

Bible Studies
on
Matthew

*Food for the Soul & A Delightful
Taste of the Eternity to Come*

Bible Studies

On Matthew

These studies have been written to inspire each one of us to a deeper understanding of our relationship with God. It is my experience that we can never be encouraged enough in this and it is a great joy for me to take part in encouraging each of you. May God bless and strengthen each of you. And may He grant you fresh understanding and awakening as you take the time to study these lessons. It is my prayer that God would make use of this small attempt to spread His light and have requested that His life and wisdom be in these words for my words are nothing unless He is truly in them.

-Seth Petrofsky

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Written by a fellow servant of Jesus Christ

Seth Petrofsky

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Author's Note

These Bible studies are a compilation written
between 2003 and 2010

Words to ponder

I would like to take some time to reflect on why we are following after Jesus and why we should desire His company more than anything else in the whole world.

The first question I would like to ask us is, “Why is it that we seem so little concerned for our souls?” Why is it that Heaven is only a small part of what we might be thinking about in the course of a day? With all of the things that we are taking care of during the day, you’d think Heaven and concern for our souls would still be the top priority. Unfortunately this is rarely what happens. We are lost to the distractions of this life and forget the reality that it is passing away. You see, our priorities are upside-down. We seem to have no shame in trying to glorify ourselves to the rest of the world. We try to dress to be noticed, even if it means going past the boundaries of modesty. We try to own things that others will either envy or at least think well of us if we have them. We like to be recognized by being more extreme than others whether it be to out-smoke, , out-dress, out-smart, or out-do them in some way. Nobody likes to be left behind, or to feel like they are outside the group. All these things will let us down. If we seek to glorify ourselves to others we will never be satisfied. We will always be insecure because of the pressure we are under to “stay ahead of the game”. Self-glorification also makes us prone to being easily offended when people try to give us helpful advice. Even the mildest advice can cause us to react. None of us want people to think badly of us, or to have anyone ruin the opinion we have of ourselves. We are also prone to being easily hurt by people’s words or actions towards us. We tend to misinterpret their meanings because we are so self-conscious. We are trapped in a world that is quite stressful. Jesus, however, desires to free us from our self-glorifying nature and to grant us a humble nature.

Jesus’ nature is one that seeks to glorify God in all things. It is a nature that does not seek to be noticed by the world, but rather, lives to obey God’s rules. It is a nature, which far from trying to be noticed and appreciated and thought well of, desires to be a servant of all. It is a nature that desires to remain unnoticed for everything it does no matter how good the job it may do for someone. It is a

nature that desires to be humble more than anything else and if anyone offers it praise, its reply is to quickly give all the credit to God. A humble nature is actually terrified of being praised for its work. It lives in fear of taking the glory. A humble nature loses its humility when it starts to think highly of itself.

A humble nature is the part of the new nature that Jesus has for us. It is a nature that allows us to ignore the distractions of the world and to keep our thoughts focused on Heaven. If we leave our striving for self-glorification and embrace humility towards God we will find a peace that the world cannot give. A peace that comes from no longer striving for what the world's standards are of what is valuable. A peace that comes from looking to see what God's standards are and strive for them instead. He has a set of standards that are always the same. We can have great confidence and trust that all will be well and our souls secure if we seek to build our lives on His foundation.

Let us get back to the value we should place on our soul. Our soul is real and yes we can lose it. Our soul is the most valuable thing we have been given. Let us show some concern for its well-being for without it we will go no further than this present life. Let us look with all diligence to the one who has promised to preserve us through eternity. Let us not be content to be distracted any longer by the world. Let us not fill our lives full of the pursuits of this world only to find at the gates of eternity that we have neglected the only thing that could have passed through its doors! It truly is a matter of life or death!

Jesus is there holding out His hand to you. Reach out and grab hold of it. We are in desperate need to be pulled out of the distractions of the world and set on the solid ground of His word and of His company. We need His company like we need the blood in our veins. He is the Life that raises us from the dead of our old natures. Let us run to Him to be made clean and new. Not being who we used to be, but taking up the new life, which He offers to us.

Fact- We become like the people we spend time with. So let us spend all our time with Jesus and those who love Him dearly.

A fellow servant of Jesus Christ - Seth

Matthew 1:18-21

God's glory accomplished in our lives

“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows. When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her, desired to put her away secretly. But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is he who will save His people from their sins.”

Today I want to encourage you with the two different perceptions that take place when the Lord chooses to use us for His glory. I would like to pay particular attention to verse 19 *“And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her, desired to put her away secretly.”* God had chosen Mary for the greatest of all blessings, that of being the mother of Jesus, but to all the world it looked as if she had broken her vows to her future husband for who would believe that it was God Himself who had miraculously caused her to be with child. Joseph didn't believe until an angel came from God to confirm the truth of what had happened.

Mary had been chosen for the greatest blessing imaginable but to all the world it looked like a disgrace upon her. What a contrast we see here. God's blessing hidden in what seemed like a terrible slander upon this virtuous young woman. It is often the same for us. God sends His blessings upon us but the world is blinded from the truth. For as we go through great distresses and slander upon our character it causes people to wonder where our God is since He has allowed so many bad things to befall us. But the truth is hidden and often even we don't see it or realize what God is accomplishing for us in all of it. God is seeking to bestow great blessings upon us and to birth His glorious plans through us, but He allows it to come in the form of sharing in Jesus' life which was one of enduring much hardship for our salvation. He allows us to share in His work of rescuing others, gladly enduring these things that even one more

person may be rescued from sin.

It seems that in the midst of our distresses even we have a hard time in thinking that these things are for God's blessing upon us and we complain and get upset. Jesus' words in Matthew 5:11-12 says, "*Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of things against you falsely, on account of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*" Slander and persecution are signs that God is doing something wonderful in our lives. It is a sign that our enemy, the devil, is afraid and wants stop us from what we are doing for Jesus because it is bringing down his kingdom of hell.

So let us press on, trusting that the hardships and persecution are good signs that God is doing something wonderful with us and that our reward in heaven will be great! Be of good courage for all the world walks in blindness to the blessings that God is pouring out upon you. Do not join in with their blindness and condemn God while He is doing something wonderful for you! Let us pray for our eyes to be opened that we might see all that He is doing for us in the midst of our trials!

God bless you all!

Matthew 3:11-12

God's work in our lives

“As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. And His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

I would like to focus on John's words regarding Jesus and His work in our lives. John says, “He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire,” He is saying that Jesus will grant to us the Holy Spirit Who will give to us His strength and victorious power over the weaknesses of our flesh and that we will be sharpened and refined through trials and hardship. 1 Peter 4:12-14 says, *“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.”* James 1:2-4 says, *“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”*

These are words to take to heart as we endure things that often cause us to wonder why so many challenges come upon us as we try to faithfully serve God. We need to have great confidence in God during these times of trial knowing that He is in them and has allowed them to come upon us to shape our lives and perfect us. These things are for our good. Jesus has promised us a victorious life as a Christian – through the power of the Holy Spirit! Jesus says that our Heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to all who ask. We live in a world that has rejected God and as a result the environment we live in causes us to stumble in sin continually and it is only through the victorious power of the Holy Spirit that we are able to overcome these things! We have to press on in a life of holiness and

fruitfulness and this can only be accomplished with His help.

Our Heavenly Father is searching for a relationship of true love with us and this is why it is so important to trust in God's love for us as we go through our trials. We must remember that things are not what they appear and when God seems farthest from us He is actually the closest. Every moment that we can hold on to that faith in His absolute love for us we are blessing His heart mightily. He is indeed storing up a very real inheritance for all those who persevere through their trials! Let us encourage one another not to faint before the end of the race. We need to encourage one another and spur one another on to keep close to Jesus and not lose heart!

Let us earnestly seek the Lord our God with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength that we might walk through this life unstained by the world and ready for the return of Christ! Our God is awesome and the eternity He has prepared for us is more wonderful than we can imagine. Philippians 3:8 says, "*More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I might gain Christ.*"

We have a most wonderful heritage in Christ! Let us rejoice in Him today!

Matthew 4:18-20

God's call on our life

And walking by the sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." And they immediately left the nets, and followed Him. - Jesus

Question - What has God called us from and what has He called us into? I know this is really two questions and I want to spend a little time on them today.

-What has God called us from? Each of us has a testimony. This is that first awareness that God has actually made it impossible for you to go in any direction except towards Him. Some of us take longer than others to finally turn and embrace Him (Many a hardship He has allowed in or lives in order to wake us up.) While others just let go of their nets and follow Him. What I'd like to bring up is that your testimony is probably one of the most useful tools you have for winning others to Christ. This is the point of contact which others most relate to and begin to see why forsaking all to follow Christ is truly the most blessed and wonderful way to live. This just reminds us that we need to take some time to revisit our past and refresh ourselves on where we came from and how God extracted us. If we write it out or talk about it with friends and family it will bring it back to the forefront of our minds so that once again we are ready to share it with anyone we meet.

-What has He called us into? This is the place we should be continually directing our thoughts to now. A good verse that will bring us back is 2 Timothy 2:4 It's just a really great reminder of how we should be living for Christ. *"No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who has enlisted him as a soldier."* And what does it mean to not be entangled with the affairs of everyday life? It means that when we have finished with our daily duties (For those of us who aren't in a ministry full time and work for a living) our first thought should be, "How can we serve our King? What can we do to be a blessing to our neighbors and to rescue the lost all around us. It

means that we are done living for self because we love to serve the King of Kings more than anything else in the world! (even more than our own live as Jesus says)

Two more verses that just encourage us to press forward are Matthew 5:19 *“But whoever keeps and teaches them (God’s laws) he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”* Luke 16:10 *“He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much”* So let us move forward as faithful soldiers of our dear Lord and Savior, leaving behind the things that so easily entangle us so that we might be found faithfully serving Him when He returns and receive the highest of praise, *“Well done My good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Master!”*

Matthew 4:18-20

I will make you fishers of men

And walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting their net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." And they immediately left the nets, and followed Him.

My question for all of us today is, "What is holding us back from rising up and answering Jesus' call to be fishers of men?" What nets are we tending that hold us back from making the best use of our time to serve the Lord? The nets that Peter and Andrew left were their livelihood. When Jesus told them to come and follow Him they left everything to serve Him. This was a pretty incredible change for them and their families and their response was to immediately let go of their nets and to follow Him.

Jesus is continually spurring us on to forsake the world and its passing pleasures in order to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. He wants each of us to be fishers of men, but what holds us back? Very often we say it is because we are shy or just don't know what to say, but there are so many ways to spread the Gospel that these hindrances really shouldn't stop us. I think that one of the most significant reasons we are not doing all that we could for Jesus is that there are nets in our lives that we will not let go of. Peter's net was his livelihood; our nets very often are entertainment or plans that we are working on. We have other loves that interfere with our love for Jesus and these conflict with serving Jesus to the best of our abilities. We have too many distractions that hold our attention and cause us to be unfruitful for Christ. Just think of all the things that can get in the way of spending a half hour at night reading the Bible. The TV, a magazine, the phone, or just distractions of not being able to focus on what we are reading. As the world around us fill our hearts and minds very often it makes the Bible and prayer seem dull and uninteresting and the more we feed our selves on a steady diet of this world the harder it gets to pick up the Bible. We forget how wonderful it was when we were spending time with Jesus everyday as He gets crowded out of our lives.

So how do we keep from holding on to these old nets? How do we let go of them and begin serving Jesus? We have to take up His net so that we have no room in our hands for the old ones. If we fill our lives with serving Him there will be no room for the old things to hold us back! We need to begin serving Him however we can everyday and continually asking ourselves how we can be serving Him more. Jesus needs to be our whole hearts desire and nothing else. If He is everything to us it will be easy to stay busy for Him.

Let me encourage us all to renew our first love for Him and to pursue Him with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength! He is our dear Savior and we love Him more than life itself! God bless!

