

How Can I Have A Greater Peace? part 2

You can read part 1 here: [“How Can I Have A Greater Peace? part 1”](#).

While watching a movie recently, I enjoyed observing the star character. It was played by the boy of a very famous actor. It was really incredible to watch his mannerisms and how he spoke. Many times throughout the film I found myself saying “He’s just like his daddy.”

I’m sure that most of you have heard that expression, haven’t you? Or perhaps you’ve been told “You’re just like your daddy”, or “You remind me so much of your momma.” We really can’t help it, can we? When we’ve grown up in the environment of our parents we just become like them, not to mention DNA.

The same can be said about Jesus:

John 8: ¹⁹ “Where is your father?” they asked.

Jesus answered, “Since you don’t know who I am, you don’t know who my Father is. If you knew me, you would also know my Father.”

Colossians 1: 15a Christ is the visible image of the invisible God.

He’s just like His Daddy! Isn’t that cool? But check this out:

Genesis 1: ²⁷ So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Romans 8: ¹⁵ So you have not received a spirit that makes you

fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father."

(I've learned that the word Abba is an intimate, Aramaic term that a child would use for their father and can be translated as 'Daddy' or 'Papa'.)

Do you see the similarity? We were made in our Daddy's image, that's how human beings were designed.

Think about this for a moment and allow it to sink in: "I am designed to be like God, which is how I am supposed to be."

I can recall a DVD player I once had. Its purpose was simply to play the DVDs, without problems. That is what it was supposed to do. It didn't. It failed to play my DVDs and for that reason, I got rid of it. Of course, I gave it a few chances to work, it was not my desire to throw it away, but if it would not work for me, I considered it useless, so into the trash it went.

Matthew 21: ¹⁸ In the morning, as Jesus was returning to Jerusalem, he was hungry, ¹⁹ and he noticed a fig tree beside the road. He went over to see if there were any figs, but there were only leaves. Then he said to it, "May you never bear fruit again!" And immediately the fig tree withered up.

Of course, the fig tree was designed to bear fruit, and when Jesus discovered that it was not, He quickly discarded it. He determined that it was useless and acted accordingly.

Isn't it interesting that we are a lot like God without even trying to be? When something doesn't work, we pitch it out. We like to create, He likes to create. We like to see progress, He likes to see progress. He worked 6 days, I work 6 days. He likes to see people getting along, we like to see people

getting along. This is the intrinsic nature of God that I think we all have, but when it comes to fruits of the spirit, they are developed only through our relationship with Him.

He is patient, I am... wait. Sorry, that doesn't work for me, at least not when I sit at a red light. He is humble, I am... wait, that doesn't work for me either. Let's try He is loving, I am... wait, not always. This isn't going so well now, is it? Then I am reminded of these verses:

John 15: ⁵ "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned.

This makes me so glad that God is patient, although I am not. When I first realized this, I realized how far I am from His "factory specifications". I can hear God saying about me: *"This one isn't working very well. What will I have to do to get him in line with my plans?"*

I am so glad that God has more patience with us than He did that fig tree, aren't you?

We've been discussing finding greater peace lately and one thing not to be overlooked is found in these verses above. To paraphrase: *"When we 'remain in Him' we produce much fruit"* Then *"When we don't 'remain in Him' we can do nothing."*

Isaiah 9: ⁶ For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Just as Jesus is the Prince of Peace, we were designed to be People of Peace. After all, the human body works best when

filled with peace.

If my life cannot be described as one of peace, that only means one thing: I have not been spending enough time with Daddy. It is that simple. We discussed this at the very beginning, a child becomes like their parents after spending years of intimate time with them. The greater the love a father has for his child, the more that child has peace. The child of a loving father feels secure.

Galatians 4: ⁶ And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, "Abba, Father."

God wants His children to feel secure so that they do not have to be pre-occupied with worrisome thoughts which hinder their ability to think and act as they should. This is where the greater faith we develop over time, the more at peace we will be.

Psalms 103: ¹³ The LORD is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him.

Just like the bumper sticker says "No Jesus, No Peace. Know Jesus, Know Peace." This is not on an intellectual level and has little to do with Bible knowledge. I've read about many persecuted Christians in various parts of the world who had very little Biblical knowledge but they certainly knew their Lord very well and that was by relying on Him through prayer.

That's enough for now; I'll leave you with my favorite verse relating to prayer (One that I think should be memorized):

Philippians 4: ⁶ Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. ⁷ Then you will experience God's peace,

which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

Are you your Daddy's child?

"Heavenly Daddy, you are so good to me. Thank you for teaching me so many things. You have provided for me and have answered my prayers in so many ways that I cannot count them. You are my provider and I know that every good thing comes from you. What will it take for me to really know you and love you as a child loves His father? What will it take for me to surrender my life in exchange for the Life you have to offer? Please hold me tight and keep me on your path. It is you, Lord, that I desire more than anything. In Jesus' name, amen."

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How Can I Have A Greater Peace? part 1

My last message, [Why Should I Be Worried?](#), evoked the greatest response to any prior messages. Was it because my writing skills have improved significantly? I think not. I think that the topic that God gave me struck a chord and it hit home with many of you. One of my close friends put it this way if I can paraphrase him: *"You discussed something that we all go through but no one ever seems to talk about."*

In light of this great response, I thought I would focus on how we can experience a greater peace and offer some practical ideas on discipleship.

