

# destination next

Isaiah 43:19

*Journey On*

*A 28 Day Devotional Journey*



January 7, 2019 - David Sullivan  
Destination Next: Journey On  
Joshua 6



## WE'VE BEEN ON A JOURNEY!

It began over 150 years ago three miles north of Plant City in Shiloh. It continued as we moved three miles south to the newly founded Plant City in the late 1800's. It continues today as we have moved another three miles south to our new campus.

When we purchased our current property, we called it "The Promise Land." Just as God took Israel on a journey after 400 years in Egypt, He has taken our church on a journey. Different circumstances, same great God. When the church moved from Shiloh to the new city of Plant City, then built a worship facility in the 1930's, and another new facility in the 1990's, each move, or generation, was standing on the shoulders of those who came before. Today we stand on the shoulders of past generations and now become the shoulders for those who will follow us.

For Israel to "possess" the land God was about to give them, they had to follow in faith. The whole nation, not just the soldiers or spiritual leaders, exhibited great faith. By faith they stepped into the Jordan River and the water stopped flowing. By faith they conquered Jericho, marching around the fortified city at God's command. Each member of the nation of Israel carried out their role - marching, singing, shouting, worshipping - until the walls fell and they possessed the city. With each step, God had something more for Israel.

As the people of First Baptist Church Plant City, God desires us to step out in faith and obediently follow Him on our journey. Our next step is Destination Next. It is our opportunity to obediently follow God, each one of us fulfilling our part in possessing the land. Our first big task, our Jericho, is to eliminate the debt we have incurred on this journey. God has a part for each one of us to fulfill. Here are some questions to consider:

Will you seek God about your part as we march, sing, shout, and worship to fully possess the land?

Will you join us now that we have crossed the Jordan and moved into our Promise Land?

The LORD never sent the children of Israel on any mission that He didn't fully provide for them. Most often, that provision was through the people themselves as He provided for them.

Pray and ask the LORD what He would have you do! Remember, it's not equal gifts, but equal sacrifice and obedience.

January 8, 2019 - David Sullivan  
Why do we give? Part 1  
Joshua 5:13-15

**As a church, we have crossed the Jordan and entered the Promise Land.** We must now continue toward conquering our first Jericho, the debt we have before us. Beyond that is Phase 2 of our move to help reach generations to come for Jesus. It may seem insurmountable, but God has a plan for us!

As a walled city, Jericho was “tightly shut up” according to Joshua 6:1. Through excavation, Archeologists have found that the city of Jericho had walls 11 feet high and 14 feet wide. The top of the wall was a smooth stone top angling upward at 35 degrees for 35 feet where it joined another massive stone wall that was even taller making the city impregnable. The LORD had a plan for the conquering of a city that must have seemed unconquerable! The details of that plan are laid out in Joshua 6: 1-27. God’s plan called on all the children of Israel to participate. Seven priests blowing trumpets preceded the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant. Armed guards marched at the front and the rear of the priestly procession followed by all the children of Israel silently marching around the city. For six days they marched around the city once each day – trumpets blowing – but with no war cry. On the seventh day they marched around the city seven times. As the trumpets blew the seventh time, Joshua instructed all the people to shout to the LORD, and the walls of Jericho crumbled before them.

But the real story of the battle is found in Joshua 5:13-15. In these verses we see Joshua, upon whom the mantle of leadership had just fallen, bowing before the “commander of the army of the LORD.” You see, as Joshua and the nation of Israel crossed the Jordan into the Promise Land and drew near to their first obstacle in possessing the land, the LORD had already sent the “commander of the army of the LORD.” God was preparing the way, providing the details of the battle plan, and outlining the part each person was to play. The most important thing that Joshua had to do was to worship. Joshua 5:14-15 tells us that Joshua “fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, “What message does my LORD have for his servant? The commander of the LORD’s army replied, “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua did so.”

All Joshua had to do was worship – that is why we give – to worship the LORD.

God has prepared the way for us. He has provided everything that we need. He has a part for each of us in His plan. Pray about your part in Destination Next as we move forward to conquer our Jericho.



*Journey On*

January 9, 2019 - David Sullivan  
Why do we give? Part 2  
Joshua 5:13-15



**Joshua worshiped. This is the first and best response for any of us before our God.**

Upon doing so the LORD provided detailed plans and instructions that He had already set forth and had already sent the Commander of HIS Army to carry out. It's the same today!! God has already made a provision and has already set forth a plan to conquer our Jericho! All we must do is worship and obey. We don't need to have all the answers – we have access, through worship and prayer, to the ONE who has all the answers!

Up until the nation of Israel crossed the Jordan, the LORD had been providing manna to meet Israel's needs each and every day. When they crossed the Jordan into the Promised Land that stopped, but God's provision for their other needs continued. The Commander of the LORD's army was there waiting. All Joshua had to do was humble himself and worship, then the LORD provided the details of the battle plan. All that remained was for everyone to be faithful and obedient to carry out their part of the LORD's battle plan.

