This message of salvation through a dead Jew on a Roman cross was just foolishness to the culture in Corinth. The bottom line was that the Christians in Corinth didn't understand who God's dream team was and why it was assembled.

Friends, I am a miracle of God and so are you! We are absolutely correct in saying we don't have the tools, the charisma, the personality, or the strength to fulfill our ministry and calling. Amen! Who cares? God does! He has everything we need! We are God's dream team, every messed up one of us, and we must not succumb to that lie from the pit of hell that God can't use us!

TALKING TO GOD: Pause for a moment and spend some time praying to the One who has delighted in using you to accomplish His purposes. Pray that you will be a man or woman who will minister in confidence and relish every opportunity He gives you as His jar of clay.

Memory Verses:

Verses to memorize → →

In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

(Ephesians 1:11-12)

BIOGRAPY OF PAUL AND JEREMIAH

Studying the biographies of very significant servants of Christ Jesus can be extremely useful and encouraging. Seeing the grace of Christ manifest itself upon a human life is a breathtaking experience. In this section we will investigate two lives: The Apostle Paul who was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write 16 out of the 27 New Testament books, and the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah who is not as well known.

These two saints are recognized as essential servant-leaders in the trajectory of the Judeo-Christian faith. It is in their lives and development that we can see God's sovereign and powerful hand.

Paul's life:

Family Heritage/Educational Background

- ♦ Tarsus is the place of Paul's birth and is located a few miles inland from the Mediterranean in Cilicia.
- ♦ Having grown up in a Jewish family (his father a Roman citizen) meant that Paul was well trained in the Jewish Scriptures and tradition (Acts 26:4-8; Phil. 3:5-6)
- ♦ Paul eventually went to Jerusalem to study under the famous rabbi, Gamaliel who was the best teacher of the day (Acts 22:3). Philippians reveals some of Paul's remarkable pedigree: "circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Phil. 3:5-6).

Occupation/Cultural Influence

- ♦ Paul by trade was learned in the art of "tent making" which he later used as a means of sustenance (Acts 18:3).
- ♦ At an early age, Paul learned to read and write by copying Hebrew Scripture. He learned the Hebrew language and probably spoke Aramaic at home with his parents. As Paul grew older, he learned the Greek language as he was exposed to the larger Greco-Roman culture.

✱ How do we see God's authorship in Paul's early life? _____

Conversion Experience

- ♦ As a zealous Pharisee, Paul gathered warrants to arrest Jewish people who had accepted Jesus as the Messiah. As Paul neared Damascus, he encountered the Lord Jesus Christ in a way that would transform his life forever (Acts 9:1-5).
- ♦ Blinding and humbling Paul, Christ confronts and converts the chief persecutor of the Christian movement. Christ sends Paul to Damascus to receive his sight back and to be discipled by Ananias and then by Barnabas (Acts 9:6-22).

Call to Preach Christ to the Gentiles

- ♦ To King Agrippa, Paul explains Christ's call on his life to the Gentiles, "I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me" (Acts 26:17-18).
- ♦ After 3 missionary journeys (1st [Acts 13-14], 2nd [Acts 16-18], 3rd [Acts 18-21]) and 16 New Testament books, the Apostle Paul is beheaded in Rome around 65 AD.

Something you should know:

Emperor Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome around 50 AD and Gallio served as Proconsul of Corinth in 51 AD. Paul's life timeline is reconstructed around these two times.

Read Philippians 3:5-11.

✱ What is Paul trying to communicate to us servant-leaders concerning our pedigree and accomplishments? _____

Having listed his pedigree and accomplishments, Paul counts them as loss. Not only are they useless, but his trust in them is a liability to his new life and calling. All these areas of fleshly confidence have lost the value they once had in comparison to knowing Christ. Paul basically makes up a phrase. It's the only time it is ever used. It reflects his intense passion over this subject. "***The excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.***" The point is that, for Paul, knowing Christ was of more value than *anything* else in his heritage and more precious to him than *anything* else in his present experience.

✱ What are the achievements in your life that you need to count as loss in comparison to Christ? _____

✱ Why do we struggle in counting these points of pride and confidence as loss? _____

In this next section of Scripture, Paul describes his confidence. The church in Corinth had been infiltrated by false teachers who prided themselves on their Jewish heritage and they placed great value on spiritual knowledge and experience that were only accessible to gifted teachers.

Read 2 Corinthians 11:22-30 and see how Paul combats the false teachers and where his confidence lies as a servant-leader.

✱ Why does Paul boast about his sufferings and not his accomplishments?

Paul develops this theme further in the next chapter. Christ told Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). As far as Paul was concerned, his qualifications as an apostle did not come in his accomplishments, successes or comfort. It was his troubles, difficulties, and suffering that showed the power of Christ in his life and ministry. Wow!