In a practical sense, worry and fear are probably the worst emotions a believer can display. This terrible twosome can cause paralysis and can ruin our witness. If non-believers observe that we worry as much as they do (and they do observe)... *“Just how great is their god?, What does she have that I don’t, she worries just as much as I do? He’s worried about a job just as much as I am.”*

Do you see where I am going with this? Do you see why it just might disturb our Lord a bit when He tells us time and time again in His Word not to be afraid and we’re out there in amongst the mass population not any different than the atheist next door?

I think we might agree that there is a worry-peace continuum with worry and fear being on one end of it and peace and joy on the other end. Since last week we focused on “not worrying”, I thought we’d approach it in a more positive way by focusing on having peace, one of the fruits of the spirit.

When it gets right down to our personal ministry, if we are overly preoccupied with our own circumstances, to what degree will that hinder us when it comes to serving others with love and attention? We owe it to our loved ones and the people we serve to find His perfect peace and walk in that path. This is not easy and requires great care and patience, but it’s worth it.

Galatians 5: ²² But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control.

The key words here are “the Holy Spirit produces”, that’s not “you will produce” or “your pastor will produce for you” or even “after much effort, you will produce”. Here are more promises:

Psalm 29: ¹¹ The LORD gives his people strength.

The LORD blesses them with peace.

Matthew 11: ²⁸ Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.

John 14: ²⁶ But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you.

²⁷ I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid.

How does that work? Does He just give peace to all and that's it? Do all believers receive it regardless? I don't believe so, re-read Galatians 5: 22 above.

It is fruit. How does any living thing yield fruit? By staying in fertile soil and getting fed.

Let's review that wonderful parable of the Sower:

Luke 8: ¹³ The seeds on the rocky soil represent those who hear the message and receive it with joy. But since they don't have deep roots, they believe for a while, then they fall away when they face temptation.

This verse probably doesn't describe you, someone, that yearns for a deeper relationship. It does, however, contain a most valuable message and one to share with our friends who are "living on the surface". It is easy to fall away when we are not deepening our faith (growing spiritually). This was me several times in my life when I just didn't take God seriously. "I prayed the prayer, I know I'm saved. How can I live up to His standard anyway?"

¹⁴ The seeds that fell among the thorns represent those who hear the message, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the cares and riches and pleasures of this life. And so they never grow into maturity.

Unfortunately, this used to describe me perfectly and I am afraid many believers are caught up in this today. Can you relate? *“What time is the game on? Oh, what did the pastor just say? I wonder where we will eat after church. I gotta get me some baby back ribs! Hold on, this pastor is way too fast for me, did he just use a Star Wars reference in church? I wonder when that new movie comes out...”* I’m sure this does not happen to you, does it?

¹⁵ And the seeds that fell on the good soil represent honest, good-hearted people who hear God’s word, cling to it, and patiently produce a huge harvest.

Personally, I prefer to read the Word of God rather than listen to it. My mind wanders way too easily, as I’ve illustrated above, and I miss things when I hear it. But when I read with the intent to understand, I take the time I need to devour the His Word as if it were a tender, juicy, medium rare Rib-eye steak, taking delight with every bite. I have friends who prefer to listen or even both. I know God’s made us all different and I think whatever it takes to get His Book into your body(heart, mind, and soul), do it! And at all costs.

This is where we need to stay in order to produce fruit, compare with:

John 15: *⁷ But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! ⁸ When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.*

These two verses clearly spell it out for you: **Keeping a soft heart and receiving and meditating on scripture is required to produce fruit.** The list I put together in [my last post](#) as a lesson from Job is a good list for growth, by the way.

If you've been frustrated that you have no peace or joy and always felt that being a believer in Jesus should be a life of peace, perhaps now you know why.

We read our Bibles daily to grow in spiritual maturity and get to know God more, not just to say we do it or just a habit.

“But I've tried to read daily before, I just don't get it” Or “I want it to be from my heart, not an obligation, so I choose not to read because I don't have the right motives”

These are cunning tricks that Satan loves to employ to keep the child of God at arm's length of their Heavenly Daddy.

John 10: ¹⁰ The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.

If the desire is not there, I understand (been there). But pray that God will soften your heart and read it anyway. If you continue to pray for God to work on your heart and read out of obligation in spite of your attitude, keep reading and the joy of His Words will come to you and the more you read the more you will enjoy it and the more you will get out of it. Then **keep reading.**

If you do not understand it, I get it (been there). Pray that God gives you understanding. In the meantime find a friend/elder/woman of faith that does understand and ask for assistance. But read anyway. I have a close friend that knew nothing of the Bible (was an unbeliever, but a seeker), started reading Genesis and read straight through the Old Testament which prepared his heart for the Good News of Jesus

Christ. He did not understand much of what he read but he understood enough, talked with various people about it and **kept reading**. What excuse do you have? All believers should continue to be seekers.

Psalm 105: ⁴ Search for the Lord and for his strength; continually seek him.

DO NOT LET ANYTHING, ANYONE, ANY SIN OR ANY REASON stop you from getting to know the loving and living God, the One who created you.