_____ *Author's Note* _____

- I wrote a study on these verses twice and decided to add them both to this book. This one was written two years earlier than the other.

Matthew 5:14-16

A light set on a hill

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do men light a lamp, and put it under a peck-measure, but on the lamp stand; and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

WE ARE LIGHTS!

WE ARE NOT TO BE CASUAL LIGHTS!

Jesus says – “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” We need to be living proof that our God is an Awesome God! Jesus says in verse 8, “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.” When Jesus met with God on the mountain with His disciples He became radiant as He was transfigured in the presence of God. When Moses saw the back of God it says Moses face became so bright that the people could not look upon him until he covered his face with a veil. Exodus 33:17-23, 34:6-7, 34:29-35 II Corinthians 3:7-18 We serve an awesome God and if we will put away all of our sinful pursuits and cleans our hearts from evil desires then we shall see God! Lord we want to see your face!

So we see now that there is a literal shining of God’s light. Let us now look at the physical way.

OUR ACTIONS!

If we say that we are Christians then where is our love for God found? How do we show our whole hearted love for God? Everything we do, we want to do with the desire to show our God in it. We don’t want to hope that people might be able to see God in us – We definitely want them to see God in us! We want people to know the love of our God! We want them to feel the power of His love through us! We want to be On Fire for Jesus! Cities set on a hilltop! Lights in a room on a lamp stand! We serve the Living God! We have been granted a gift better than life itself! You cannot buy it or earn it! The Kingdom of Heaven is a treasure!

-How can a price ever be put on eternity with God?

-Let us seek Him with longing in our souls!

-This life will pass away! –We can take nothing with us!

We need to look past our daily grind and see outside! God is awesome! His ways are just! In His house are many mansions! All He requires is for us to let go of our filthiness, our lies, our despairs, our mean attitudes, our greed, etc... Let us consider some of the things we love more than Jesus that cause us to let go of Him and by doing so trade them for eternal life. Our car, enticing and sinful entertainment, our job, our house, even our stamp collection, what gives any of these things their value? What is our standard of value? If God created everything and He is working on creating something new for us, and we can see all of the beauty that is around us, then His new creation will be even better!

We need to wake up! Jesus is returning soon and we want to be found doing the work He has told us to do, which is to do all things to His glory that many more might be saved before His imminent return!

God wake us up! We want to be near You! We want to be on fire for you today, and every day from now until Your return!

Matthew 6:20-21

Where your treasure is there will your heart be also

“But lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in and steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” – Jesus

It is so easy to have treasure here on earth. Things that we just have to have or our lives will not be satisfying. Each of us could do an inventory in our hearts and come up with quite a few things that we just can't live without. These things intertwine themselves into our character and become impossible to remove. These are treasures we have been building on earth, but Jesus says don't spend time on treasure that can be stolen or waste away, but build your treasure in heaven where it cannot be taken from you.

What kind of wake-up call is required for each of us as Christians in order for us to finally realize the truth of Jesus' words? God allows many things to happen in our lives that cause us to realize what is truly important. For some of us it may be a terminal illness, for others it's allowing disasters to come when we finally feel like we are getting the perfect life on earth. Our heart is what determines what our treasure is. Whatever it sets itself on is what it pursues and lives for. Let us take a moment and examine our hearts desire and see whether or not it is Jesus that it longs for. Let us see if is full of desire to be near Him, to be with Him, to be serving Him, these are the signs that our treasure is in heaven.

I find it amazing how quickly our hearts get distracted by other loves. It seems to be an endless cycle of having to bring it back to Jesus to be renewed and strengthened by His company. Some temptations are so subtle that we don't even realize that our heart has drifted. Others are strong and we know that they are wrong but can't overcome their pull. Jesus says that all who hold on to Him until the end shall be saved, meaning that everyday we would have to work hard not to drift into temptation. Our enemy knows our weaknesses and when we are strong in one area he seeks out another and waits for us to once again let down our guard in the places we formerly

were strong. The moment we feel we are un-tempt-able in some area is the moment we take a break and stop being on guard for it. There is never going to be a time to relax until we are in heaven.

1 Peter 1:13-17 says, *“Therefore, gird your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix yourselves completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, ‘You shall be Holy, For I Am Holy.’ And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man’s work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth.”*

We are the children of an awesome God Who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ. Let us make the best use of this reconciliation and spend as much time with our Heavenly Father as we can! He is our treasure! He is our gold and our security! Let us look to Him today and rejoice in the salvation that He has granted us. Let us make use of the talents He has given us and store up treasure in heaven this day!

May God bless each of you and fill you with new hope and a fresh joy in Christ!

God bless!

Matthew 6:21

Setting our heart on things above

“For where your treasure is there will your heart be also.”

Our heart is one of the most challenging things to get under control. In fact, without God’s direct help I would say its quite impossible. Our hearts are forever seeking something or someone to fill their desire and hope, indeed there is nothing harder to deal with then a heart that fails to attain that which it seeks. It doesn’t have a right and wrong restraint, it just simply fixes itself on the object of its affection and won’t let go. Thus making whatever it is to be our greatest treasure.

There is only one thing capable of truly satisfying it’s great ability to desire and love and that is the hidden depths of the heart of our Heavenly Father. He is a desire that grows the deeper you go and gets stronger and more satisfying the longer you seek Him.

It’s scary to think about the weight Jesus always places on where that treasure is. He tells us that we will end up wherever it is and if it’s here on earth it will not be in heaven and vise versa. This is why He tries to tell us these things so plainly.

So what do we do with the reality that we are continually dealing with old or new temptations that try to reestablish our treasure here on earth? The Devil never sleeps therefore his tempting never does either. Why do people who try to sell something go to someone who specializes in advertising? It’s because that person has made a study of human nature and buying habits and has learned how to capture men’s hearts which will then cause the product to sell well. So it’s not by chance that when you go to the store or the mall that you will find that you and your money are soon parted. Those guys know their job. The Devil is trying to part you from your heavenly treasure continually and not with things that don’t appeal to you! He entices you with only the things that catch you personally. - He’s done his homework and knows you well.

So we must not be surprised that we are continually dealing with desires that are so strong that we cannot overcome them without God’s help. The Devil has picked these things on purpose. The only cure is to spend more time with God so that our hearts and

minds are brought back to Him and our head is given a chance to clear from the fog of our adversaries deceptions. The truth is, the treasure of earth is passing away and if we love these things we will pass away with them. So let us be wise as serpents and innocent as doves knowing that our adversary is cunning and is enticing us with plastic gems while the real ones are awaiting us in heaven. Let us not let go of the real treasure for the fake. One is eternal - the other passing away.

Let us uphold one another and keep seeking the things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father!

Matthew 6:31-34

Seek first the kingdom of God

“Do not be anxious then, saying, ‘What shall we eat? or What shall we drink? or With what shall we clothe ourselves?’ For all these things the gentiles eagerly seek; for your Heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will take care of itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” – Jesus

What does it mean to seek first God’s kingdom and His righteousness? Jesus says that our security and happiness are found by seeking God first. What does it mean to seek His kingdom? Our God has established laws for our peace and security. Living in obedience to His commandments is to be abiding in His kingdom for His laws will be our guidelines for all of eternity. God’s kingdom is expanded by carrying the Gospel message to everyone around us which causes it to grow like a seed. To seek first His kingdom is not only to live by His laws but to do all things that are in His best interest. If you were the caretaker of someone’s property you would show good stewardship if you made it better by the time you left than when you first received it. It is our desire to see the kingdom of God grow and mature under our care rather than be extinguished because of lack of concern or diligence.

What does it mean to seek His righteousness? The righteousness that God has for us is the blood of our dear Savior Jesus Christ. He is our righteousness and security. As we do our best to live in obedience to God’s commandments we find ourselves failing miserably. We are all chained to sin and it is the righteousness of Jesus that sets us free. Jesus has also sent us the Holy Spirit to fill us and give us complete victory over our old nature. The Holy Spirit gives us the power and the desire to overcome all those nagging sins that try to hold on to us.

To seek first God’s kingdom and His righteousness is to be walking as a steward who is faithful with the property that has been left in his care. We have been left with the rules of the house and the supernatural ability to carry out the work. If we are tending God’s

house, all our needs are His concern for we are diligently working for Him.

Each of us has a different calling from God which is why it is important to seek Him first. To some He has called to be teachers, to others, caretakers of His land for the benefit of those in need. But to all, we are to be continually ready to share the Gospel of Jesus and be a light to the world. If we treat all that we have as belonging to God then we will be ready to put it to any use for which He has need.

Tithing and serving the Lord with all your means is a step of faith. Every time you do God allows it to be not a convenient time to be doing so, thus testing our trust in Him. Fortunately for those who do this He will never fail to uphold them. He is the author of truth and promise-keeping. He will never lie. Try Him and see that He is faithful!

There was a rich man who came to Jesus and asked the way of eternal life and Jesus said, *“Go sell all that you have and give it to the poor and come follow me.”* The man couldn’t do it – could you? Jesus then goes on to say that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into heaven. Pretty scary isn’t it? It is a life of complete trust in Him that Jesus has called us to. Are you ready for the adventure?

**Thank the Lord for He is faithful!
Rejoice in Him today!**

Matthew 6:34

God will take care of tomorrow

“Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” -Jesus

If we do as Jesus says and leave our troubles of tomorrow until tomorrow and deal with the troubles of today what does this actually look like for us. Amazingly Jesus simply wants to put our hearts at peace by truly beginning to place our trust in Our Heavenly Father’s ability to not only know what we need before we ask but to faithfully provide for those things. If we start thinking about it, most of our stresses are based off of a lot of what-ifs regarding how things might go tomorrow. Jesus wants us to leave what we can’t see, with Him and to concentrate on the things that are actually in front of us. He will take care of the rest.

I just want to give a little example of how our trust in Him can change what we do and what gets accomplished. Here we are on PEI and God opens up an outreach in North Carolina where we have the opportunity to simply set up in a park in the center of a town and share the Gospel. We’re not part of any group and we’re doing it all for no charge so there is no way to cover any of the cost for a trip that will take us three days just to get there. Three days before we are to leave we don’t have enough gas money to even get out of our driveway let alone go to NC. We continue with our plans and pray. Two days before we are to leave God sent us enough money to get to our first stop in CT. So we left for NC as planned. We arrive in CT and find another donation has come in which will cover just enough to make it to NC but that’s it. We arrive in NC and while we are unloading our gear to start setting up in the park a lady comes up and says, “Now I know why God sent me here this morning.” She gives us a check and leaves. We’ve never seen her again and she didn’t come to the concert that night. In fact she wasn’t even from there but from Florida. After she had left we found that she had given us a donation that would cover all our expenses to get back up to Maryland where we had another free outreach scheduled. When we finished in Maryland God again provided enough gas to get to Connecticut and from there He provided enough to get home. At no time

did He provide more than the immediate needs and yet He faithfully took us there and back as safely as if we had all the money up front for the trip. If we had simply looked to our circumstances we would have never left PEI at the beginning because on our strength it truly was impossible. And if we hadn't gone, not only would we have not accomplished work that God greatly blessed but we would have missed out on seeing God's unfailing provision for every day's needs. (This is just one of many testimonies that God has given us regarding His faithfulness.)

This faithfulness that He has promised not only impacts our work for Him but every area of our lives. It affects our decisions on getting married, on having a family, on worrying about our bills and job security. Don't miss out on God's blessings that will come when you put your trust in Him. If you are waiting for everything to be lined up perfectly before you move forward in your life you will never move forward. But if you trust God, He will take care of not only all the things you do know about but also all the things that you could never anticipate. He is watching over you.

So rise each day with a new song in your heart and a fresh confidence in your Heavenly Father. He is faithful and will not fail you. Trust in Him and as Moses said to the congregation, "Blessed is the man whose boast is in the Lord!" God bless you all!