✱ What troubles, difficulties, and suffering are you facing in ministry right now? Or in the past 12 months? _____

✱ **How does this pain demonstrate the power of Christ in your life and ministry?** _____

Jeremiah's life:

The "Weeping Prophet," Jeremiah demonstrates this principle of pain and weakness profoundly. The prophet Jeremiah led the people of Israel during one of the most discouraging times in Israel's history. Jeremiah wrote both the Book of Jeremiah and Lamentations and is very honest about the turmoil in his heart concerning his call to prophetic ministry. God's message of judgment and the coming destruction of the land was very frustrating and overwhelming to Jeremiah.

Family Heritage/Educational Background

- ◆ Jeremiah's father, Hilkiah, was a member of the Levitical priesthood and lived in Anathoth, a small village about three miles northeast of Jerusalem.
- ◆ Joshua 21 reveals that the descendants of Aaron the priest lived in Anathoth.
- ◆ He may have come from a family of means, which was demonstrated by his ability to buy the estate from the bankrupt kinsman without difficulty.

Occupation/Cultural Influence

- ◆ Jeremiah was from the priestly line, but nothing indicates that he ever entered the priesthood in Jerusalem.
- ◆ God told Jeremiah he could not have a family: "You shall not take a wife, nor shall you have sons or daughters in this place" (Jeremiah 16:2).
- ◆ In Jeremiah's day there was widespread idolatry, rampant immorality, and spiritual decay. There were few godly leaders and a sparse population of believers.
- ◆ His prophetic ministry extended through the reigns of King Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah as well as all three deportations (exiles) of Israelites.

✱ **How do we see God's authorship in Jeremiah's early life?** _____

Call to Be a Prophet

- ◆ As far as God was concerned, there was no doubt that Jeremiah was going to be a prophet. "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations" (Jeremiah 1:5). He was called to be a prophetic spokesman for God to the nations.
- ◆ However, as far as Jeremiah was concerned there was much doubt and concern over this call. This is Jeremiah's response to his call: "Then said I: 'Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth'" (Jeremiah 1:6).
- ◆ God explains the divine authority that Jeremiah will possess: "'Do not be afraid of their faces, For I am with you to deliver you,' says the LORD. Then the LORD put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me: 'Behold, I have put My words in your mouth. See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, To root out and to pull down, To destroy and to throw down, To build and to plant'" (Jeremiah 1:8-10).

Jeremiah's fear was that of failing and not being good enough. How many times as servant-leaders has this emotion shot through our bodies? How many times have we said, "Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth!"

As God did with Paul, He does with Jeremiah, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Read the final words of Jeremiah's commission in Jeremiah 1:17-19.

"Therefore prepare yourself and arise, and speak to them all that I command you. Do not be dismayed before their faces, lest I dismay you before them. For behold, I have made you this day a fortified city and an iron pillar, and bronze walls against the whole land— against the kings of Judah, against its princes, against its priests, and against the people of the land. They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you. For I am with you," says the LORD, "to deliver you."

—Jeremiah 1:17-19

✿ **What are God's promises to Jeremiah, especially in adversity?** _____

✿ **How did these promises give him the confidence to fulfill his extremely difficult call as a prophet?** _____

✿ **In what specific areas of your ministry is God's strength being made perfect in your weakness?** _____

✿ **How is it true of your situation that God's grace is sufficient for you?** _____

WHO ARE YOU AND WHERE HAVE YOU COME FROM?

Life Timeline: One of the main tools we will utilize is something we will call the “Life Timeline.” This tool will give us a picture of God’s sovereign hand in our lives, the joyous and painful aspects of our journey, the events and people who have been formative in our lives, and significant steps and experiences that have led us to this point.

Our hope and prayer is that considerable time and emotion will be spent developing this Life Timeline. This process will reveal and usher in a great deal of understanding of God’s grace and authorship of your life and ministry. It will give opportunity for your discipleship group to gain insight into how God works in other people’s lives as well as positive and negative influences in your life. It really answers the question, How has God brought you to this point?

Here is how we want it structured. We will divide the Timeline into 6 major sections that will deal with similar questions. First think through these questions, and in the next section we will ask you to display the information on the Life Timeline in a way that brings clarity and understanding.

Birth:

Place and date of birth?

Describe the “home” you were born into (family dynamics).

- ◆ What were mom and dad like? Positives? Negatives?
- ◆ What role did you fill in family dynamics (peace maker, leader, black sheep, joker, chameleon, etc.)?
- ◆ Was there mostly peace or lots of turmoil?
- ◆ What was the spiritual climate?

Describe the personality you were born with (Oftentimes we are a combination.)

- ◆ Sanguine (talker/people person)
- ◆ Choleric (worker/leader)
- ◆ Melancholy (thinker/details)
- ◆ Phlegmatic (easygoing/patient/steady)

Other ways you would describe your personality?