The exodus of Israel from Egypt began with a "burning bush" experience when the LORD spoke to Moses and told him to take off his shoes for he was standing on holy ground. Isn't it awesome that the LORD, over 40 years later, used these same words at the completion of the exodus. God had kept His promise to deliver the people to the land that He had promised Abraham's descendants generation earlier. Hebrews 13:8 says "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" and I believe this is a demonstration that HIS provision for His people NEVER EVER ENDS.

The children of Israel didn't see the LORD's provision until they took the first step, and indeed did so for seven days, but they heard from the LORD and acted upon what He told them. He told Joshua to have the priests play trumpets and the children of Israel to shout to the LORD and the walls would fall. As I write this, I think of the words to that glorious hymn, It Is Well – it says, "And Lord haste the day when my faith shall be sight and the clouds be rolled back like a scroll, the trump shall resound and the LORD shall descend, Even so it is well with my soul."

Will you ask the LORD what He would have you do? He never asks you to do something without providing a way for you to do it!! But rarely does He do it until you have taken the first step of faith. Will you step out with us and see the LORD's provision? Pray and ask the LORD to show you what HIS plan is for you and what part HE would have you play in Destination Next.



January 10, 2019 - David Sullivan



God's Provision - God as Multiplier, Part 1



Luke 9:1-17

Yesterday we looked at Joshua and how the LORD had already provided the victory over Jericho; Joshua and the children of Israel only had to worship, listen, and obey to receive that which the LORD had already made provision for. Today we'll look at another example from scripture.

The feeding of the 5,000 is one of the better-known stories in the New Testament. The story of this miracle is found in Luke 9:10-17 (and is paralleled in Matthew 14, Mark 6, and John 6). The gospel writers must have viewed this as a very significant event since it is the only miracle recorded in all four of the gospels. We know from the accounts that there were 5,000 men plus women and children present that day. Most theologians believe the number of people fed was somewhere between 15,000 – 20,000.

The timing of this miracle is as significant as the miracle itself. Matthew, Mark and John share that John the Baptist was beheaded just before sharing about this miracle. Throughout the Old Testament John was prophesied to be the one to prepare the way for the LORD. He was perhaps the first true and best-known evangelist of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Luke, however, doesn't mention this part of the story. Luke 9:1-6 shares that Jesus called together the twelve disciples, gave them some brief instructions, and then sent them out empty-handed to preach the kingdom of God. They obeyed and they "went from village to village preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere (9:6)." He multiplied one missionary into twelve missionaries! Jesus had been preparing and discipling the twelve for this purpose. But the lesson continues in verses 10-17 of Luke 9.

We all know the story, Jesus and the twelve tried to slip away for some rest, but they were sought out and found by the huge crowd. As the day wore on, the disciples came to Jesus and asked that he send the people away so they could eat and find lodging in the city as they were in a remote place. Jesus simply answered and said, "you feed them." Can you imagine the thoughts that surely ran through the disciples' minds? Phillip even said "Seriously??? – that would take 8 months' salary!" Okay, I took some liberty in my interpretation of what he said, but you get the point – it was a tall order! While this seemed like an impossible situation for the disciples, much like Jericho did to Israel back in the day, Jesus had a plan.

God always has a plan and a provision for us. Maybe you're thinking to yourself, "Seriously???

– how can I give right now?" Just remember, the same God who provided for Israel to get to the Promised land, who provided for the disciple to go and preach the gospel at Jesus' command, and who provided for the crowd, is the same God that you and I serve. God will provide; pray for how He will use you!



*Journey On*

January 11, 2019 - David Sullivan  
God's Provision - God as Multiplier, Part 2  
Luke 9:1-17



Luke recounts that Jesus sent out the twelve to do ministry. Once they were back together they tried to get away for some rest, but the crowds found them. It was late in the day and they were in a remote area, so Jesus tells His disciples to feed them. Then He simply asked, “what do you have available?” The reply? 5 loaves and 2 small fish. As Pastor Robert Morris likes to say, “they found a young boy that had slipped into town and went to Captain D’s and got the two-fish meal deal with extra bread.”

Jesus then gave them simple instructions, seat the people in groups of about fifty. They did this and brought what little they had to Jesus. He blessed it and then asked them to distribute it to the crowd. At this point in the story you need to understand that this took a huge step of faith by the disciples because the bread and fish had not yet been multiplied. Each disciple turned to face a crowd of 15,000-20,000 hungry people while each was holding 1/12th of two pieces of fish and five loaves of bread. It wasn’t until they broke it and gave it away that the LORD multiplied it! Jesus blessed it, but it took the action by the disciples before the miracle of multiplication occurred!

Perhaps you are considering what you want to give to Destination Next, this new campaign. Maybe you are looking at what you have and your resources and saying to yourself that you simply don’t have enough to give. We serve a God that is a multiplier and not a divider! You don’t have to divide what you have between family needs, bills, and utilities and give what is left over to God. We serve a God of limitless resources and supplies!! In the feeding of the 5,000, the little boy first had to be willing to give up his lunch and the twelve disciples had to risk being embarrassed in front of the crowd by attempting to feed them with such a small and seemingly insignificant amount. Jesus could have simply snapped His fingers and fed the crowd, but He didn’t. He chose to feed them through the disciples who could only give as they received. They trusted, were amazed, and took part in one of the most significant miracles of Jesus’ short ministry here on earth.