Matthew 7:1-2

Guarding our tongues

“Do not judge lest you be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.” – Jesus

What is it that comes out of our mouths everyday? Is it criticism, sarcasm, slander, harsh words? It seems like we are forever suspecting the worst motives in each other and coming to conclusions that the other person never intended. We seem to have so much trouble in giving each other the benefit of the doubt. Why is this? We have a nature that is very self-conscious and is always trying to defend itself from anything that appears to threaten it. We have a pride that never wants to be wrong in someone else's eyes and tries to justify all of its actions. This is what Jesus is getting at when He says, “In the way you judge, you will be judged.” He gives to us a mirror into our hearts by allowing others to look at us the way we look at them. We will hear them having the same suspicions that we do of them. I have seen this happen many times where if you speak badly of someone behind their back they will have an attitude towards you even if nobody ever tells them what you said about them. God allows a spirit of dissension to be between you. You see, God is always watching and keeps His word that however you judge, you will be judged.

This mirror is quite a blessing because it quickly teaches us to examine our behavior and work on changing it. It helps us to speak well of one another and not slander them behind their backs. Speaking well of one another also encourages letting down our barriers with one another and confessing our sins openly to them. If we have a bond of trust our unity will grow and blossom. To speak well of one another is to bring heaven on earth. Jesus says that how you want others to treat you, so treat them. He has ordained that this law will be upheld supernaturally and no man can stop it from happening.

We must practice what we preach for every commandment is equal in the sight of God and not judging is the key to happiness and peace in our lives. Speak well of your friends, your family, your

neighbor, and of the person who always seems to go out of their way to hurt you. Pray for one another that God would draw them to Himself and that He might use you as part of His work in their lives. James 1:19-22 says, *“This you know, my beloved brethren. But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. But prove yourselves to be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.”*

May God bless you all this day and fill you with the peace and joy that comes from obedience to His words!

Matthew 7:7-8

Joyful expectancy!

“Ask and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened.” -Jesus

These are the verses that God has been pressing home to my heart this week, particularly the words, “For everyone who asks receives.” Jesus is not playing games with us or trying to say anything other than what He means here. The verses that follow are about men knowing how to give good gifts and how much more willing our Father in heaven is to do so for those who ask. The only thing God requires is sincerity of heart when we make our requests which is why it is so much easier to simply believe that God won’t answer or has decided not to. It does not take a great man of faith to believe that God won’t answer.

I believe that the most sincere form of asking from the heart is to ask with Joyful Expectancy. This causes our heart to actually have to come out of it’s despair in order to embrace it’s request of God seriously and be looking for His answer. Joyful expectancy and despair are not compatible with each other and cannot be done simultaneously. So why does it take so much faith in order to have joyful expectancy when He has so fully promised to answer our prayers? He even shares His own heart towards us further by instructing us how we are to behave, telling us, “Give to those who ask of us and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.” Matt. 5:42 Also in verse 44&45 He says, “But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.” Faith is hard because we get tested on it. You see, God desires to bless us abundantly with riches in heaven and one of the ways He bestows it upon us is by the tests He allows and when He sees that we are truly holding on to one of His promises it gives Him a real opportunity to make the most of it so that He might bless us more abundantly. This is why when we truly exhibit the character of

faith we come into such conflict and trials. God will answer but His timing is truly for our greatest blessing!

So let us look deeply into His character and know more fully in our hearts that “He who asks of Him shall receive,” just as He has promised us and asked for us to do for others. He lives by His own commandments and truly loves each of us as only a Father can. We are His sons and daughters. His own flesh and blood because He has adopted us as His own.

Lord -we love you and desire closer fellowship with You today!

Matthew 7:7-11

Answers to prayer

“Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened. Or what man is there among you, when his son shall ask him for a loaf, will he give him a stone? Or if he shall ask for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!”

Did you know that our Heavenly Father is waiting for you to ask Him for your needs and desires, and requests for salvations? Jesus says that we have not because we ask not. Our Savior wants us to understand that we should have complete confidence in our Heavenly Father’s love and concern for us. Our heavenly Father is full of love and compassion and has set Himself to be our provider for eternity. We are not orphans! We have a Father who is watching over us!

I have been keeping a prayer journal for many years now and it never ceases to amaze me how, often when I am praying for someone I haven’t seen or heard from in a long time, they show up or call with some amazing story of what God has been doing in their lives lately. The fact is, every time we go out of our way to pray for someone, God answers it, and the more detailed your prayers are for that person, the more detailed God’s answers are. It is a constant encouragement for me to pray in more detail which, of course, requires spending more time with God in order to bring everything before Him. It encourages me not to be lazy in my prayers! Every time you pray for someone God answers and their lives are affected by it. Watching what God does in their lives is the most wonderful experience in the world.

So what are you waiting for? Set some time aside to pray for people. Pray for your brothers and sisters in Christ that they would be strengthened and encouraged and bear much fruit. We are all struggling against our adversary and we need to be upheld in prayer by one another. Pray for friends and family who aren’t saved yet. Ask

that God open their eyes to be able to see Him clearly. Ask for help in being a light to them. Pray for ways that you can be spreading the Gospel and making the best use of your time for God's kingdom so that it will grow. Pray for His help in overcoming the distractions that keep you from spending time with Him every day. There are so many things that prayer will accomplish and when you have finished praying write out a short work list that you could do during the day that would plant seeds of eternal life in your neighborhood and in everyone around you.

It all starts with prayer which each of us can do and when we have prayed the fruit will come forth from our lives, seemingly out of nowhere! You won't be able to stop the fruit from coming forth from your lives!

When you seek God earnestly, He will never leave you without an answer to your prayers! He answers every one of them! Be encouraged and try Him in this! He is faithful and His promises are true! Rejoice in Him today! God bless!

Matthew 9:10-13

A heart of compassion

And it happened that as He was reclining at the table in the house, behold many tax gatherers and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, “Why is your teacher eating with the tax gatherers and sinners?” But when He heard this, He said, “It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means, ‘I desire compassion, and not sacrifice,’ for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

– Jesus

“I desire compassion, and not sacrifice, for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.” The tenderness of our Savior... How well He knows us and is able to encourage us with fresh hope and courage. So many times we fall back into our former sins and yet here He is holding out His hand to us and pulling us back up out of the pit of despair again. His only requirement is that we in turn hold out our hand in compassion to others rather than holding their sins against them. You would think that this would come naturally to us after all that Jesus has forgiven us from and yet we are constantly guilty of pointing out other people’s faults as though pointing it out was the cure for it. Being able to see someone else’s faults does not take the wisdom of the ages, it comes naturally. This is not to say that a word in its proper place in regard to sin is wrong it is often necessary, but for the most part, compassion is to uphold them before God in prayer that He would strengthen and uphold them and keep them safe from temptation.

I marvel how God takes our word and always gives us the benefit of the doubt. When we pray and tell Him that we are sorry for our sin and won’t do it again He treats us as though it was good as done. He doesn’t wait a week to see if we really meant it before He blesses us for it, but rather, He immediately treats us as though we had never sinned and never would again and pours out his loving kindness upon us. We on the other hand, wait to see if the person really meant what they said, before we begin to trust them.

Ezekiel 33:13-16 say, “*When I say to the righteous he will*

surely live, and he so trusts in his righteousness that he commits iniquity, none of his righteous deeds will be remembered; but in the same iniquity of his which he has committed he will die. But when I say to the wicked, you will surely die, and he turns from his sin and practices justice and righteousness, if a wicked man restores a pledge, pays back what he has taken by robbery, walks by the statutes which ensure life without committing iniquity, he will surely live; he shall not die. None of his sins that he has committed will be remembered against him. He has practiced justice and righteousness; he will surely live.”

The essence of compassion is to think well of one another and to always assume that what they have done was with good intentions towards us. This also transfers to our relationship with God as He delays in His answers or allows us to go through tough times. We are to assume the best motives behind it and that He has our best interests in mind in how He is dealing with us. He is faithful and loves us far more than we know because our human love is not nearly as deep as His love.

So let us pour out our compassion on others and pray for one another and uphold one another that we might all be found awake and ready at Jesus' return.

Matthew 10:37-39

Laying down our lives for Jesus

“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 up his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it.” – Jesus

I would ask that each of you meditate on the words of these verses for a little while until they make a deep impression on your heart. These words cannot be treated lightly for they have a very great impact on our lives. We cannot reflect on these words without coming to the realization that there are things and people in our lives that mean more to us than Jesus does. There are times in our lives (and they are the best times) when we truly have put down everything and Jesus has been more to us than anything else, however, over time other loves creep back in and grab hold of our affections and we realize that we are once again holding on to this life and don't feel particularly inclined to let it go. These words of Jesus stir up our conscience and remind us that it truly is a narrow path that leads to life and we cannot take anything of this world with us if we expect to make it.

These words give us great cause to be down on our knees seeking to be set free once again from the love of this world. There is only one power that can break the chains that hold us down and it is the power of the Holy Spirit! We have need once again for repentance and even fasting as we seek to be able to once again take up our cross (which is death to self) and follow Christ with our whole heart. We must live our lives with an earnest desire for nothing else but Jesus that everything else might be put down in its proper place. If we are to be able to work with Him there must be nothing left in our lives that we cannot give up for His sake. Jesus has a life for each of us that causes us to be on fire for Him and a great light to all the world around us. However, that light grows almost too dim for anyone to see if we are full of the passions and desires of this world. We are choked out by everything that means more to us than Jesus for it is impossible to speak against something you love and are

compromised by. We are all full of weaknesses and compromises with this world's standards. We are in more fear of losing men's good opinion of us than in what Jesus thinks of us.

So how do we escape these compromises? We must take our time with Jesus as being life and death. Life if we spend time with Him and death if we neglect Him. We must pursue Him with every ounce of our strength and be on our knees humbly seeking His pardon for our compromises. He is very willing to help, but we must go to Him diligently and daily that we might walk in righteousness and not stumble into our old sins for as He says, "He is a rewarder of all those who diligently seek Him."

Everyday that you resist temptation is a day that causes you to become more on fire for Jesus. Everyday that you cry out for forgiveness for a sin that you have stumbled back into is a day of reconciliation and renewal. Seek to have a sharp conscience that won't let you go five minutes after you have sinned before you are once more on your knees and receiving the peace of His pardon. Our walk with Jesus requires diligence and persistence and this is where taking up the cross is the physical picture of what we have sacrificed in order to be with Jesus.

Jesus is our dear Savior and faithful companion and He earnestly desires for us to spend eternity with Him. Let us press on and uphold one another in prayer that we may walk victoriously in Christ until the day which He has appointed for us to meet Him in person!

Matthew 10:42

Being a disciple

“And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you he shall not lose his reward.” – Jesus

What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus? A disciple is someone who studies under someone to be just like them and to carry on their work, therefore, to be a disciple of Jesus is to sit at His feet and learn from Him in order that we may become like Him and carry on His work. If we are His disciples we will do every good work in His name that all glory and honor will go to Him and all credit for every good action will be laid at His feet. Jesus is telling us that if we are serving in His name we will not lose our heavenly reward for anything that we have done for Him.

A cup of water is an interesting illustration for Jesus to use for we tend to think that only the big things we do for Him will be rewarded and that if a major thing was not accomplished then it wasn't worth doing. But this is not the case. You and I are not good judges of the type of soil we are planting seeds in and one tract or word spoken can land in the heart of someone you didn't even notice was there and that person will go out and draw many to Jesus! There are many great missionaries who have started out exactly in this way and have brought many nations to salvation.

The question for today is, “What is our cup of cold water?” What steps are we taking in order to serve our neighbor? How are we showing the love of Jesus and being faithful in the small things that we can do for Him? I think that a very practical way in our busy society is when someone asks something of us, that we don't complain about it but do it with a cheerful heart as though it was Jesus Himself who had asked it of us. Another problem with how busy we are is that we have to overcome the busyness if we are going to go out of our way to help another person. We all feel sympathy for people who are in trouble but it takes work to get out there and do something about it. Jesus says that in the last days men's hearts will grow cold towards one another and I believe that this is the spirit of the age we live in and we have to fight against it in order to turn our

love into actions.