Childhood/Teenage Years:

What schools and churches did you attend?

How would you describe your spiritual life during this period?

Significant influences or influencers on your life.

What was the positive/negative impact of friends?

What was the positive/negative impact of family?

What were some of your strengths during these years?

How did you struggle? What trials did you face? Fears? Besetting sins?

Adult Life

How did your college years affect you? What was your experience?

What vocation has God called you to? What jobs have you been involved in? Churches and Education experiences?

Significant influences or influencers on your life (include wife/husband if applicable).

Describe your spiritual journey during this stage of your life.

What was the positive/negative impact of friends?

What was the positive/negative impact of family?

What were some of your strengths during these years?

How did you struggle? What trials did you face? Fears? Besetting sins?

Something you should know:

The idea of the Life Timeline comes from Robert Clinton’s book, Making of a Leader and the Spiritual Formation material from Dallas Theological Seminary.

Something you should know:

Putting together your Life Timeline may become a painful experience. Most of us have had some very difficult times in our lives that we are not excited to revisit. Take time to pray that God would give His grace and healing touch during this process.

Please contact your leader if you need help!

Conversion

What were the people/events that led you to Christ?

Why were you attracted to Christ?

What changes has Christ caused in you?

Calling to be a Servant-Leader

Significant Christian influences or influencers on your life?

Your Christian passions

- ◆ What's important to you spiritually?

- ◆ What do you get excited to "pass on" to other Christians?

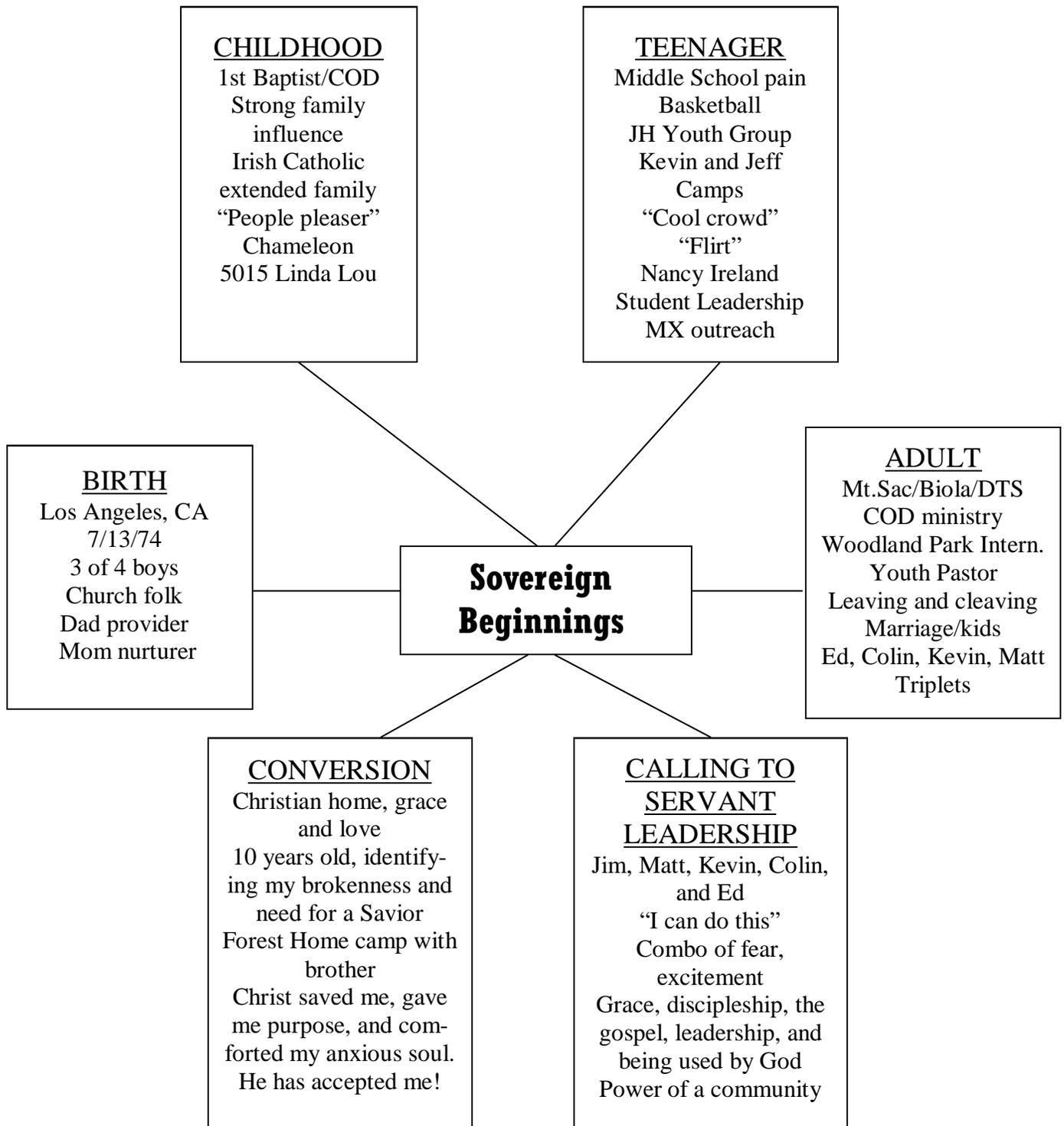
How do you want to invest your time and energy as a servant-leader?