This message has eternal implications and cannot be stressed enough. After all, what else is there in life worth excelling at, much less compares in importance?

The Kingdom of God is not like High School.

Matthew 13: ⁴⁴ "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man discovered hidden in a field. In his excitement, he hid it again and sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field.

With God we can't afford to squeak by in class, going through the motions hoping He'll give us a passing grade on judgment day. He'll either know us, or He won't. Do we really want to casually hope for the best? **The time you spend serving in ministry is meaningless if you're not spending the time to know Him.** Where does my passion to serve come from? The heart and mind of God, or from my filthy self-righteousness?

Matthew 7: ²¹ "Not everyone who calls out to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. ²² On judgment day many will say to me, 'Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles

in your name.’²³ But I will reply, ‘I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God’s laws.’

This is the difference between participating in ministry because it was just a good idea and God calling you to ministry because you heard His voice and were obedient.

If we stay in good soil, as explained above and develop the disciplines of being in His presence daily with prayer, reading, and regular fellowship, we will continue to grow. We will experience His peace, joy, and eventually all the fruits I believe. Trees don’t think about producing fruit when they keep growing, good fruit happens. Same with us, when we stay in good soil and diligently pursue Him, He will produce good fruit in us and it will just happen, right before our eyes.

I’ll leave you with a couple more verses on peace and that’ll wrap it up. Thank you for reading, I pray that you take this message to heart and seek Him with all you’ve got!

Isaiah 26:

*³ You will keep in perfect peace
all who trust in you,
all whose thoughts are fixed on you!*

Psalms 46: ^{10a} ***Be still, and know that I am God!***

Psalms 34: ¹⁴ *Turn away from evil and do good. Search for peace, and work to maintain it.*

Will you join me in seeking His peace?

“Dear Lord, thank you for this message. I pray that all who read this message take it to heart and set time for you each day so that they can get to know you a little better and understand you more. Please help me hang in there when the situation is tough and remain steadfast in my effort to pursue

you. You are the only One worth pursuing and I thank you for getting my attention. In Jesus' name, amen."

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Why Should I Be Worried?

I don't know about you, but I have more than a few things to worry about. Some big, some small. Some short term, some long term. A few things I have some control over and others that I have no control over. On top of that, I receive emails filled with details about additional things to worry about as if I should join the sender in their concern. There are a lot of things to worry about.

Can you relate?

If I choose to, I could worry about my car falling apart, my yard that needs mowing, a project that is really late, bills that are behind, the lack of money that is coming in and the fact that I have no health care. Oh, but that's not all. I could also worry about my office that is a mess, or that many people, friends of mine, who struggle with little income and worse circumstances than I. While I'm at it I could also worry about our state and federal governments and everything else that is madness in the world.

My friends, all that I've listed here are genuinely a part of my reality.

Now I know that many of you have even longer lists than I. Some of you might be tempted to say "big deal, you think you've got problems, take a look at my list!" What I find fascinating is that I know people with long lists with poor

circumstances that worry less than people with shorter lists and seemingly smaller issues.

Lessons I've Learned

With this knowledge I draw these conclusions:

1. Our worries and concerns are relative and in no way can be compared with someone else's. People that live an "easier life" should not be put down or their problems minimized because they don't "compare" to mine. Who am I to judge?
2. It really is a choice to worry, but harder for some to break. I've been told by people that their mother worried so it became a learned habit for them, or even maybe a genetic trait, I don't know.
3. Some people can hide it well and some people wear it on their sleeve. Appearances can be deceiving, people don't always "have it altogether" as you may think.
4. Everyone's worried about something, in various degrees. Everyone also has something to be thankful for. (Read Psalm 103)

What amazes me is that I can be out doing anything and can be in a cheerful mood when I suddenly have a worrisome thought enter my mind. If I ruminate (Beth's word, not mine) on these thoughts without considering the sovereignty of God and His plans and purposes for my life then I'm left hopeless. It is that simple. Without God, there is no hope. If I fail to acknowledge my Creator then my cheerful mood quickly turns to despair.

1 Thessalonians 5: ¹⁶ Always be joyful. ¹⁷ Never stop praying. ¹⁸ Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.

Nothing substitutes our time spent with God

This is just one reason why it is essential to spend time with God daily in prayer, His Word, and spiritually charged fellowship regularly if we want any hope of having a joyful life regardless of the circumstances.

I think worry or fear is the absence of or lack of faith. Is God truly sovereign? Is He in control? Does He want what's best for me?

Based on this passage from Psalm 112 I think the measure that someone worries is an indicator of how well they know their God, personally and/or intellectually.

Psalm 112:

¹ Praise the Lord!

*How joyful are those who fear the Lord
and delight in obeying his commands.*

...

*⁶ Such people will not be overcome by evil.
Those who are righteous will be long remembered.*

*⁷ They do not fear bad news;
they confidently trust the Lord to care for them.*

*⁸ They are confident and fearless
and can face their foes triumphantly.*

This passage in 1 John says it well:

***1 John 4:**¹⁶ We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love.*

God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. ¹⁷ And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world.

¹⁸ *Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love.*

ALL things work together...

One thing that I've found is that God allows us to experience "rough spots" so that we learn to depend on Him more (which is what He desires most):

***Romans 8:** ²⁸ And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.*

And He stretches and matures us through the process:

***Romans 5:** ³ We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. ⁴ And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. ⁵ And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.*

Knowing this should excite us and then we can really shout with joy.