We need to spur one another on and encourage one another in this! We need to call one another and say, “What are you doing tonight?” Let’s go help a neighbor. Let’s skip our movie night and help out at the Salvation Army or see what we can be doing through our church. Let’s go hand out tracts on the street! Let’s give up our selfish pastimes and earn an eternal reward for those same hours we used to spend on ourselves! When we get to heaven we will not say, “Boy I wish I had watched a few more movies” but, “I wish I had done more work for God!” Let us not waste any more time on the distractions of this life and look forward to our future in the next! God bless!!!

Matthew 13:22

Distracted by the world

“And the one on whom seed was sown among thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke out the word, and it becomes unfruitful.” – Jesus

If I were to ask if you had spent time with God today, what would your answer be? Talking to my friends and asking this question, many times I get the response, “I just didn’t get the time” or “I know I need to, but maybe I can get some time in tonight.” Many of my friends, myself included, have an intense love for God and yet so frequently our walk becomes unfruitful and full of discouraging falls into temptation and every time with out fail, it is from being distracted and neglecting our time with God.

My question for you today is the same. Have you spent time with God today – reading from His word, and in prayer? Jesus hits our excuses exactly when He says, “The worries of the world (Bills, Security) and the deceitfulness of riches (Seeking after things to make our lives more fulfilled) choke out the word and it becomes unfruitful.” These things consume us and rob us of our fruit. We are either caught up in the fears of staying ahead of the bills, or distracted by our love for the things of this present life that we are working hard to attain. Our time for God has become secondary or worse – last, to all of our other pursuits. My brothers and sisters – The Devil is robbing you of your fruit! He is robbing you not only of your peace and joy here on earth, but also of your eternal inheritance and the riches that God would have been storing up for you as you bore fruit!

If you don’t wake up and take time for God you will be choked out! Your life will be barren of all joy and fruit! Don’t give yourself any more excuses as to why you don’t have time for God or you may find yourself standing outside the gate knocking and Jesus saying, “Depart for I never knew you.” The truth is you never took the time to know Him. This is not the time to play games with God and fit Him in when you have the time. He is a true friend! Don’t shut Him out of your life for the things of this passing world! He is

the Creator of all and will give you victory over your circumstances and over your trials, and your temptations! He will be there for you - I promise! He will make sense out of your hectic day and cause things to go smoothly if you put Him first before all else! Don't wait for the right time – make Him first and all other things to wait for Him. He will bless all that you do and satisfy your life with joy and good things! Make Him first today and renew your first love for Him!

The generation we live in is full of sin, worldliness and selfishness. We must make God first in our lives if we are to break out of this mold and become fruitful! May God bless each of you today with His Holy Fire! God bless!

Matthew 13:31-32

The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed

I think that we all have to wake up and realize that our lives have become too real to us. By this I mean that we are consumed with life and staying alive. We devote our lives to two things.

- 1) Staying alive. - keeping ahead of our bills and sicknesses.
- 2) Finding things that satisfy our reason for living. - getting ahead of sickness and bills so that we can do the things that make us happy.

In these things we tend to overlook something that will change our lives in these areas forever. We are so caught up with life that we overlook the Kingdom of Heaven. It is not compared to a mustard seed without reason. A mustard seed is very small and has been said to be the smallest of all the garden seeds. But when it grows it becomes the largest of all garden plants, even becoming a tree! The Kingdom of Heaven is not called a kingdom because of its small size. Yet it starts as such a small place in each of our lives. If God takes up even five minutes of your day He is not a very big seed in your life is He? You are living the other 23 hours and 55 minutes in another world! Here is the scary part. It is in those five minutes that you are preparing for the other 23 hours of life. Is this enough time to be ready to fend off the temptations of sin? If they are, then you are an amazing Christian. If I spend all day with God it is still an amazing struggle to avoid temptation. Being dedicated to staying close to God in all that you do is the only way to stay out of trouble.

As my brothers and sisters in Christ, I urge you not to overlook the Kingdom of Heaven. That such a Kingdom is presented in this way, small and insignificant as a tiny seed, shows that we must be on our guard not to overlook it. The world walks on without noticing it and so will you and I if we are not careful.

God's kingdom IS A KINGDOM; complete with joyful pleasures, and lively, creative work. Until you start to give more than five minutes a day or an hour a week to Him, you will never truly see the Kingdom He is offering. He requires an exchange. Your life

here on earth for a life in eternity. Giving up a life that is passing away for a life that will never end. Do we really have a hard decision to make over this? Yes, in fact we do. Each of us has built a life for ourselves here on earth, complete with jobs and what makes us happy. No one escapes the hard and seemingly lonely step towards God's Kingdom. The road to Heaven is hard and if you feel like you are already a Christian and have never had to take this step you must now examine on what foundation you are standing. What makes you different from the world? If you say it is because you believe God exists, the Devil believes this as well and it has no effect on his salvation. To be saved one must allow his life to be remade on God's foundation. Everything you do must be held up to the light of God's word and either thrown out or reformed to His laws. It is a step of faith and no one is exempt from it. It is where we and the world part company.

Let us pray for strength to truly give up our lives to His examination .And, with a willingness to throw out all that He asks us to remove. We need His strength and courage to be able to do this. But we will find a wonderful freedom once we start.

Your life begins when you give it up to follow Christ. Let us joyfully seek His Kingdom lest our hearts grow cold and we again seek out a life here on earth.

Can you grasp the value and awesomeness of the gift of Heaven? Seek it out for it is more real than anything you will find here on earth!

May the joy of Christ be in each of your hearts this day and may Your feet find His path to walk upon.

Matthew 14:28-32

The faith to get out of the boat

“And Peter answered Him and said, “Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.” And He said, “Come!” And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But seeing the wind, he became afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, “Lord, save me!” And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” And when He got into the boat, the wind stopped.

I think that often we start with real faith. We start with a faith that is absolutely assured of receiving what we have asked for, whether it be for help or a need or a desire. We have enough faith to literally get out of the boat - which is indeed miraculous - but only moments later the faith that got us over the side takes note of the fact that what we have done or asked for really is humanly impossible. Then the challenges and opposition add their fuel to the fire of our uncertainty and fears.

The faith to step out of the boat is truly awesome! It is real faith that has started us on the path of the impossible, but the completion of that faith requires keeping our gaze firmly fixed on Jesus and completely disregarding our circumstances and surroundings. In Jesus face is reality, (God’s reality) He is the creator of all things and all things conform to His will.

So if you are struggling right now after having the faith to start with, BE ASSURED, your faith was real and your trust justified! You are simply experiencing the next step that has been placed in front of you and if you hold onto that same faith you will not be disappointed. And for those who falter in the face of the storm, be of good courage, as with Peter, He will not leave you to die but will reach out and take hold of you. Though you may receive a rebuke as Peter did, you will not be overcome by the storm for Jesus has His eyes upon you.

Do not be dismayed! But go forth with great confidence in the Lord! He is your refuge and your strength! May He be your boast today! Our God is the Lord and creator of all!

Matthew 14

The reality of God brings action

Belief in God must bring action. If you say that you believe in God and should obey His rules, what is it that causes you to actually begin obeying them? At what point do you start to take God seriously enough to do what He commands you to be doing? Well, if we don't simply start then the consequences of our actions will become our guide. I will put us into three categories.

1) There is the life of extreme wickedness. That is, things that bring about consequences quickly. Drugs, Murder, Lust, and Adultery. These produce results in people at a rapid rate.

2) There is a life that is basically good. That is, you don't really pursue the life stated above. Your married and you try not to treat people badly. In general, you are a law-abiding citizen.

3) There is a life in which you have been brought up in a Christian home. You went to church all your life, and in general you are an easygoing person who knows that God exists and everything seems fine with that idea.

All these groups have one thing in common. A lack of true belief in God's call to obedience. What you are looking at in reverse order from 3-1 are the results of the same sin of UNBELIEF. Why is this? It is because the Christian in category 3 failed to do his job because of unbelief. Belief is what turns a person around. If belief sets in and becomes real to him than he must become active in God. He has no other options available to him.

By this I mean that he would know that God expected him to obey Him and to be in fear of his children growing up without this knowledge as well. He would become aware of the literal death that comes from disobeying even one of God's commandments. Example: If you commit adultery you not only destroy your own family and your children, but you destroy the other persons family and that persons children. Even if the other person is not married or have children yet. You have destroyed innocence and have caused a chain reaction that torments that person and their future family for life. God set the laws in this area for our good. If one of His command-

ments can have this much impact on our lives what does this mean about all of His other commandments. Must we experience the pain of breaking a law in order to not break it again? Let us instead, gain understanding in this and take God's laws seriously. As I have said before, He has put them there for our good.

As we progress from living in a Christian home, to living by basic morals, to living in dark sin we are simply following the road of unbelief. It is just harder to spot it in a Christian home than it is in a drug addict's home.

These three categories produce a fruit that is unavoidable. Emptiness. If God is not real to us then we are seeking out a life that is of this world. We are seeking for earthly joys, satisfaction and security. But these will all fade away to nothing and that nothing will turn quickly to despair. For what is there that is left to be sought for? No true security. A lost satisfaction in things that once brought us pleasure. These things get harder and harder to bring back. We become so empty and lost inside. You don't have to be a burned out drug addict to feel this way. It is common even in Christian households.

Meanwhile, God holds out His hand and says come, I will give you what is real. I will give you that which never passes away. I will grant you life like you have never lived before. Come seek Me out. Know Me for how real I am. Behold I am standing beside you. Come live by My laws for they were created for your good. Take comfort in Me and leave your misery behind for I am real! Take courage and do not be afraid. Go to Him even as Peter did, walking on the water at Jesus' call. For He is calling you in the same way.

The reality of God must bring action. The same as if your earthly Father walked into your room and asked you to clean it up and to do your other chores. You know that he expects it to be done and you are quite assured that he is real and means it.

Our Heavenly Father is truly a pleasure to know. Do not live in a casual belief of His existence, but with absolute assurance that he is there and expects you to treat Him with the utmost respect and obedience. Our happiness depends on this. It is this knowledge that sets us in motion and transforms our lives. I pray for God's blessing on each of you who are reading this, for I desire nothing more than to see God glorified even greater in each of your lives.

Matthew 14:15-21

The reality of God brings action part 2

If we have taken the step to start obeying our Heavenly Father, it necessarily brings us into a working relationship with Christ. By this I mean that as you truly desire to obey Him, a new dimension of life will become revealed to you.

In these verses Jesus gives them a reality-bending job to do. He says, “You must give these people something to eat”. Now all they had between them was five loaves of bread and two fish. How could Jesus even begin to ask them such a request? There was not even a way to come up with the money to pay for all the food it would require. If you or I were there we might even have gone so far as to laugh at Him for even the idea of such a request. Never a wise thing to do! There now had to be a level of trust and obedience with no scorn or mocking attitude. Jesus had meant what He said and was well prepared to get the job done. It now took a step of faith to bring forward what little they had and to whole-heartedly and with all sincerity give it to their Master. Jesus was not discouraged by the smallness of the gift compared to the five thousand people it had to feed. He proceeds to give thanks to God and calls His disciples to start handing it out. You can just imagine the amazement when every time they came back there was more to be had!

We have a very valuable lesson to learn here. We have to become aware that though we ourselves might have what looks like nothing to offer our Heavenly Father, it is our job to gladly and whole-heartedly give it to Him. Then, do not be surprised at the job He may give you to do with it, but rather, start giving it out and as you run out keep going back to Jesus for more. Oh yes, there will be more. You will never find Him lacking on His part. It is the very smallness of what you are given to work with that gives all the credit to our Heavenly Father. It is very important for both you and the world to know that what is being done is beyond your own ability and that without God it could not be done.