What are your strengths as a servant-leader? Spiritual gifts?

What are your weaknesses as a servant-leader?

What is your attitude towards the Body of Christ (church)?

LIFE TIMELINE (example)



Display the “content” of your “Life Timeline” on a diagram. Structure it however you want, be creative. Abbreviate the answers to the questions using symbols, words, and short phrases.

YOUR LIFE TIMELINE

After you present your “life timeline” to your discipleship group, your group should be given permission to ask “follow-up” questions about your life story.

Some possible follow-up questions:

- ◆ How does your life relate to Paul or Jeremiah’s life?
- ◆ Paul had Gamaliel to mentor and challenge him. Who are the Gamliels in your life?
- ◆ Paul had his Jewish/Pharisee heritage. Jeremiah had his priestly heritage. What heritage did you have that led to your calling as a servant-leader?
- ◆ What was your “Damacus Road” experience?
- ◆ What historical events shaped you?
- ◆ Jeremiah’s disadvantage was that he couldn’t speak and he was young. Paul felt limited by his “thorn” in his flesh. What do you see as your disabilities?

OUR PAIN IS NOT IN VAIN!

At times as servant-leaders we wonder what God is doing. We wonder why we are having to endure such pain, disappointment and frustration in ministry. I'm sure the Apostle Paul and the Prophet Jeremiah endured many of these moments. On those dark days in those lonely hours we ask, *does our pain have meaning? Does our suffering have purpose?*

The Book of Romans was written by the Apostle Paul in Corinth on his third missionary journey (around 56-57 AD) to both Jewish and Gentile believers in Rome. In Rome, Christians were under Nero's reign and there was increasing hostility and persecution towards the Christians both from Rome and the Jews. There was very little protection and heavy taxation—a great deal of suffering. Under Nero's rule it was very painful to be a Christian. At the end of Nero's reign, Christians were put on stakes and lit on fire and used as light for Nero's dinner parties. Others were covered with the hide of wild beasts and were torn apart by animals. Both Paul and Peter were probably killed under Nero.

Paul prophetically highlights the types of suffering Christians will endure in Rome: tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and sword. As you can imagine, the Roman Christians felt and would feel much disorientation because of their suffering. These suffering Christians were asking many questions, one of them was, *What's the purpose?* In their suffering, Roman Christians felt alone, fearful, and disoriented.

✱ **As you think through your life-timeline, which you just completed, what do you think was the purpose of your suffering?** _____

God causes all things to work together for our advantage! The events of our lives are no accident, God is working them out for our good!

Read Romans 8:28 several times.

✱ **Why do we say that God causes all things to work together for our advantage?** _____

In light of the verses before and after, it is God who is working here. God is the subject. What about the "all things"? The "things" of the "all things" may not be good themselves, but God is the orchestrator. He is harmonizing. He is blending all of our experiences in such a way as to produce that which is good to our advantage.

✱ **According to Romans 8:28, who does He do this for?** _____

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

—Romans 8:28

A little help...

This is addressed to those who have trusted Christ as Savior and are God's children and are loved by Him and respond by loving Him. God is not saying that only in those moments when you are "truly loving God" do things work together for good. Paul is explaining that God causes all things to work together for those who are in Christ.

Read Romans 8:29-30 several times.

Before you read the definitions below take your best shot!

✿ What's the difference between "foreknew...predestined...(and) called?" _____

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified (Romans 8:29-30).

For whom He foreknew...It is possible that foreknew or foreknowledge can actually mean *foreordination* or *choice ahead of time*, how the NKJV translates it in 1 Peter 1:20. The word then becomes synonymous with *election* or *predestination*. It is very tempting to add theology to this term, but we must stick to its basic meaning. For our purposes today we will define "foreknew" as God's intimate and active knowledge ahead of time (Acts 26:5; Romans 8:29; 11:2; 1 Peter 1:20; 2 Peter 3:17).

He also predestined...A very appropriate way to define predestined is, "The plan God has prepared for His children." God's predetermined plan (Acts 4:27-30, 1 Corinthians 2:6-9, Ephesians 1:3-12).

These He also called...God has called us Christians in the sense that He has pursued us to be apart of His family (Romans 1:1, 6-7, 4:17, 9:11, 11:29).