It tells us that there really is a purpose and that we'll be better witnesses on the other end.

"Hard times", when allowing God to work with us (remaining submissive), yields patience, compassion, joy, understanding, and perseverance. There are things you learn through difficulties that you simply cannot learn otherwise. Do you remember the book of Job?

Job was blameless from the beginning.

Job 1: ⁸ Then the Lord asked Satan, "Have you noticed my servant Job? He is the finest man in all the earth. He is blameless—a man of complete integrity. He fears God and stays away from evil."

He naturally went through a great period of despair. When God finally reveals Himself to Job He sets Job straight by making it abundantly clear that He is God and Job is not. What I think is really cool is how God showcased His creation to illustrate just how great He is. This humbled Job. It was this great experience with the Almighty and the revelation of things "far too wonderful" for him that led to his repentance and, after praying for His friends, concluded His test.

Job 42: ¹ Then Job replied to the Lord:

*² "I know that you can do anything,
and no one can stop you.*

*³ You asked, 'Who is this that questions my wisdom with such
ignorance?'*

*It is I—and I was talking about things I knew nothing about,
things far too wonderful for me.*

*⁴ You said, 'Listen and I will speak!
I have some questions for you,
and you must answer them.'*

*⁵ I had only heard about you before,
but now I have seen you with my own eyes.*

*⁶ I take back everything I said,
and I sit in dust and ashes to show my repentance."*

**One significant lesson to learn from Job is that
being blameless is not enough.**

If that is all you are seeking, you will miss out on Life

Himself. What God desires most is for us to continually get to know and understand Him more which will only perfect our love and admiration for Him. This is why the greatest commandment is to “love God...” and not “Don’t sin and be blameless”. After all, it is our love for Him that ultimately gives us the power and desire to do good.

Here are some lessons from Job that will lead you to peace:

1. Don’t count on advice or sympathy from ignorant friends, but pray for them.
2. Spend time with people that know God personally more than you do. Usually, they are the older ones (not necessarily as in Job) at church that always seem to be full of joy.
3. Continually strive to know God, both intellectually and personally (Bible reading, prayer, journaling to name a few activities).
4. Do whatever it takes and pray that you stay humble and meek, keeping your heart soft.

I’m not at all suggesting that if you continue seeking God that you’ll ever be worry-free, for even Jesus was distressed in the garden of Gethsemane. What I am saying is that listening to and following these words will greatly reduce your worry, giving you peace, improving your witness and moving you towards godliness rather than bitterness.

These are great passages to memorize:

Philippians 4: ⁴ Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice! ⁵ Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon.

⁶ **Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything.** Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. ⁷ Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your

hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

Matthew 6: ³¹ “So don’t worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’ ³² These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. ³³ Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

³⁴ “So don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today.

**If God, the Creator of all things seen and unseen,
is for us, what do we have to worry about?**

“Dear God, Let all that I am praise your name!, Thank you for teaching me so many things. My hope is in you and you alone, for you do not disappoint. Continue to lead me in your Truth so that I may grow in knowledge and understanding. Help me to know you better so that I can lean on you in dark times. You are awesome Lord and I thank you for loving me to begin with. Your loving mercies endure forever. In Jesus’ name, amen”

Take comfort from these closing words...

Job 23:

8 I go east, but he is not there.

I go west, but I cannot find him.

9 I do not see him in the north, for he is hidden.

I look to the south, but he is concealed.

10 But he knows where I am going.

And when he tests me, I will come out as pure as gold.

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Have Your Friends Been Warned?

Are you familiar with the phrase, “You’ve gotta take the bad with the good.”?

I think that’s just the way life is, isn’t it? There is always good news and bad news. I find the Bible to be much the same way. Consider this selection of verses:

1 John 5: ¹² Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God’s Son does not have life.

John 3: ¹⁸ “There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God’s one and only Son.

2 Chronicles 15: ^{2b} The LORD will stay with you as long as you stay with him! Whenever you seek him, you will find him. But if you abandon him, he will abandon you.

1 Chronicles 28: ^{9b} If you seek him, you will find him. But if you forsake him, he will reject you forever.

Notice that each of these has the “good news” and the “bad news”. Each passage contains 2 promises, one for the righteous and the other for the wicked. Moses sang the same tune:

Deuteronomy 30: ¹⁵ “Now listen! Today I am giving you a choice between life and death, between prosperity and disaster.

It's no wonder the Bible has lost its popularity.

In a day and age where the stories are sugar coated and most people are over-entertained, it doesn't take long when reading the Word of God before it pierces your heart.

Paul has a great way of putting it, I'll let him speak for himself:

***Romans 11:** ²² Notice how God is both kind and severe. He is severe toward those who disobeyed, but kind to you if you continue to trust in his kindness. But if you stop trusting, you also will be cut off.*

In addition, Paul adds:

***2 Corinthians 2:** ¹⁵ Our lives are a Christ-like fragrance rising up to God. But this fragrance is perceived differently by those who are being saved and by those who are perishing. ¹⁶ To those who are perishing, we are a dreadful smell of death and doom. But to those who are being saved, we are a life-giving perfume.*

As believers and ambassadors for God, we know we have a message to deliver. In a nutshell, it is this:

***2 Corinthians 5:** ^{20b} We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!" ²¹ For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.*

There is also a time to warn others.