As you can see, our attitude towards our Heavenly Father is the most important part to all other actions. A trust in His loving kindness and ability to grant the means to all that He would ask of us

is imperative. Without this knowledge we will react to His requests and commands with hopelessness at the size of them, anger that He would ask such a thing, or mocking at the thought of such a seemingly foolish request.

So let us joyfully attach ourselves to Him, thus causing our lives to come to life. That we may not get discouraged at His requests, but rather tackle them with the small abilities we have been given. And so, we will be taking part in amazing miracles that are far beyond what we may see as possible. Thus God will be glorified in all that is done, and we will become faithful stewards with what we have been given.

Our Heavenly Father is indeed the Father and Creator of all, and at His desire, reality bends to do His bidding. I look forward to seeing the truth of these words come to life in each of you. It is truly a wonderful and inspiring step for every Christian to become aware of.

Matthew 15:18-19

Guarding our hearts

“But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, and slanders. These are the things which defile the man.” – Jesus

James 1:14-16 says, *“But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust is conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. Do not be deceived my beloved brethren.”* We must guard our hearts for it is an evil and adulterous generation that we live in and there is not one of us who is not touched by the stain of the desires that the world offers to us everyday. We live in a society that is bent on going to hell in the lap of all the delights that sin has to offer. We are being swept away with carnal desires and earthly ambitions that inflame every passion that is unlawful. We are like ants trapped by the taste of a sweet poison continually going back for more in order to bring it back for the entire family and all the while it is slowly and surely killing us. I look at this illustration having endeavored to get rid of a colony of ants that had made their home in my house. And putting out some liquid poison on the counter, watched them work industriously to collect it and take it home. They worked day and night for a few days straight crowding one another to get at it and I obliged by constantly providing more for them to get. Then in a day they were gone. Not a trace of them left.

The devil continually puts out the poison in the form of lustful pleasures and promises of riches. We pursue and work to bring these things into our home all day long all the while they are only a well disguised poison and we have already partaken of it and will surely die even if we didn't touch another drop of it! We have eaten and the poison has set and our passions and desires are constantly flaring up with no way to be cured except by going to Jesus to be healed. The poison is one which even when we have been healed from it is still so irresistible that we go back for more. Once again, death has set in and we must pursue the cure through Jesus. My friends, it is no game we play with this world. It is life and death and

Jesus was not speaking too extreme when He said that if your eye causes you to stumble, to pluck it out. We need to pray for purity in our lives and purity in our church. God's laws are being openly mocked and run over and we need to stand up and depart from all the compromise!

We have been called to holiness and purity and the world is passing away along with its lusts and we do not want to pass with it. We need to wake up from just drifting along as Christians who are sleepy. What are we doing hiding in our homes and being timid in sharing Christ with others? Jesus left the glory of heaven and was not ashamed to be seen with us and to call us brothers in the sight of all the Hosts of Heaven! If anyone should feel shame by association it is Jesus and not us! We are the ones who are raised up into places of honor by being associated with Him!

We have been given the greatest honor by being called His brothers and sisters! Let us wake up and renew our commitment to be seeking Him earnestly everyday and to be used by Him for the spreading of His kingdom and glory!

God bless you all!

Matthew 15:32-39

Feeding the four-thousand

In this chapter I would like to call to our attention the compassion that Jesus had for those who were crowding around Him for instruction and healing. Being very much aware that these people had not eaten in three days, He desired to give them something to eat so that they would not faint on their return home.

Jesus demonstrates that His concern is not just for their souls but for their physical condition as well. He has been both teaching and healing these people for three days now, but when it comes to sending them home He has one more gift for their perseverance in staying with Him.

The question is how does this apply to us? I think the meaning is clear and yet it is easy to miss it. If we pursue God with a strong desire to be near Him He will not overlook the reality of the condition we are in. If we, like the four thousand in this chapter, pursue Christ to the point of ignoring all other things, Jesus will not have overlooked our necessity of those things. He knows the physical limitations we live under and will not leave us to perish while we are so earnestly following and seeking Him.

The actions of these people are quite commendable. How often have you gone three days without eating or working just to spend time with Jesus? Jesus shows us that not only will He take the time to teach us, but that our physical condition will be taken care of as well. I know that we all find it is very easy to be distracted from spending time with Him. But most of these distractions have to do with having no time to spend with Him because of the pressures of staying alive. (bills, food, school) I would like each one of us to be aware that He is displeased with this excuse having given a definite promise that He is watching out for those things and will provide for them. He wants us to understand that our salvation is far more important than any of these things.

However, this is just the beginning. He desires us to test His faithfulness in these things so that we might begin to take it to its real purpose. He wants us to trust Him with our lives that we might start concentrating on rescuing others. He desires us to be His hands

and feet and mouth. He wants us to join Him in a job that is truly valuable. In fact, the value of the job is beyond our estimation! He wants us to be waking people up to the reality of the eternity He has granted to us and to respond to His call for obedience. Each person we are able to reach is one more person who now has a real future ahead of them. An eternal future. What is the price or value that can be placed on a person's life? Can we measure the value of their eternity? We should never cease to be looking for ways to rescue people. Each one is more precious than anything else on this earth.

I encourage each one of us not to give God our excuses, but rather, to begin to understand how much He loves and cares for us. Then we can seek Him with confident energy, letting nothing distract us from spending time with Him. The confidence in His love will cause us to be ready to touch any person who God will send into our lives. That trust, having allowed us to devote more time to Him, will help us to be more prepared for the work.

It is a job that everyone is capable of becoming part of, no matter how little you may think you have to offer people. God is both willing and able to make use of it. So let us give what we have to Him and look forward to seeing what He will do with it. Always remember that there are real lives in danger of spending eternity in Hell and some of them have walked right through your life without your even saying anything to them. Let us stop being caught up in ourselves and become aware that there are others who need our worries and concerns more than we do. Let us put our worries and concerns to better use!

Let us do as Jesus has commanded and love our neighbors as though they were ourselves. It is a wonderful call to action that has no end of work and no end to the fruit it could bear.

Matthew 16:24-27

Jesus will recompense every man according to his deeds

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it. For what will a man be profited, if he gain the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and will recompense every man according to his deeds."

We need to read these words daily and have them written in places where we can be reminded of them continually. They bring back the truth to our hearts that Jesus really is coming back and that living our lives fully for Him is the greatest blessing in the world!

Do you ever stop and think about what it means to deny yourself and pick up your cross? Our flesh cries out for the things of this world continually like an undisciplined child who screams and gets mad when he doesn't get his way. There are so many areas of our lives that are like that. We come to Christ and get saved but this doesn't mean that we are suddenly good in every area. It means that now we have subjected our bodies to Jesus' authority and His rules. We have been living a long time by our own rules and for ourselves and as we sit under our Lord's authority He begins to teach us and point out the things in our lives that have to change. This is where we begin to deny ourselves. Every place that God puts his finger on will seem like some impossible thing to let go of. Some of those things will even cause us to get mad at Him and yell at Him. (Ask me how I know this?) You see, our Heavenly Father is not afraid of our wrath because He loves us past it. He will do what is for our good regardless of our reaction which really shows how much He loves us because He doesn't have to. He could be like many parents who simply find a way to compromise with the complaining and screaming child.

I find it an interesting thing about God's work and leading in

our lives that most of the time we simply have to say yes and submit to His rules long before we understand why. I like to think of it like a parent telling their child not to play in the street. The child does not understand yet the very real threat of being killed by a car but if he obeys he will live to find out why his parents gave him that rule. Our Heavenly Father wants us to live long enough to understand why. *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments; His praise endures forever.”* Psalm 111:10 *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.”* Prov. 1:7

Taking up the cross is carrying out the work that God has for us to do. Jesus knew that His mission was going to be literal death on the cross and many who have followed Him have done the same. This understanding makes us want to make every moment count and keeps our focus on things that really matter. It’s so easy to be distracted by things here on earth that are passing away which cause us to forget the work that will not pass away. If we forget we will become ineffective.

“For what will a man be profited if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul.” These words just bring us back to our senses and the world once again loses it’s grip on us. Interesting fact: Did you know that when Jesus told those who wanted to follow Him that they must sell all they had, trading it for heavenly riches, that not very long afterward at the downfall of Jerusalem thieves had overrun the land and would kill anyone who had any wealth at all in order to steal it. Anyone who had anything of value lived in fear for their lives. So they could have traded possessions that they couldn’t keep for treasure in Heaven which no man could steal. Josephus’ history of the downfall of Jerusalem goes into great detail about those events.

“For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and recompense every man according to his deeds.” This is our greatest day when all we have left behind will feel like nothing compared to the heavenly smile of our Savior and we will wish we had several lifetimes of things to give up just to make up for the blessings He bestows upon us! All we have lost will be nothing in our eyes.

Our victory is in Christ Jesus! Let us look to Him today and may this earthly life just fall away from us.

Matthew 18:2-4

The life of a child

And He called a child to Himself and set him before them, and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." - Jesus

If we are to enter the Kingdom of Heaven we must become as little children. Consider the illustration that Jesus has directed us to. This one line simplifies all the complexity of trying to understand our relationship with our Heavenly Father.

Let us look closely at this picture and learn from its example. When a child is born into the world he is not expected to pay the bills and to struggle with keeping himself alive. His father has taken on these responsibilities before he was even born. No, instead he has the job of being obedient to his father and to trust that his father knows what is best for him. His chores around the house are suited to his age. His father does not have him repairing the roof at four years old or mowing the lawn at five. No, instead his jobs are keeping his room clean and learning to share his toys. As a child he has no choice as to whether or not he is the one who takes care of himself. He must trust his father to do this job for his life is completely in his father's hands.

As Christians this knowledge should fill us with joy. The trust that a child can have that his father will take care of him whether he is scared, sick, or in trouble is the trust we can have in our Heavenly Father.

So the question is, do we have this kind of trust in your Heavenly Father? How real is He to us? Do we really expect to get an answer when we cry out to Him? Do we have assurance that He has both heard us and is going to answer? This really is the test. How can He be our confidence if we are not actually sure that He is going to help us with our problem? We pray but inside we have that doubtful feeling that He won't answer our request. And it seems that as long as we pray for things that we can do ourselves we are full of confidence that He will answer. But when it comes to things

beyond our control then we don't have much confidence. In fact, many times our confidence fails entirely and we fall into despair. So who are we really trusting? It seems to me that we have built our faith on ourselves rather than on God. We start by praying for these things that are beyond our control with what seems like real faith and trust in God, but as things begin to go in ways that are entirely contrary to how we think they should have been answered we give up on our trust in Him and get mad or full of sorrow towards Him. This is when we need to take courage and learn what trust in Him is. Let us give Him a chance to teach us by joyfully not giving up on our trust that He will answer and to wait expectantly for His good plan to unfold. We can be assured that He is not only working on the answer, but has promised to take care of us as His little children.

So the next question is how do we attain this kind of trust? It seems that every time we think we are learning what trust is, something new happens that really seems impossible to deal with! We feel that this time it is beyond what He would or could do for us. The cure for this is to get to know our Heavenly Father. Our confidence will grow as we start to understand that we really are little children in His house. He has not left us on our own, in fact that is as far from the truth as a newborn baby is from getting a job. As we start to earnestly seek Him, this reality will not be far behind.

I urge each one of you to seek Him with joy on your lips and trust in your hearts. This confidence is the foundation stone for our relationship with God. It is one of the blessings that our loving Savior has purchased for us. I recommend reading John 14:12-27 It sums up all these things quite well.

May God bless each one of you with a quiet spirit that loves to sit still in the presence of our Heavenly Father. He is a wonderful teacher who longs for you to sit quietly at His feet that He might instruct you in the ways of your eternal life.