These He also justified...Romans 5:1 states, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Justification is the legal term for God the Father, declaring us righteous because of our faith in Christ (Romans 2:13, 5:1-2).

These He also glorified...To be glorified is the end result, it's the finish line it is all that we have been praying and hoping for all of our Christian lives. Glorification is when we become everything that God has purposed us to be! Our full adoption as sons and daughters, redemption of our bodies, set free from the corruption of sin and death, etc. (8:17-25, 1 Cor. 15). "For I consider the suffering of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18).

According to these definitions, let me paraphrase verses 29-30:

Through God's intimate and active knowledge ahead of time, He planned how to conform His children to be like Jesus Christ (the resurrected and glorified Christ will be the leader of these transformed Christians). In order for God to plan this out for His children, He pursued them to become His family, those He pursued to become His family, He declared righteous because of their faith in Christ. Those He declared righteous, will become everything that God has planned Christians to be.

Purposeful suffering...

In Genesis Joseph said to his brothers, "You meant it for evil but God meant it for good!" That's not just Joseph's story, it is our story as well. Our pain, our agonies, our suffering are tools, instruments, stepping-stones used by God to do us good. Outside of this truth our suffering is pure chaos. If our suffering has no purpose we begin to medicate and distract and avoid reality at all cost. If our suffering has no purpose we are left with confusion, anxiety, and fear.

Don't forget Lesson 2...

We must not forget what is communicated right before Romans 8:28-30: "Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God." When suffering hits, we are disoriented, frustrated, and hurting, but in that pain we are called as Christians to pray. We pray our heart and we pray for the things we think we need, and as we do that (simultaneously) the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us and Jesus Christ takes those groanings and intercedes for us perfectly. Especially in our suffering, we truly don't know what we need, God says, "Don't worry about it. Pray your heart, pray your pain and the Holy Spirit will pray simultaneously for you and Jesus will intercede perfectly for you." That's why Jesus can say, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full (John 16:23-24). That's why James can say, "You do not have because you do not ask" (James 4:2).

As you think through your life timeline, how have you seen Romans 8:28-30 work out in your own life?

If this doesn't give us purpose, hope, and meaning as leaders, I don't know what will! Although you may have no idea how God is going to redeem a particular situation, He knows and He will redeem it. God causes all things that happen to us in life and ministry to work together for our advantage. His promise is that we are being conformed to Christ and our glorification is assured.

TEAM OF A SERVANT

Lesson 6

OVERVIEW

- ♦ Why Team?
- ♦ Why Spiritual Gifts?
- ♦ Why we run from teams?
- ♦ Love Covers a Multitude of Sins?
- ♦ Humility and Trust
- ♦ What's Important to You?

WHY TEAM?

If you are reading these words it probably means that you have been on a team before, maybe many teams. We have been on teams all of our lives: starting with our families, our little league teams, group projects, committees at church, corporate teams, the list goes on and on. It doesn't take extensive experience on a team to quickly ask the question, WHY TEAM?

From many of our experiences with teams, we may have some intense negative emotions and hurt. We have been disappointed, hurt, and marginalized. Many of the teams we have served on have been ineffective and toxic.

- We have been on teams where individuals have held the team hostage by their abuse, withdrawal, or manipulation.
- We have been on teams that have started off well but ended very poorly, with broken relationships, lost confidence, and a wake of pain and devastation.
- We have been on teams where our primary job is to "listen" and not be heard.
- We have been on teams where no one was functioning in the roles that God had designed for them and it was a recipe for disaster.
- We have been on teams that met together and pretended to work together, but no trust, no relationship, no cooperation took place.

✱ **Share some of your experiences of being on a team.** _____

✱ **What scares you about being on a team?** _____

Let's be honest, most of our experiences with team may have been negative. However, as we read through Scripture, we quickly discover that "being on a team" is one of God's greatest priorities for the servant-leader. In fact, according to Scripture, we cannot be all that God designed us to be without a team. It's not only commanded but it is assumed.

One of the very first things that Jesus Christ did in His earthly ministry was to develop and cultivate a team.

Jesus' unique team of 12...

- Peter*
- Andrew*
- James (son of Zebedee)*
- John (son of Zebedee)*
- Philip*
- Bartholomew*
- Thomas*
- Matthew*
- James (son of Alphaeus)*
- Thaddaeus (Judas of James)*
- Simon the Zealot*
- Judas Iscariot*

Read John 1:35-51.

✳ **Why did the Son of God, Co-creator of the Universe, God Almighty need a team?** _____

Jesus compiled a very unlikely and unique team of 12 men who represented a cross-section of the population. They were not the epitome of success, yet Christ saw the potential they had to turn the world upside down because of their relationship to Him and their relationship to one another. The history of Christianity demonstrates the power of this team of disciples and the foresight of our loving Savior to encourage us in this legacy of TEAM.