Read these verses carefully:

***Ezekiel 3:** ²⁰ "If righteous people turn away from their*

righteous behavior and ignore the obstacles I put in their way, they will die. And if you do not warn them, they will die in their sins. None of their righteous acts will be remembered, and I will hold you responsible for their deaths. ²¹ But if you warn righteous people not to sin and they listen to you and do not sin, they will live, and you will have saved yourself, too."

I'm not necessarily saying that we need to be going around warning everybody, but when the time comes and the conversation moves toward death, "end of the world" scenarios, and future events, I'd like to think I'd have the courage to say something like "Get right with God, because judgment day is coming."

And if they say "That's just a 'made up' fable, the Bible has said it many years ago, it won't happen" You can tell them:

***2 Peter 3:** ⁸ But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day. ⁹ The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent. ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and the very elements themselves will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be found to deserve judgment.*

Great explanation, isn't it?

My point is that people need to hear the whole truth, which is not all "good news". Let's learn from the master Himself, this is what He had to say about the future:

***Luke 17:** ²⁶ "When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it*

was in Noah's day. ²⁷ In those days, the people enjoyed banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat and the flood came and destroyed them all.

²⁸ "And the world will be as it was in the days of Lot. People went about their daily business—eating and drinking, buying and selling, farming and building—²⁹ until the morning Lot left Sodom. Then fire and burning sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. ³⁰ Yes, it will be 'business as usual' right up to the day when the Son of Man is revealed.

Here's another warning Message from the Messiah:

Matthew 7: ²¹ "Not everyone who calls out to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. ²² On judgment day many will say to me, 'Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.' ²³ But I will reply, 'I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God's laws.'

Don't you think it's time to tell the truth?

"Dear God in heaven, may I say the words you give me to say. My friends need to know about the coming judgment and I don't know how make it clear, will you help me warn them somehow? I never know what to say or when to say it, but I know that if you live in me that my words will be your words and I can rest in that. Thank you for saving me from the coming judgment. I pray that I can continue trusting in you so that you can use me to share this news with others. In Christ's name, amen"

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He Loves Me... He Loves Me... (not?)

Does the title sound familiar? Of course, at least for some of you, I hope. In case you don't, perhaps there are people reading this that are too young or from another culture that never heard it before. I looked it up on Wikipedia and it seems to be of French origin.

Suppose a young girl daydreams about a boy, there is a simple game called "he loves me... he loves me not" which would determine whether the boy loves her or not. It is played by picking a daisy and then plucking the petals from it one by one. As each petal is removed the girl will say out loud "he loves me", then the next petal is removed, "he loves me not", next petal, "he loves me", next petal "he loves me not" and so on until the last petal is picked which, whatever phrase is recited, determines whether the boy loves her, or not. Suppose the last petal is "he loves me not"? Why she'd probably have to pick another daisy and try again. ☐

Is it silly? Maybe, but cute.

Isn't it nice to know that God always loves us and regardless of any "daisy game", He still loves us?

But do we believe this? Day in and day out? Is this just intellectual knowledge of God's Word or is it something that we know to be true in our hearts?

I think the greater understanding of His love for us is directly related to the less stress we have.

Here's the real test: Ask yourself these questions "Do I

still worry?", "Do I still have fear?" Or how about "When my bills are late, do I get anxious?", "Do I fear losing my job?", "Do I worry about losing my home?", "What do I worry about?"

If you said yes to any one of these that just means your normal. Everyone has fears and worries to various degrees. Although I believe this about people I'm convinced that that is not God's plan for us.

Philippians 4: 6 Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.

Matthew 6: 34 "So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today.

He tells us not to worry about anything! Are you kidding me?

At the heart of this, I believe that worry is simply a word to mean "lack of faith".

Matthew 8: 26 Jesus responded, "Why are you afraid? You have so little faith!" Then he got up and rebuked the wind and waves, and suddenly there was a great calm.

Hebrews 11: 6 And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.

I've learned that as I grow spiritually, I worry less and less, and although I still struggle with it, this knowledge gives me hope. Meditating on both **Philippians 4:6** and **Matthew 6:34** as seen above, has been really good for me. God is telling me not to worry. Eventually, I finally started to say to God "OK Lord, if you say so." and I am amazed at how

effective it was to meditate on these verses.

Another verse that really disturbed me and was helpful in meditating on was this:

Psalm 112: 7

*They do not fear bad news;
they confidently trust the LORD to care for them.*

Who is “They” anyway and why wouldn’t they fear bad news, doesn’t everybody fear bad news? Can anyone relate to this? “They”, found earlier in the Psalm, is:

¹ *Praise the Lord!*

*How joyful are those who fear the Lord
and delight in obeying his commands.*

Some days I’ll tremble with fear and others I seem to be at peace. It is the days of fear that I’ve really learned to cling to Him and go to Him constantly. It is also in these days of unrest that I find myself doubting what I know to be true. *Is God really going to rescue me? Does He really love me?* What I find fascinating is that after a day of gloom I can pray to my God and the next day, with the same circumstances, He gives me a renewed sense of hope and peace. It’s as if to say “He really does love me!”.