Matthew 18:12-14

A call to action

“What do you think? If any man has a hundred sheep and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and search for the one that is straying? And if it turns out that he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than the ninety-nine which have not gone astray. Thus it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish.” – Jesus

You can sense the distress that is in the shepherd as he finds that one of his sheep has strayed and is now unprotected from predators and the dangers of the terrain. His fear for its safety is what causes him to earnestly seek for it and upon finding it –to be so full of relief that it exceeds all of the fear that he had been suffering on its behalf. Relief has flooded his heart and brought with it great rejoicing!

So the question for us today is, “Have we realized that we are missing sheep?” In one sense, we are the sheep, but in another, we have been called to be our brother’s keeper. Jesus has set Himself as our example and has demonstrated that no sacrifice is too great for the work of rescuing the lost. The love that He has for us set no limit on what He was willing to endure on our behalf and the joy from the complete victory that He has purchased for us is so much greater than the distress that He was under for our salvation. In other words, we have the ability to share in the joy of our dear Savior by earnestly seeking out the lost and rescuing them!

This is a call to action! This is a call to be on our knees before God, asking Him for direction in what to do in order to get started, and seeking Him with all our heart to be used by Him for the purpose of rescuing others. This is a call to shake off our comfort zone and to step forward and embrace the work that God has for each of us! The best employee is one who not only does his job, but asks for more when he is finished. He desires to out-do his best. How often do we truly go to God for a work list from Him? Are we content to just do the bare minimum that we feel obliged to do because good Christians do these things? Or are we ready to be busy for God and

to take part in the radiant joy that comes from taking the challenge that He will set before us?

So this week I challenge each of you to spend time with God in the morning and to ask Him for a list of things you can be doing for Him during the day. And when you have the time, send me an e-mail telling me what happened. It doesn't have to be a long e-mail, but let me know how God answered and what took place as a result.

We have been instructed to spur one another on to great works in Christ so I would really like to encourage you all to take this challenge. Sacrifice one of your nights that you have set aside for yourself and ask God for a job to do instead. If there is one thing I have learned as a Christian its, "The greater the personal sacrifice, the greater the fruit that will come from it." The Lord will allow you to be tested by distractions and desires that will come up to stop you from setting the time aside for working for Him, in order to bless you all the more as you overcome them to serve Him!

May God fill each of your hearts this day with a fresh excitement to be serving Him!

Matthew 19

The wisdom of self-control

As we read this chapter two things become very clear. 1) The reality that God's laws and our obedience to them is of no less importance now than it was when they were first put in place at the creation of the earth. They have not eroded with time or become less important to be obeying. 2) That God's blessings for our obedience to His laws are also just as sure now as they were then.

Now we all live in the world and we love the things of the world. Because of this fact we like to think that the punishments for breaking the laws of God might not be so bad or that they might not apply to us at all. We also don't like looking too closely at what God's laws are so that our consciences will stay in the dark as to what is really right and what is really wrong. We like to keep the laws as gray and unclear as possible. Inside we all know that if we look closely at the laws we will find that we are going to have to stop doing things that we love or live to do. So we all try to stay away from really knowing the laws so that we will not be accused of outright disobedience to them. If we don't know then we might only get a warning instead of a serious punishment.

This approach is not going to work. In the desire to hold onto the things of the world we have attempted to cover over the reality of the Awesomeness and Holiness of a God who created the Universe and set up all the laws, which we are trying to ignore. God will not be fooled by our attempted ignorance of His rules. It will not pacify One who had to send His only Son to pay the price for our breaking of those same rules. God's rules are so Holy and unbreakable that the only payment for breaking them had to be from one who was completely innocent of ever breaking them.

Now let me ask you something. If these rules are so dearly paid for how can you expect to survive without making it your priority to know and obey them? Jesus has indeed paid the death penalty for our breaking of them, but that payment was purchased so that we might have the freedom to begin obeying them. You see, if Jesus hadn't come there would be no need to even attempt obedience because there would be no escaping God's wrath for what we had already

committed. Each of us would be without hope of escape from Hell. But Jesus did pay the price and now instead of the death penalty we will receive discipline for our disobedience to those rules. Now we must study those laws so that we may learn to obey them quickly thus avoiding His loving discipline. God's rules still stand, but now we have grace and hope through Jesus. It is a gift that should have us joyfully trying to obey every one of God's laws. Indeed, we should be studying the laws intently that we might please our Heavenly Father with our joyful desire to obey Him. We should take full advantage of the salvation we have been given by studying and obeying those laws that we might enjoy the blessings and rewards that come from obedience to them.

God calls each of us to use our understanding so that we might learn from His discipline. We can either learn quickly or we can ignore the correction that He sends to us. To learn quickly always means that we have to painfully deny our flesh and to walk away from whatever we have been doing that breaks His laws. The reason this is so hard is that the things we have to give up are always things that we love to do or couldn't stop ourselves from doing. Put it this way. If you told an alcoholic that he had to give up drugs, would this be hard for him? Of course not. He never did drugs. It's alcohol that he can't leave alone. Walking away from things we love requires self-denial and sacrifice. It is always a hard road, but it always leads to a stronger relationship with God and the wonderful blessings that come from this relationship.

We are fortunate to have such a wonderful and loving Heavenly Father who will pursue us with discipline. His discipline causes our lives to become cut off from the things that we could or would not leave of our own free will. He backs us into a corner until we have no choice but to look to Him and thank Him for His "severe mercies". The fact is if we have no self-control, He will enforce His self-control on us in order to rescue us from further consequences.

It is time to learn self-control and to become responsible for our actions. Let us not wait for God to have to enforce self-control upon us, but rather let us quickly act with putting self-control in our lives. Otherwise we may find that we don't like the form of discipline He has chosen for us. May God bless you all with a renewed urgency to seek the Lord with all your heart! Let us love our Heavenly Father more with each passing day!

Matthew 19:29

Stepping out for Jesus

“And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name’s sake, shall receive many times as much, and shall inherit eternal life.” – Jesus

Jesus certainly tests our comfort zone. He doesn’t give us any illusion that we should expect a life that needs no faith to step out and follow Him. Jesus is answering Peter’s question which was, *“We have left everything for You, what will there be for us?”*

Our Heavenly Father places two choices before us, either we can have the world and it will be the only heaven or treasure we will every have, or we can forsake this world and receive an eternal one in exchange. Why is it that we can’t have both? Often we try to have both but we fail neither achieving much for God nor much for ourselves. Our trouble comes in the form of a divided heart that is not sold out for one or the other. We seek comfort and pleasure and security from the earth and then our hearts are attached and we cannot leave it behind in order to walk in complete submission to the commandments and will of God. Every disciple of Christ faces this cross-road. Do I let go of what I know in order to embrace the unknown? Is God truly my security as He says He is? Is His hand truly stronger than mine when it comes to taking care of me? Is it true that Trusting in Him is safer than my job which has taken care of me till now? The truth is, God is going to shake the United States and Canada real soon and our whole way of life is going to fall apart. The things we have believed were secure will fail and our hope will have to find a new place of refuge. God has blessed us for His own sake up till now, but He has had enough of our sin and wickedness that has gone out and polluted both us and the nations that formerly looked to us for Godliness. He has pronounced His judgment and in my opinion, it will not be long delayed.

It is not too soon to be thinking of these two choices God has given us. The good news is that once we have surrendered the things of this world to Him they lose their hold on us. Jesus becomes our hearts desire and nothing else compares to being near Him. Revelation 2:4-5 says, *“But I have this against you, that you have left*

your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you, and will remove your lamp stand out of its place – unless you repent.” – Jesus

This is our wake-up call for us to let the world go and serve Jesus with our whole heart. The distractions that have pulled us away are often nothing that even holds our interest because once you have been with Jesus everything else loses its taste. However if we don't continually refresh ourselves in His presence these things deaden our soul and cause the word of God to grow dim in our minds. Now is the time to awake and repent of the things that we have stumbled over. Our Heavenly Father approves of this and will restore all the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives!

Let us arise and clear our hearts and houses of the pollution of the world. Let us remove everything that causes our heart to stop and say, “If I follow Jesus I'll have to give up this or that.” Don't look at them, just get rid of them so that God's Holy Spirit will be pleased to live in your house! Let us repent and seek the Lord with our whole heart both for ourselves and for our land! There is much work to be done for the Kingdom of God. Let us rise up and do it!

God bless!

Matthew 20:1-16

Earning Heavenly wages

I am very drawn to this illustration of earning Heaven's wages. It is interesting to me that it is not our great abilities or how long we have worked for the "Landowner," but is about whether or not we are standing at the gates of His vineyard ready and waiting for work.

In Jesus' other version "The parable of the wedding feast," those who were invited were to busy doing things for themselves, buying houses, plowing fields, or visiting friends, to be able to attend. In both of these scenarios being ready and having no other self-absorbing commitments is the key to being let in to Heaven.

Jesus is placing our payment of Heavenly wages on whether or not we are standing at His gate waiting for a job in His vineyard. He does not tell us to be plowing the fields beside His vineyard so that we are practiced up to be really good at vineyard working when He should ask us to work for Him. No, we should be standing, ready and waiting for the work He would have us to do. If we work in the neighboring field, practicing for when He should call, we may find ourselves not wanting to answer Him because what we are doing has become too important to us. It may be fantastic practice but it is still not His vineyard! We will earn no Heavenly wages if we are not in His vineyard.

So what does it mean to be waiting for Him at the gates of His vineyard? Let me start by saying that it might be the hardest thing you will ever do for Christ. Waiting at His gate means giving your life to Christ. That is, putting down the desires of your flesh so that when He calls you are ready to answer Him quickly. It is setting your life aside so that you can live completely for Christ. As I was telling a friend of mine, we can all prepare for some Christian outreach ministry. Maybe we are planning a three-day trip into the city to spread God's word. So for the month before we go, we are preparing ourselves for who we might see and what we are going to say to them. We have prepared ourselves and know that it will only be for a few days and then we will be able to relax and go back to life as usual. This is not that difficult because it has a beginning

and an end. Both of which we can see and prepare for. What Jesus is describing in this parable is different. He has described a much more challenging duty for us. He has instructed us to be standing at His gate waiting for an invitation to begin working in His vineyard. He does not give us a set time that He will come looking for us, but rather, He will come unexpectedly and if we are waiting for Him He will put us to work. If we are not there waiting, His unexpected arrival will find us not at our post, and therefore losing the chance to enter into His vineyard.

The reason being ready is so hard for us is that we must put our lives on hold indefinitely to await His coming to offer us work. If we are not ready when He comes we will be passed by and lose our chance to earn His Heavenly wages. The only work that earns Heavenly wages is in His vineyard. We will find it nowhere else.

So the question is, how much of any given day do you have yourself mentally and physically prepared to do anything that Jesus would have for you to do? How much of your day is devoted to being ready for His call? How much of your day is devoted to living for God and not for your own worldly pleasures? Have you set your mind on living obediently to God's laws every moment of the day? The reason I ask these questions so many times is to stress the point that we should desire these things more than anything else. If we don't keep them in the center of our thoughts we will easily be distracted from being at His gates waiting for the work.

If Jesus finds you, are there times of the day that you would tell Him that you are unavailable for the work He would have for you to do? You can't do it because you are going out with friends, or to a party. If He had only asked you a few hours sooner you would have had the time and been glad to help Him. We expect Him to understand that we have scheduled time for ourselves and we can't change the plans at this time, but we will be available again sometime tomorrow. So you can see that preparing to be available for a certain day of the week or month to be a witness for Christ is easy compared to always being ready to work for Him at any hour of the day or night. One has a beginning and an end. The other has no beginning and the end is when eternity has begun.

In this parable we have been told that we must be standing

there waiting so that we might be found and given work. Once we are working we will find that it is much easier to avoid the temptations that we struggled with before. We will find that we are too busy to have any more time for the things we used to do. The work can be hard, but I don't think that it is harder than standing there waiting for the work to begin. So let us take courage putting our sinful pleasures and distractions aside. Let us be found waiting at His gates looking forward to the work He would have us to be doing. Think of Peter walking on the water. When he took his eyes off of Jesus he started to sink. We also will begin sinking back into the way we used to be if we take our eyes off of Jesus.