One of the churches in the New Testament that had much to learn about teamwork was the church in Corinth. There were divisions arising among the Corinthian believers (1:11), and the depth of Greek philosophy combined with their pagan background distorted their view of wisdom, power, and strength. The Corinthian church was more impressed with their leaders than with God, so they chose their own Christian leaders whom they followed as disciples (ch. 1). As a result, their view of TEAM was very distorted and dysfunctional. In 1 Corinthians 12, the Apostle Paul addresses this dysfunction that is tearing their church apart.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-27.

Paul begins by stating, "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all" (vs. 4-7).

Put those 4 verses in your own words:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

✳ **What is Paul trying to communicate?** _____

Although we are gifted differently, there is one objective, one Spirit, one Lord, and one God. These spiritual capacities given by God are for the profit of everyone on the team.

"For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member

but many. If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,' is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,' is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body." (1 Corinthians 12:12-20)

✱ **What happens when we don't realize that God wants us to function in TEAM?** _____

✱ **Who established the TEAM in the first place?** _____

"And the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you'; nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unrepresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually." (1 Corinthians 12:21-27)

✱ **What would happen if we gave up on our TEAM, the Body of Christ?** _____

←←Verse to Memorize

Memory Verse

***But now God has set the members, each one of them,
in the body just as He pleased.***

(1 Corinthians 12:18)

WHY SPIRITUAL GIFTS?

✱ **Growing up, who were your favorite superheroes?** _____

✱ **What “super power” did you envy or want more than anything else in the world?** _____

Was it x-ray vision, the ability to freeze or burn things or read minds? For me I wanted to fly. I know that there are a lot of cool powers you can have but seriously, is there anything better than flying? Just think about it. If you can fly your world has no limits. If you met someone who had the ability to fly but never used it, wouldn't it bother you? Absolutely! You can fly!?! What's the deal? Do something! Use this gift that God gave you! Do good with it! Can you run some errands for me while I'm stuck in traffic?

The overwhelming theme of the Bible concerning spiritual gifts is this: God has given us a gift, and we need to use it!

Several weeks before Christ ascended to the right hand of the Father, He took His disciples to an upper room in Jerusalem and taught the most important lessons they would ever learn. The main Person that is introduced in the Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17) is the third Person of the Trinity, the Helper, the Spirit of Truth, the Holy Spirit. Jesus is so excited to impart the Holy Spirit to His disciples that He says these words, “Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you” (John 16:7).

Christ did ascend and the Holy Spirit descended on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). On that day, the glorious Bride of Christ appeared, a new organism began, and the revolution we call the Church started. This Body consists of every man, woman, and child who has placed their faith in Christ as the One who died for their sins and arose. At that moment we are placed by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). In the Body of Christ, the Church, we as Christians have been spiritually gifted by the Holy Spirit. We are given a gift and God wants us to use it.

There are four passages that develop the doctrine of spiritual giftedness: Romans 12:3-8, 1 Corinthians 12 & 14 (specifically 12:4-11), Ephesians 4:7-16, and 1 Peter 4:10-11. Let's take the time to study these sections:

Read Romans 12:3-8.

✱ **Write down 3 main themes from this section:**

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Paul tells the Roman Christians not to think more highly of themselves than they ought to, but to be sober. As Christians we are many members (individual members with different functions), but we are one body in Christ.

Our humility is tied to the fact that grace was given to us! God has dealt to each one of us unique gifts according to the grace that was given to us. Paul tells us over and over to use the gifts that God has bestowed on our lives for the benefit of the Body of Christ.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-11.

✱ **Write down 3 main themes from this section:**

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Again, Paul lays out some rock solid themes to a congregation in Corinth that is divided and fragmented. There is diversity in giftedness and ministries, but there is a supernatural unity in the Spirit, the Lord, and the same God who works all in all.

The purpose of these gifts is for the profit of the whole Body, not just individuals. Again, it is God who is the divine distributor and orchestrator of these spiritual gifts. He distributes to each one individually as He wills.

Read Ephesians 4:7-16.

✱ **Write down 3 main themes from this section:**

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Are you noticing any overlap in these three passages?

God is the One who is the Gift-giver. He is the One who imparts these gifts as He wills and He is a good, gracious, and strategic Gift-giver. The purpose of the gifts is to equip the saints, the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ.

The spiritual gifts are necessary to bring the Body to spiritual maturity. This goal and vision is dependent on the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share.

Read 1 Peter 4:10-11.

✱ **Write down 3 main themes from this section:**

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

What do we learn about spiritual gifts from vs. 10-11? Everyone receives at least one spiritual gift to minister to one another in the Body. We must exercise our gifts as good stewards of the amazing and manifold grace that He has given us. God is the One who gives authority, who supplies ability, and all glory goes to Him.

There are times in ministry when a spiritual gift void exists. We can think of examples of where a certain spiritual gift would be vital for a ministry to succeed, yet this particular gift is nowhere to be found.