1 John 4: 16 *We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love.*

God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. 17 And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world.

¹⁸ *Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love.*

I think perfect love should always be our goal; this would enable us to overcome fear. This makes sense since the greatest commandments are to love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength and neighbors as ourselves.

Isn't this great news? You see, He loved us first:

1 John 4:19 ¹⁹ *We love him, because he first loved us. (KJV)*

Then He commands us to love Him back, for our own good, of course:

Deuteronomy 10: ¹³ *And you must always obey the Lord's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good.*

In the effort to love God and learning how to love Him; this is where true transformation really happens.

The more we understand God and the love He has for us the less fear we'll have.

James 4: ^{8a} *Come close to God, and God will come close to you.*

The closer God comes to you, the more you will realize just how much He loves you and your fears will start to fade away.

How do I grow spiritually and learn to love Him more?

1. I read my Bible **daily** and follow a reading plan because I need one.

2. I seek Him in prayer on an as needed basis (at least **daily**), telling Him about all my fears and asking Him to fill me with His Spirit and to teach me His ways. *“Lord, how can I be one of those who doesn’t fear bad news? Please let that be said of me.”*
3. I regularly spend time in fellowship with believers discussing each other’s lives and focusing on the Word of God. In groups of 2-15 people (about 4-5 times a week)
4. I read godly books. Personal biographies are great and those focused on spiritual growth.

Sermons at church and on the radio are great, but nothing beats “individual God time” and scriptural fellowship.

Keep in mind that this is where I am now. When I first started to seriously seek God I read the Bible, prayed a little bit and met once a week with others. Since then my desire for fellowship grew and I find great enjoyment from these weekly meetings with the godly. The more I sought God, the more time I wanted to be with Him and His followers.

Will you join me on this journey to love Him more?

“Dear Lord, thank you for calling and loving me. I am so privileged to know you and have a heart for you. Will you help me know you better? Please help me to learn how to perfect my love and learn how to love you more. You have been so good to me and I thank you for what you’re doing today and in the future. In Jesus name, amen.”

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What Is Holding You Back?

Luke 2:49 ⁴⁹ And He said to them, “Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” (NKJV)

Last week I wrote about volunteering for service. On second thought, is it really volunteering? Forgive me for this great misunderstanding. Perhaps He is looking for volunteers for special assignments as was the case in Isaiah 6, but for the purpose of our discussion of general service to God, He’s given us a clear commandment:

Matthew 22: ³⁷ Jesus replied, “‘You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’

At this point when we willingly respond to His love and actively pursue Him we are only being obedient and doing what we are told.

Psalms 32:

⁸ The Lord says, “I will guide you along the best pathway for your life.

I will advise you and watch over you.

⁹ Do not be like a senseless horse or mule that needs a bit and bridle to keep it under control.”

¹⁰ Many sorrows come to the wicked, but unfailing love surrounds those who trust the Lord.

Jesus called it “My Father’s business”. Being a part of the “Body of Christ” is more than just being another family

member. As anyone should know, when we grow up there are certain responsibilities that come along with being a family member. God's family is no different!

Think of it as a business that is family owned and operated.

God is the Father/Proprietor and Jesus is the Son/Foreman or more commonly known as the Master. Then we have the Holy Spirit who is our assistant/Advocate and the angels have special roles such as messengers and guardians. Our title, at least the one that applies to all of us is Ambassador and we are joint heirs (Romans 8:17). I realize that some of us may wear many hats, but we are all Ambassadors.

2 Corinthians 5: ²⁰ So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!"

I believe this role by itself if taken seriously, should have enough prestige and responsibility to make us excited about getting out of bed in the morning.

Those ambassadors in Washington D.C. have nothing on us. We are ambassadors of God Most High and we are joint heirs to His kingdom, so we should live the part.

Hebrews 3: ⁶ But Christ, as the Son, is in charge of God's entire house. And we are God's house, if we keep our courage and remain confident in our hope in Christ.

Hebrews 10: ³⁵ So do not throw away this confident trust in the Lord. Remember the great reward it brings you! ³⁶ Patient endurance is what you need now, so that you will continue to do God's will. Then you will receive all that he has promised.

Obedience starts by making a conscious decision to meet with Him daily.

If we want to work in this family business it is imperative that we spend regular time with the Master long enough to know what He likes and dislikes which helps us make godly decisions more frequently. It really is that simple. For example, we will learn that when we pray a prayer, such as this little gem, in the face of great enemies...

2 Chronicles 14: ¹¹ And Asa cried out to the LORD his God, and said, "LORD, it is nothing for You to help, whether with many or with those who have no power; help us, O LORD our God, for we rest on You, and in Your name we go against this multitude. O LORD, You are our God; do not let man prevail against You!"

God listens and is willing to rescue us...

¹² So the LORD struck the Ethiopians before Asa and Judah, and the Ethiopians fled. ¹³ And Asa and the people who were with him pursued them to Gerar. So the Ethiopians were overthrown, and they could not recover, for they were broken before the LORD and His army. And they carried away very much spoil.

Isn't that an awesome prayer? Read it again. Here was a man that seemed to know his God and relied upon Him. They fought the Ethiopians *in His name* as we should be conducting our lives, *in His name*.