May God bless each one of you with a strong desire for Heavenly wages. And may each of you find by experience that they are the only wages worth working for.

Matthew 21:1-17

The fear of God

The lesson that we have for us today is one that defies our human nature and puts our love and fear of God to the test. It is an illustration of how important it is to not be affected by people's praise or anger when it comes to our obedience to God.

When Jesus entered into Jerusalem the people were shouting praises to Him and glorifying Him. However, He did not let their good opinion of Him affect His obedience to God. If He had, He would not have been able to do what the fear of God demanded to be done. He would not have been able to walk into the temple and turn over the tables of the businesses that were filling up the temple where holiness and purity should have been. It was a courageous step that would have made many people very angry. Can you imagine what sort of people it would have been that He had just offended? It would have been the wealthy and most influential men in Jerusalem. Can you imagine who you would have to know or be in order to get such prime area for a store? It was the best location imaginable. Just think, once a year everyone had to come through there.

It would have taken so much courage to do what Jesus did and yet it was not just courage. It was a thing that had to be done for fear of God's wrath if it were not done. The people were violating the holiness of God's temple. Jesus was in fear of the disobedience before God and was full of compassion for those who were unknowingly taking part in something that God was going to judge harshly. He wanted to rescue them from destruction and if possible avert God's wrath.

So the question is how would you and I have handled a similar scenario? I think we would have been doing well if we even talked to a couple of the vendors to express our concern of the laws we might be breaking. We would probably finish our talk with something like, "Well, your set up already so lets let it go for this year, but next year we have got to make some changes because it's an issue that's really starting to concern me." Meanwhile the judgment of God is imminent and there will likely not be a next year! Our

fear of men and hesitant attitude will have cost us the city of Jerusalem. God's wrath will come and the cost will be great. It concerns me greatly how much this is true for us all of the time. We don't fear God enough to completely change our ways, and we don't fear enough for others. The punishments that come from breaking God's laws are real and we should fear them. We each know people who are heading down a road that will be their death, but we don't want to say anything or do anything, which could save them. You see, they might get mad at us or hate us if we do it. Or they may think we're fools and that we don't know what we are talking about. We have to love them more than all these possibilities. We need to take action. If you had a friend who was walking to the edge of a cliff while reading a book and listening to music with their headphones on and you could see that they didn't realize how close they had gotten to the edge what would you do? Well if you grabbed them by the shoulder and pulled them backwards roughly they would probably be startled and most likely annoyed at being treated in such a way. However when they realize that you just saved them from falling to their death I'm sure that they will have forgotten how roughly you had treated them. Instead they will thank you for your actions and love you all the more for your having rescued them.

I would like to close by saying that the kind of love that doesn't mind taking peoples anger to do them good only come from a deep devotion to God. It is the love that is often talked about in the Bible. We don't naturally have it. It is something that grows as we spend time with God. You see we love ourselves too much to take on the burden of loving others. We need this love more than anything and we must seek God earnestly for it. It is a love that gets us away from our selfish natures and makes us ready to help anyone that God places on our path. It is my desire to see each of us continually ready to be a blessing to others.

May God bless each of us with the gift of love for one another.

Matthew 22:37-40

The greatest commandment

You shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart, and with all of your soul, and with all of your mind. These words will change our lives if we make them our dearest desire. These words will break the bonds of our worst temptations and will set our life on fire with obedience for God.

There is no mystery to the key that opens the door of change in our lives. There is no mystery in how to get out from under the spell that temptation has over us. There is no mystery in how to obtain the ability to not fall back into sin. This commandment unlocks them all.

Jesus unlocks the door by reminding us that we must love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, and mind. This love for God is described in such detail as to demonstrate that it is an all-consuming love. It is not just one part of you that should love Him, but all of you. This all-consuming love is vital to receiving the benefits of our salvation. It is a love that will start a chain reaction in our lives that will transform us into new men and women, reborn into God's family.

Let me describe the events that take place when you seek God in the way that is spoken in this commandment. As we start to seek God with our heart, mind, and soul we will start to realize that it describes a love that is not distracted. It is a love that requires the use of all of our senses. As we pursue this love a desire to get very close to God will begin to fill our hearts. If we keep diligently seeking Him we will find that He begins to draw near to us. His nearness brings us in contact with His Holiness and His Holiness starts to reveal just how many things there are in our lives that are disobedient and unholy. This knowledge will become so real to us that we will begin to feel deep sorrow for our sins. It is a sorrow that penetrates deep into the soul and desires nothing more than to be forgiven. When we have felt this sorrow a cleansing will begin to take place in our hearts and a true understanding of what Jesus has done for us will overwhelm us. It takes this heart-rending sorrow to receive heart-changing forgiveness. Our repentance before God

must be real. There is no shallowness in His presence.

Now we will begin to feel a change in our relationship with God. A change that is different than anything we have ever felt before. It is a feeling of being in God's presence. There is a peace and a joy when our sins are forgiven and we are near God. In fact, that peace and joy will not leave us but will become part of us until we get distracted and leave His side. This change is so wonderful that it leaves us with knowing that we never want to lose this closeness with God again. Before we were people who knew that we should be obeying God's laws. Now we have become people who never want to live without them. We now want nothing more than to be obeying His laws and trying to please Him in every way that we can. It is such a delight to please Him!

This brings me to the second greatest commandment. Which is to love our neighbor as our self. You see that until we have pursued God with our whole heart we are not ready for this commandment. It is the extreme closeness to God that opens our eyes to the real distress of our neighbors. We begin to be filled with a compassion for people that stems from God's compassion for people. His love infects us with love for others. His commandment sets our feet in motion to begin taking care of others. It sets us on course for being a living testimony for God. It is the path of truly becoming a servant of all and the greatest in Heaven is the servant of all.

Jesus has lead the way in all of these things. Let us follow after Him with all diligence. Let us long to be continually learning how to be wonderful servants. Always going the extra mile for others with no complaints or thoughts for ourselves. This is our greatest struggle for our selves continually want to be taken care of first. In fact they never seem to leave us alone for a moment. They are continually getting in the way of every opportunity to help someone else. Our selves are never satisfied!

Hold fast to our Heavenly Father. Seek Him earnestly and you will find Him. We need Him more than anything else. He is our Lifeline, our Air, our Living Water. These two commandments are lights that will shine a clear path into the kingdom of Heaven.

Matthew 23

The greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven is the servant of all

There are a couple of things that we need to know in order to be good servants. 1st a servant is someone who bears his masters burden. He does not give him one to bear. In other words if you had a servant who made you do all the work you really wouldn't call him a servant would you? 2nd a good servant leads the way by his attitude and behavior. He is not discouraged by being given the hardest jobs but instead, by his willing and cheerful spirit, inspires others to join him in the work. Our attitude affects people a lot. If there are jobs that we don't feel like doing others will also be inclined to not feeling like doing them. If there are jobs that we grumble and complain about it is amazing how quickly those around us start to feel the same. Being a servant does not mean that you no longer have the ability to be a leader. If you are willing to do anything and nothing is beneath your dignity you will become a wonderful leader. Your willing nature and energetic spirit will turn you into a person people want to follow.

God has called us to a very important job. He has called us to serve our neighbor. So with the understanding that as a servant there is nothing we should not be willing to do for others, many avenues are wide open for us to start doing what He has asked. We simply have to overcome ourselves and begin.

Let me give us a "servant assignment." Let us each make a list of jobs that we hate doing or at least annoy us to be called upon to do and for the next three weeks make those things our priority to do.-Maybe it's something like when we vacuum the living room we don't go into the corners or behind the couch. - Or maybe when we do our laundry and we don't fold the person's clothes that were in the dryer when we went to use it.-Or maybe your brother has left his things all over the table you were asked to clean and you feel that it's really not your job to pick up his things. -Maybe it's doing the dishes. -Maybe it's mowing the lawn. I know that these are very simple examples, but you will find that your character and integrity

are shaped by how you handle these things. If we are thorough in these little things than we are more likely to be thorough in the big things. Being lazy or trying to get out of doing things by just doing the quick part of the job is like a disease that only gets worse the longer we let it go.

To do jobs halfway or halfheartedly will cause us to never be ready for responsible positions in life. So also, to obey God's laws halfway or halfheartedly will cause us to not be ready for the position He has planned for us in Heaven.

We need to seriously view ourselves as God's servants and to do every job thoroughly so that He is not ashamed by our poor service towards His guests. Jesus has told us that even giving a cup of water to a child in His name is doing it for Him. Everything we do for each other in Jesus' name is doing it for Him. Heaven's way of life is to serve others. The earth's way of life is to serve ourselves. Let us learn to live, as we will in Heaven so that we are ready when we get there.

Let us pray for humble and unselfish hearts so that we will be able to be the servants He has called us to be.

Matthew 24

The return of Christ

This chapter is on the things we can expect to see just before the return of Christ. The thing I want to point out is that Jesus disciples were living every day as though He was about to return. They were energetically teaching His words and working to see that no man was overlooked regarding salvation. So if they were sure that His return was imminent then, what does that mean two thousand years later? I would think that the very air around us should be crackling with the electricity of thousands of angels gathered at our very doorstep waiting for their commander to give the word to move. It really has been two thousand years already! How much longer do you think it will be before He gives the word? He will be here soon! Our Master is returning let us get our houses in order! Let us be expectantly waiting for Him to arrive! Let us start waking each other up. Let us help each other to trim our lamps. Let us tell each other stories to remind each other just how soon it will be to His return.

So what does this mean? How do we start to truly wake up and be ready for His return? This means that we have to start making God our priority. We don't want Him on the last part of our list and if everything else gets done we'll spend some time with Him. We need to start devoting a part of each day to spending time with Him. I know that we all try and do this, but I also know that it is the first thing the Devil tries to undermine because it is our lifeline to God's Living Water. This time with God is not one of those things where if we get the time - great, if not -well there's always tomorrow. If you were taking care of your houseplants with this kind of an attitude your plants would be dead in no time. We need God's Living Water the way they need regular water.

Being asleep is no more than being so distracted by the pursuits and daily routines of this world that we don't spend any time with God. Without fellowship with God our conscience gets dull and once this goes we even stop wondering what being a Christian really is. We just start to think of ourselves as being saved and that there really isn't anything else to do but live our lives, and if people ask

us if we believe in God we just say the magic word “Yes.” However we are not alive in Christ. We are not drinking from His fountain of Living Water. If we were we would be seeing the “growing affect” of drinking from the Well. A conscience that hated sin. A desire to see others reborn in Christ. A desire to see the hungry fed. A desire to take care of orphans and widows. To sum it all up, we would have a “Heart of Compassion.” All these things are the fruit of drinking from the Fountain of Life.

It is time to recommit ourselves to spending time with God every day. This time with Him is why we are Christians. It is the time with Him that floods our soul with new life. It is the time with Him that fills our heart with joy and peace. The pleasure of being in His company is such that there is no place where we would rather be.

May God bless each one of you this day with a fresh taste of His Living Water. And may you long for it with a renewed desire that far surpasses the desire for the of this world.

Matthew 24:45-47

Being faithful servants of God

“Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you, that he will put him in charge of all his possessions,” -Jesus

To whom is Jesus addressing in this passage. He is addressing you and I and the food He is speaking of is spiritual food, that is, words of correction, words of encouragement, words of reminder and prayer, and considering ourselves to be our brothers keeper. If it concerns him it concerns us. Jesus gives us both words of encouragement and words of warning in the following verses which I have not written out concerning our forsaking of this important job for the sake of our own enjoyments and comforts.