✳ **What do we do in this situation?** _____

One of our associate pastors, Colin McDougall, has an interesting testimony when it comes to the typical ways we have viewed spiritual gifts:

I was never born to be a pastor. In fact the heart for pastoral ministry and the gifting was simply not in me. So when God gave my wife Becca and me a burden for people in Kenya who did not know Jesus and did not have a church in their area, I felt hopeless about helping them plant churches. How could anyone plant churches without the pastoral gift?

Becca's solution was simple and direct as usual: "Why don't we just ask God to give you the gift?" Well we did pray, and He did give the gift, and in the grace of that gift we planted churches for sixteen years. Recently a number of people have confirmed to me that the pastoral gift is the strongest of the gifts God has given me to exercise. Maybe that is because I know it is a gift; maybe it is just very plain to me that it flows from Christ in me and not from any natural ability or inclination.

Serving God out of His gift of grace has made the hard work of the ministry a great joy. It is also a comfort and encouragement to me that God gives spiritual gifts to those who ask for them. Jesus reminds us to "ask and keep on asking...keep on seeking...keep on knocking...because everyone who asks receives" (Luke 11:9). Jesus goes on to say that God is much more generous with us than we are even with our own children, so "how much more will your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?" Ask and keep on asking. God will pour out His Spirit and the spiritual gift of revival on our nation if we ask Him to.

✳ **Do you believe that God gives spiritual gifts to those who ask for them? Why or why not?** _____

WHY WE RUN FROM TEAMS

There are obviously appropriate times to leave a team.

✱ **Name 3 appropriate (positive/good) reasons to leave a team.**

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

It could be that God is moving you in a whole new ministry direction. It could be that you are literally leaving the area and need to find a new church. It could be that your "plate" is too full and you have to shift your priorities to another team (your family, etc.).

However, most of the time when we leave a team it has very little to do with any of those reasons. Most of the time we leave a team because of pain.

✱ **Without using names or too many details, describe 2 ministry team situations that made you run or want to run (first situation on this page and another situation on the next page).**

1) _____

In your opinion, why was this team dysfunctional? _____

What part did you play in the dysfunction? _____

What could you have done differently? _____

What do you think the result of those actions would have been? _____

Looking back, would it be worth it? Why or why not? _____

Now, talk about a second scenario with another team.

2) _____

In your opinion, why was this team dysfunctional? _____

What part did you play in the dysfunction? _____

What could you have done differently? _____

What do you think the result of those actions would have been? _____

Looking back, would it be worth it? Why or why not? _____

LOVE COVERS A MULTITUDE OF SINS

Possibly after Paul's execution, Peter exhorts a group of Paul's churches in Asia Minor ("To the pilgrims of dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" [1:1]). In the first epistle of Peter, Peter wants to encourage a persecuted people and give them hope in the midst of many trials. The persecutions of Nero gave these Christians ample opportunity to be discouraged. They were open to attack from the outside as well as the inside.

Read 1 Peter 4:7-11

✱ **Why does Peter begin by reminding his readers that "the end of all things is at hand"?** _____

It is true that Jesus Christ can come and judge us at any time. It is also true that we have a finite amount of time here on earth to glorify God. God has placed us in a team with limited time and resources that we must give an account for. We are exhorted to be serious and watchful in our prayers.

Peter now lays out some supernatural team lessons.

✱ **What are they?**

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____

It is very important to understand that Peter is addressing a Christian's relationship to other Christians. He exhorts us "above all things" to have fervent or "constant" love for one another. The reason is that "love will cover a multitude of sins."

✱ **How does "love cover a multitude of sins"?** _____

✱ **Have you experienced this?** _____

Something you should know:

Hospitality caused "grumbling" in that day because it was costly. There was a severe price and great danger for those who housed itinerant pastors, teachers, or other Christians. It would often incite even more persecution and suffering. For us hospitality is dangerous because we lose our sacred privacy. Yet true hospitality is one of the most effective tools in impacting people for Jesus Christ.

A little help...

Love "covering" is not "covering up." It is not ignoring the sin or living with the sin, but patience and forgiveness in dealing with the transgressions of another Christian or team member. Love deals with the sin but does not allow the transgression to permanently scar the team. Love covers in the sense that it enables us to have authentic fellowship despite sins. Love removes sin's choke hold on relationships.

✿ **What are some typical sins that damage team relationships?**

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

✿ **How could “love cover a multitude of sins” in these situations?**

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Time of Prayer and Renewal:

Find a quiet place (maybe go on a walk, go in the backyard, or go for a drive to a secluded place) and ask God to forgive any sins (specifically confess as many as the Holy Spirit brings to your mind) that you have committed against the teams that God has placed you in.