Here's another example. We can learn a lot from these 3 verses:

Psalm 40

For the choir director: A psalm of David.

¹ I waited patiently for the Lord to help me,

and he turned to me and heard my cry.

*² He lifted me out of the pit of despair,
out of the mud and the mire.*

*He set my feet on solid ground
and steadied me as I walked along.*

*³ He has given me a new song to sing,
a hymn of praise to our God.*

*Many will see what he has done and be amazed.
They will put their trust in the Lord.*

The Lord heard his cry and helped Him immediately. Wait a minute, did I read that wrong? Oh yes, I got it wrong indeed, **David waited patiently**, and then the Lord turned to him. David was in despair, can you relate? Out of that despair, God lifted him out and gave him a new song to sing. How exciting is that?! Not only that but in the process “Many will see what he has done and be amazed. They will put their trust in the Lord.”

We must realize and embrace the fact that our service to Him starts with our character. God wants to first change us so that we can be like Christ on earth. Have you ever served in ministry with “Christian complainers”? It’s not fun, is it? I think God would rather have His complainers go home than be poor examples and spoil others.

Numbers 14: ²⁹ *You will all drop dead in this wilderness! Because you complained against me, every one of you who is twenty years old or older and was included in the registration will die. ³⁰ You will not enter and occupy the land I swore to give you. The only exceptions will be Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun.*

Judges 7: ³ *Therefore, tell the people, ‘Whoever is timid or afraid may leave this mountain and go home.’” So 22,000 of them went home, leaving only 10,000 who were willing to*

fight.

The Owner is very particular about how things operate so He gave us quite a large Employee Manual in order that we can have knowledge and understanding of His business.

Just like any other family run business, it is crucial to know all we can so that we can be successful and please the Owner.

Joshua 1: ⁸ Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do.

This is getting on the Boss's good side, what happens when we don't put the effort in to know about His business:

Hosea 4:

⁶ My people are being destroyed because they don't know me. Since you priests refuse to know me, I refuse to recognize you as my priests. Since you have forgotten the laws of your God, I will forget to bless your children.

This is quite sobering, isn't it?

I think it is very important to keep these words from our Master in mind which tend to put things into perspective:

John 6: ²⁷ "Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal." (NASB)

Will you join me in His on the job training program?

“Dear Lord and Master, thank you for hiring me. I pray that I will show myself to be a faithful and trustworthy servant. Please help me to speak good words, not worthless words so that I might influence others and not be influenced by them. Give me endurance Lord, so that I might not get faint or grow weary. Help me to make better choices so that I can wisely put your business first, which leads to eternal rewards. Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord and God Almighty; just and true are thy ways O Lord, for you are the King of Saints. I am humbled before you and at your service. In Jesus name, I pray, amen.”

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What Have You Been Called To Do?

God had it all set up. Long ago, some 400 years prior to the exodus God let Abraham in on His plan to have His people sent to Egypt for 400 years of slavery.

Genesis 15: ¹³ Then the LORD said to Abram, “You can be sure that your descendants will be strangers in a foreign land, where they will be oppressed as slaves for 400 years.”

Over 400 years go by and sure enough, the Israelites have been in bondage long enough, so they cry out for God’s help. It’s time for the big event. The plan that was devised so long ago was ready to happen. But wait, what’s missing? God’s ambassador to the Egyptian Pharaoh, of course. His plan includes a key person to go before Pharaoh to request that the slaves be set free. It’s now time to call him into action...

Exodus 3: ¹ One day Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian. He led the flock far into the wilderness and came to Sinai, the mountain of God. ² There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the middle of a bush. Moses stared in amazement. Though the bush was engulfed in flames, it didn't burn up. ³ "This is amazing," Moses said to himself. "Why isn't that bush burning up? I must go see it."

⁴ When the LORD saw Moses coming to take a closer look, God called to him from the middle of the bush, "Moses! Moses!" "Here I am!" Moses replied.

You can almost see the expression on his face when he says "Here I am!". So far so good, God got his attention. But what happens when Moses is told to actually do something?

¹⁰ Now go, for I am sending you to Pharaoh. You must lead my people Israel out of Egypt."

¹¹ But Moses protested to God, "Who am I to appear before Pharaoh? Who am I to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt?"

As if a burning bush is not enough!

In spite of seeing God's miracle and being addressed directly by the Angel of the Lord, He questions his Creator.

God responds...

¹² God answered, "I will be with you. And this is your sign that I am the one who has sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God at this very mountain."

OK, fair enough? Not quite. Even after getting all his objections and questions answered, Moses still doesn't want to

participate...

Exodus 4 ¹⁰ But Moses pleaded with the LORD, "O Lord, I'm not very good with words. I never have been, and I'm not now, even though you have spoken to me. I get tongue-tied, and my words get tangled."

¹¹ Then the LORD asked Moses, "Who makes a person's mouth? Who decides whether people speak or do not speak, hear or do not hear, see or do not see? Is it not I, the LORD?" ¹² Now go! I will be with you as you speak, and I will instruct you in what to say."

¹³ But Moses again pleaded, "Lord, please! Send anyone else."

Moses is still unwilling!

In other words, "You got the wrong guy, Lord!". If I was reading this story for the first time I would think that God would go to His plan B, right? But God doesn't have a plan B. Instead, God offers to send his brother Aaron as well and that was that, done deal.