So what is Jesus telling us in respect to the work He has given us? He says be faithful and diligent and timely with our efforts towards one another. Faithful and observant, seeing and going out of our way in order to meet the needs of others. We need to realize that we are to go beyond waiting for someone or something to come along and give us a job, but to take up the matter and begin to do the work without anymore procrastination. Jesus promises that if He finds us diligent in this work when He comes that He will be well pleased and reward us for our faithfulness. So what are the practical steps for diligently serving in the family of God?

1. Starting our day with a willingness to work and a heart that is asking God where He would like us to start.
2. Not assuming our day is finished simply because we have completed some small task for Him.
3. Being ever diligent to multiply our knowledge of God by the study of His word and spending much time in prayer.
4. Praying for God to send us people to be praying for and ministering to.

These four things will be guaranteed to cause us to be busy with tending the house of God. Our lives will not be fruitless if we do these things and the best part is that you don't have to go to

seminary to achieve these things or have great plans to be a pastor or evangelist. Anyone can do these things. They are the only guidelines for entering into His service and being found faithful at His return.

So let us think on these things and act upon them, making them our earnest prayer to God that we might simply bring them into daily practice in our lives. May God bless each of us this week with a great renewal of His Holy Spirit that we might diligently and with single-mindedness set about His work.

Matthew 25:14-30

The parable of the talents

There must be an understanding of what our responsibilities for Christ are. This parable tells us that each of us have been given talents that we are expected to make use of. God gives to each of us according to our abilities so that there is no excuse for not being able to make use of them.

An interesting point to this parable is that God gives the talents to His own slaves. Not someone else's. So as Christians we must recognize that we have something which we are expected to make use of. The people that are slaves to this world around us do not have that same responsibility, for the talents were only given to those who serve Him.

So as we look around us and see all the things of this world that look so appealing, and we see that it is normal for everyone around us to be striving for those things. We have to stop and realize that we have a job to do which they have not been given. We have a responsibility to take care of what our Master has left us in charge of. We don't have time to be chasing the things that everyone else is. We have already been given something of more value than what they seek. We are expected to work with it so that it will be worth even more when our Master comes to collect it.

The question is what are these talents that He has entrusted to us? A talent is any job or action that we do in which we give all of the pay or reward to our Heavenly Father. A talent is anything that we do which goes to enriching God and His kingdom rather than to enriching ourselves.

Example. If we build furniture we should be faithful to tithe the money that we get from its sale. We should be looking for ways to use the gift of wood working to help others. House hold projects or gifts etc.

Another example. If we live at home and take care of the house then our thoughts should be focused on doing everything as unto God for it is His house and He has given us the use of it. You can also be looking for ways to help your neighbor and to do acts of kindness towards anyone in need. Some of us have a gift for teaching some

a gift for listening. We just need to use them to the best advantage for God.

What is the best way to cause these talents to grow? We have to just start using the gift, for example, teaching God's word. First we start teaching. Then we find we need to start writing. Those writings turn into books. Those books turn into libraries. So you can see how one talent can turn into several. Once we start to use a talent we find that each one has so many connections to other things that the room to grow is never ending.

So let me encourage you to look for ways and to pray for ways to turn the things you do every day into things that can be given to God. He has said that if you are faithful with little He will make you faithful with much. Being faithful with our talents is not an option that we can take or leave. He has told us to make use of them and not to ignore them. To ignore them is enough to cause us to be thrown out of the kingdom of Heaven.

It is wonderful to think that God truly has given each of us something to work with. We have been given something of value by our Heavenly Father and it should be our first priority to turn it into more.

Matthew 26

The Passover

I would like to take some time to reflect on what God sees when we sin. Sin is something that God hates, to put it mildly. Actually sin is something that He will not tolerate to come near Him. However, God sent His son to pay the price for sin that we might be forgiven and allowed into heaven.

This chapter reveals the pain Jesus was in as He contemplated the reality of what was about to happen. He had come here to fulfill God's word which had been promised to man after the fall. The lamb that was used to atone for sin up till the time of Jesus was the constant reminder to God that His Son was coming to fulfill the promise to bear the penalty of death that our sin demanded.

God was with Jesus on the night He was betrayed. He was there and felt the pain that His Son was going through. At any time that night They could have decided that we were not worth the pain it would take to save us. I am sure that if Jesus had decided that He did not want to go through with it God would have stopped the plan right then and there. However, Jesus loved His Father so much that He would not walk away from His Father's plan. God was with Jesus through all of His pain and suffering and when we sin against Him we remind Him of what His son went through to pay for those sins. This is not a thing to take lightly. Let me give an example. What if you were fooling around and accidentally killed your best friend's four-year-old son. Now to make it even worse you were doing something that your friend told you never to do with his son. Every time your friend saw you He would be reminded of what had happen and that he had warned you not to do it. What a painful friendship you would have even if your friend had truly forgiven you.

Our sin is what caused Jesus to die! Every time we willfully sin it is a fresh reminder that we were the cause of His death. Let us not fool around with the sinful pleasures of this life without being fully aware that it breaks the heart of our Heavenly Father every time we do. Yes, our sins are forgiven and yes He will willingly paid

the price, but we do not want to willingly do anything to cause Him more pain.

Let us take these thoughts seriously and look with love and devotion into the eyes of our Father and tell Him how much we love Him. It is time to throw our sins as far away from us as possible and to never look back at them. We have a loving Savior who has done all for us. Let us do all for Him with gratitude and love.

Matthew 27

The call of the Cross

Jesus gave His life for us in a very physical way. He did not stay in heaven and simply tell His Father to put all of the blame on Him and that He would always try and make up for our sins. No, He came down and endured the harsh death penalty that was demanded to compensate for our sin.

Our job as servants of Christ is to follow in His footsteps. Our job is to give our lives for others. It is to see people's needs and to take care of them. However, if we would do this we need to put to death our selfish and prideful nature so that there is nothing that holds us back from helping others. If selfishness is ruling in our lives then we will never have the time to help others. We will be too busy taking care of ourselves. If pride is ruling then we won't want to go into places that others would think us foolish for going into. When we are proud other people's opinions of us always hold us back.

Jesus led the way. One moment He was entering the city of Jerusalem and all were praising Him. The next He was taking the humiliation of being put to death on a cross. If pride were part of His life He would not have wanted to give up the good opinion that the crowd had of Him. He would never have allowed Himself to be put to death.

So how do we put our pride and selfishness to death? There is a very simple beginning to this answer. We must go to God in prayer and ask for help with these things. We must ask Him to start pointing out our pride to us, showing us just when we cross the line. We need Him to make it clear to us just how much these things influence our lives and to grant us a repentant heart that no longer wants them in our lives.

Pride is (to put it plainly) wanting people to think that you're cool. It is wanting people to envy you for what you have. It is talking badly about someone so that you will look good. It is wanting to be recognized for how well you can do certain jobs or to be recognized for how much you help others. In fact, most of what we do and why we do them comes from proud motives. We don't want to live with

something that is below the status of the crowd that we are hanging out with and we always want to be seen or recognized for how well we can keep up with them.

Selfishness is what keeps us from doing things for others. We are so busy with either pleasing ourselves or taking care of ourselves that we don't have time to even get to know our neighbor let alone help them. Selfishness ties us up in knots and never lets us be useful to anyone. It causes bad attitudes to grow in us. We become easily offended by people make demands upon our time and we resent being interrupted from our pursuits of pleasure or work. It promotes short tempers, thoughtless words, antagonistic personalities, and inability to work with other people. It hardens our will so that no one is allowed to have any right to our time, and it fills us with an assumption that everyone should just automatically know not disturb us or bother us with requests. Selfishness destroys a good nature and a cheerful environment. Selfishness truly is hell on earth!

So, Jesus has called us to putting ourselves to death, that we might begin having a cheerful and willing spirit towards others. It brings out acts of kindness and love that gladly go the extra mile for others even to the point of physical death. Our lives are no longer our own. We have freely given them up for Jesus to make use of.

Let us draw close to God in prayer and in His word. For that is the only way to truly be given the ability to walk away from our pride and selfishness. His love for us is beyond measure and his desire to truly change us on the inside is such that he gave his life to complete the work.

Matthew 28

Make disciples of all nations

“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”- Jesus

I think that there is an amazing thing that has happened here. Before Jesus death on the cross He had given all authority to God and placed Himself in the lowest position with no authority but what was given from His Father. He gave Himself up to be under the jurisdiction or law of men with complete trust that His Father controlled the hearts of men and all things that concerned Him. Now, He has told us that all authority in heaven and on earth have been granted to Him. Justice and mercy are in His hands for all has been given to Him.

As he ascended into heaven He gave us our job He commanded us to go forth and make disciples and to teach all that He has taught us. So the question is how are we responding to this call to action? Are we dragging our feet, hoping that others will do enough work so that we won't really need to help out? Are we ignoring the command all together? Or do we not even know that we have been commanded to do this?

Well here is the thing. If you saw a car accident and found that you were the only person around, your concern for there safety would make it impossible for you to not do something to help. Even if you didn't know any first aid you would still do the best you could for them. The first time you experience something like this you will realize that it is the last time that you want to be in that position unprepared. Especially if there had been something simple that you could have done that would have prevented the person from being crippled for life or worse, dying. A little bit of knowledge would have been a tremendous help to the person and their family.

Think about how many people around us are dying spiritually. They are headed for eternal death. Just try telling even one of

them how to find God and you will start to realize how unprepared you are to help. Now lets go even farther, what if that person knew their soul was in trouble and asked you for help? What would you say to him that would assure him and answer all of his questions as to the safety of his soul? I think that we will find that all that we have to say will sound empty and more like a band-aid over a gaping wound than a healing touch that can truly close it.

We are all unprepared for the challenge of soul surgery. A doctor has to go to school for seven years to even come close to operating on a person. How much more prepared should we be to help rescue a person's soul? We need to put ourselves through soul surgery school. What school is this and how can we attend? There is a class you can take each day where you get to watch and learn from the Master Surgeon. First He will require you to study the Bible and to pray (to do some classroom work). Studying and praying in that little room also known as your prayer closet. Then He takes you out and introduces you to His patients that He is diligently working on. Next He will show you some of His worst patience who upon being healed were so thankful to their physician that they have dedicated their lives to working with Him so that they might show their appreciation for what He did for them.

We can never be too prepared for rescuing people. There is always more that we need to know and scenarios that we have never been in before. We must spend time with the Master Physician and do all that we can to learn from Him. Let us answer the call to go forth and teach all that He has commanded us and to live as He has taught us to live. Let our actions go hand in hand with our words. Let us not wait for others to do jobs that we can do. Let us not hesitate because there are lives at stake with each passing moment. Let us realize that we have indeed been called and given a job. Let us not convince ourselves that He meant someone else when He said those words. There are tragic accidents all around us and we are often the only ones around to see them. You won't be able to use the excuse that "nobody told me that I was supposed to do something." The accident speaks for itself there should be no need to explain that the person in the accident is dying and needs quick attention.

So let us not delay to learn all that He has commanded us so that we are ready to teach and help all those who are in trouble. Let us develop a keen eye that sees people needs so that we will be better able to help them in time. But most of all, let us learn what it means to truly love our neighbors so that we are seriously concerned for their wellbeing.

The power of prayer

Prayer really is the most powerful tool we possess. The devil knows that God hears the cries of His people and that he will have to turn and run from the situation. The Devil is very careful to try and not get us riled up enough to call for help. Instead he lulls us to sleep with pleasant distractions until we have no voice to cry out to God with. Let us wake up and use our voices to good account!

The Devil loves us when we are asleep. Let us no longer assist him in his work! But rather, let us pray for Christ's light to shine brightly from us. Let our hearts be continually towards everyone around us and let us not be distracted by physical comforts or caught up in our selves! Let us move forward in Christ as able members of His body. Let Heaven be in our sight at all times and let us not forget that we are strangers in a land that is not our own. We are simply traveling through it on a way to a better one.

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