HUMILITY AND TRUST

There are so many profound leadership principles that can aid us in functioning in a team. However, the two most significant words to remember when we are working in a team are: humility and trust.

They may be the two most difficult goals to reach in all of Christianity. We are prideful, fragile, broken men and women. Humility is a supernatural transformation in our souls. We have been burned, mistreated, misunderstood, and deeply wounded. Trust is a spiritual long shot that can only be accomplished by God Himself.

The Apostle Peter knows well the difficult dynamics of working on a team. In 1 Peter 5:1-11, he reminds each and every one of us what it takes to be a part of this amazing adventure we call a team.

Read 1 Peter 5:1-4.

✳ **What is Peter's chief concern with the elders?** _____

✳ **What should be their motivation to oversee willingly, eagerly, as examples to the flock?** _____

Read 1 Peter 5:5-11.

✳ **Write down 5 principles of relating to one another:**

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

In every team we are a part of, there is leadership—authority that God has placed there. For some of our teams, this leadership is very good; for other teams this leadership is not so good. Peter tells us (who are under authority in these teams) to be submissive and be clothed with humility. He also gives us some motivation, for “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

Ultimately our job is not to protect ourselves but “humble (ourselves) under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.” In this very difficult and often painful process, Peter tells us to develop a discipline of casting cares, “casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you!” God is the great Provider and Vindicator, we are not! We humble ourselves under God's mighty hand, and He will exalt us when the time is right. In this process, when our hearts are full of anger and fear we are called to share our hearts with God (casting our cares) because God in fact cares for us.

Peter also points out the supernatural enemy that seeks to devour Christians. Our enemy is alive and well and knows the power of team and knows our mission as believers. He is described as a “roaring lion” who is on a feeding frenzy.

The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

—1 Peter 5:1-4

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

—1 Peter 5:8-9

✱ Peter tells us to do 4 things:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____

✱ In the context of relationships (and team), why did Peter encourage us to be sober (clear-headed), vigilant (alert), resisting Satan, and steadfast in the faith? _____

Satan delights in turning our teams upside down. He can attack in very subtle ways or very aggressive and obvious ways. Relational conflicts in the Body of Christ often muddy our thinking, so Peter tells us to be sober and clear-headed. We must be alert to the potential attacks, and dangers, and we must be prepared. We resist Satan by refusing to yield to his attack and divisive plan for the team we are serving on. We must be steadfast in the faith and the mission of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are not alone. “Knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.” As Paul says, “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12). Every single one of us who serve, lead, and are involved in teams will suffer deeply and profoundly. Suffering will be a part of our everyday experiences and interaction. We are not alone, our brothers and sisters in Christ are experiencing the same things.

Peter finishes this amazing section of Scripture by reminding us of our mission and our Master’s place in all of this. “But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen” (1 Peter 5:10-11).

We serve a God “of all grace” who has called us to an “eternal glory by Christ Jesus.” After you have suffered, He will “perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.” God is not absent or distant, He is a God of grace, who has an eternal plan of glory of perfecting, establishing, strengthening, and settling us. Our job is to trust His plan and involvement in the difficult and painful seasons of ministry.

WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO YOU?

What's important to you? What is your life about? What are you willing to give up to see God work in very dramatic ways?

There's a man in Scripture who gave up everything the world held dear. He gave up everything that people in his world thought was significant and prestigious. He had stature and recognition in the world and time he lived in.

He said, if anyone's going to have confidence in his flesh in this world, I would be the one. "Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Philippians 3:5)

In his day, the Apostle Paul had it all. **He had it all and he gave it all up. He gladly and joyfully gave it up.**

Why? Why would he possibly give these things up? What made it worth it?

Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death. (Philippians 3:8-10)

All the things that were once important to him and continue to be important to the world, Paul says they are "loss" or "rubbish" (excrement). They were excrement in comparison to the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. They were nothing compared to knowing Christ, being loved by Him, and loving Him in return.

This relationship didn't come from His own doing or "righteousness" but came through faith in Christ. Because of this relationship, we, like Paul have the same power working in us that raised Christ from the dead.

Paul also knows that the same suffering and pain comes to all those who gain Christ. But it is a fellowship and a powerful suffering. We are being conformed to His death and to Him (Rom. 8:28-30).

What's important to you? What is your life about? What are you willing to give up to see God work in very dramatic ways?

Paul counted all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord.

My prayer is that you too "may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death."

God bless you servant-leader on this amazing journey with the Almighty!

Serving in Grace: Review Sheet

1. Subject:	4. Subject:
Memory Verse:	Memory Verse:
Central Truth:	Central Truth:
2. Subject:	5. Subject:
Memory Verse:	Memory Verse:
Central Truth:	Central Truth:
3. Subject:	6. Subject:
Memory Verse:	Memory Verse:
Central Truth:	Central Truth:

PRAYER SHEET

Prayer Requests/Date	God's Answer/Date