¹⁴ Then the LORD became angry with Moses. "All right," he said. "What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he speaks well. And look! He is on his way to meet you now. He will be delighted to see you."

I think that is a beautiful way to make everybody happy. God gets His man, Moses' gets to work alongside his brother, and Aaron gets a role in the plan and works with his long-lost brother. My friends, only God can do this and Israel is saved as a result!

This is just one example of a person being drafted into service, but I also think God asks for volunteers:

Isaiah 6: ⁸ Then I heard the Lord asking, "Whom should I

send as a messenger to this people? Who will go for us?"
I said, "Here I am. Send me."

At this point, God was no stranger to Isaiah as Moses was initially and by this time Isaiah was ready. He enlisted himself and became willing. When the time came for an assignment, Isaiah was ready. What's important to note, however, is that Isaiah prepared his heart for this.

God is still looking for volunteers.

He does not overemphasize this in His Word because He wants us to seek Him and learn how to love Him so that it is purely voluntary on our part. He doesn't want you to work for him if your heart isn't into it. What kind of witness is that anyway?

2 Chronicles 16: ⁹ The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.

You see? He's ready to give you strength when you commit yourself to Him!

What assignment does He have? Here's an example of what I would consider His universal work:

John 4: ³⁴ Then Jesus explained: "My nourishment comes from doing the will of God, who sent me, and from finishing his work. ³⁵ You know the saying, 'Four months between planting and harvest.' But I say, wake up and look around. The fields are already ripe for harvest. ³⁶ The harvesters are paid good wages, and the fruit they harvest is people brought to eternal life. What joy awaits both the planter and the harvester alike! ³⁷ You know the saying, 'One plants and another harvests.' And it's true. ³⁸ I sent you to harvest where you didn't plant; others had already done the work, and

now you will get to gather the harvest.”

Jesus was always about His Father’s business, as should we.

Here we read that His workers are paid good wages and much joy awaits.

Here is a clear message that God is looking for more volunteers:

*Matthew 9:*³⁷ *He said to his disciples, “The harvest is great, but the workers are few. ³⁸ So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields.”*

“The harvest is great”

So “wake up and look around” as Jesus says here. Do you see people in bondage? Do you see the hurt and the needy? How about the spiritually lost? Do you think perhaps, with the knowledge and passion that God has put in your heart, that He’s called you to be a part of His grand plan?

Some of you may already be participating and acting on His instructions while others may be clueless as to what God’s called you to do. Perhaps God has already called you to get involved with a ministry found in your church bulletin or maybe He wants you to start a new one. This is between you and Him and don’t let anyone tell you what you should be doing for God unless He’s already told you.

1 Kings 13: ²³ *After the man of God had finished eating and drinking, the old prophet saddled his own donkey for him, ²⁴ and the man of God started off again. But as he was traveling along, a lion came out and killed him. His body lay there on the road, with the donkey and the lion standing*

beside it. (Read the entire chapter to understand the context.)

The key is to be able to hear God's voice and respond to Him. If you make yourself available to Him consistently over time, you will learn to hear His voice and He will give you work to do.

This isn't a science.

It is simply an effort on your part, devotion if you will, to seek your Creator in such a way that He becomes your closest friend and the one person you learn to rely on the most. If He is not already, then you are not a true disciple.

***Luke 14:** ²⁶ "If you want to be my disciple, you must hate everyone else by comparison—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple.*

If you are not giving God a chance to speak to you or you are not available to Him through reading His Word, praying and regular fellowship, then you are not even in the game. You would be on what I call the "Inactive Reserve" list. To me, this is being apathetic, complacent, or indifferent to God. Perhaps this list would be compared with those described in **Revelations 3:15-16**. Please do not be associated with those people.

Psalm 105

⁴ *Search for the Lord and for his strength;
continually seek him.*

⁵ *Remember the wonders he has performed,
his miracles, and the rulings he has given,*

⁶ *you children of his servant Abraham,
you descendants of Jacob, his chosen ones.*

Are you ready to be called?

Will you pray this psalm with me?

Psalm 26, A Psalm of David.

- ¹ *Declare me innocent, O LORD,
for I have acted with integrity;
I have trusted in the LORD without wavering.*
- ² *Put me on trial, LORD, and cross-examine me.
Test my motives and my heart.*
- ³ *For I am always aware of your unfailing love,
and I have lived according to your truth.*
- ⁴ *I do not spend time with liars
or go along with hypocrites.*
- ⁵ *I hate the gatherings of those who do evil,
and I refuse to join in with the wicked.*
- ⁶ *I wash my hands to declare my innocence.
I come to your altar, O LORD,*
- ⁷ *singing a song of thanksgiving
and telling of all your wonders.*
- ⁸ *I love your sanctuary, LORD,
the place where your glorious presence dwells.*
- ⁹ *Don't let me suffer the fate of sinners.
Don't condemn me along with murderers.*
- ¹⁰ *Their hands are dirty with evil schemes,
and they constantly take bribes.*
- ¹¹ *But I am not like that; I live with integrity.
So redeem me and show me mercy.*
- ¹² *Now I stand on solid ground,
and I will publicly praise the LORD.*

Can I get an AMEN?

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