What about you? Are you willing to allow the LORD to show Himself as a God that is a multiplier and not a divider? As the song *Ordinary People* says, “Little becomes much as you place it in the Master’s hands.” Jesus multiplied the bread and the fish as the disciples broke them and gave them away; likewise, what may seem as little to you becomes much as you place it in the Master’s hands – you simply need to take the step of faith and allow the LORD to provide through you.

January 12, 2019 - David Sullivan  
Abram and the Wisemen  
Genesis 14:20; Matthew 2:10-11

We recently celebrated the Christmas season, a time we celebrate God's gift of Jesus Christ to us. Unfortunately, we too often seem to misunderstand giving. Families often set dollar limits on what they will spend on each other, giving gifts that are relatively equal in value trying to avoid those awkward moments when someone gives a gift of greater expense than we gave them. Or heaven forbid we have a party and someone shows up with a gift for us when we have nothing for them. Or maybe we give a gift and get nothing in return and feel slighted! Let's look at a couple of examples of gift giving in Scripture.

In Genesis, Abram was returning from defeating King Kedorlaomer and his allies and rescuing his nephew Lot. He was met by the King of Salem who blessed him and declared, "And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand." Abram then gave a tenth of everything he had out of gratitude for the deliverance from his enemies, setting the standard of giving we follow today. In Matthew 2:10-11 we have the story of the Magi bringing gifts to Jesus. They had been reading the prophecy of the birth of the long-awaited Savior and they bowed down and worshipped Him, giving gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. They were overjoyed and gave out of celebration in worship to the One who would provide salvation.

These two seemingly unrelated scriptures, separated by two millennia, teach us much about giving. Giving should come not out of compulsion or guilt, but rather from a grateful heart. Abram gave a tenth to the King of Salem for the victory achieved in battle. The Wisemen gave in worship of the birth of the long-awaited Savior and Hope of the World. Mary and Joseph gave nothing in return, rather, they gratefully received the gifts on Jesus' behalf.

2 Corinthians 9:7 says, "*Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion.*" Abram and the Wiseman demonstrated this type of giving, grateful for the provision that the Lord had provided and was going to provide in the future. As you pray and ask the LORD what part He would have you play in this campaign, ask Him to open your eyes to see both what He has done for you and is about to do for you. God loves a cheerful giver.



*Journey On*



January 13, 2019 - David Sullivan  
Honor the Lord With Your Wealth  
Proverbs 3:9-10



*"Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim with new wine."*

These are perhaps some of, if not my favorite, verses in Scripture. I love it for its simple admonition on how to live life in focus. A focus that is Christ-centric and not money-centric. God is saying, "if you will...I will." This is a classic example of a promise from God as well as a principle to live by.

Honor, as used in this verse, implies to "give weight or importance." Simply said, we "give weight" to the LORD by placing Him first in our lives: in our time, our talents, and our money. Giving to the LORD is a lifestyle. Whether you are new to the concept of giving a tithe of ten percent to the LORD or whether you've been doing it for years, we all need to be careful that our motive for giving is right. We must not fall into the habit of giving - writing a check or logging onto an app - and then checking off that box and moving on to the next item on our to do list.

Rather, we are to honor the LORD with our wealth. That goes well beyond just tithing. We honor the LORD when we care for the needs of those around us. 1 John 3:17 asks, "But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?" We honor the LORD when we love others as we love ourselves, the second great command given by Jesus. By giving to the local church faithfully, we enable the church to carry out the mission of sharing the love of Jesus through the sharing of the gospel and meeting the tangible needs of our world.

The passage in Proverbs promises that if we give first, then He will provide for us in abundance. We looked at this a few days ago in the feeding of the 5,000. Jesus blessed the fishes and loaves and the disciples started to give what little they had before it was multiplied. Martin Luther, whose writings triggered the reformation of the church stated:

*"I have held many things in my hands, and I have lost them all; but whatever I have placed in God's hands, that I still possess."*

I encourage you today to give weight the LORD with your time, your talents, and your financial resources. Put Him first in all you do, He promises to fill you to capacity if you do.

January 14, 2019 - David Sullivan  
David and Goliath  
Samuel 17:3

I recently saw a picture of a valley with a caption stating that it was the valley between the Philistine and the Israelite armies where David slew Goliath. Until seeing that picture I never realized there was an actual valley between them, even though I had read that story a hundred times. We all know the story; the two armies faced each other, and for forty days Goliath came out and challenged the Israelite army but no one would accept the challenge. Then David enters the picture. He comes along and understands that it was as much a spiritual battle as a physical battle. Gathering five smooth stones, he went out and killed the giant, Goliath, while the rest of the army stood shaking in their boots.

What if David had never stepped foot into the valley? Would he have still gone on to become king of Israel? One thing is for certain – we wouldn't have this great story if he hadn't! David was willing to step into the valley because he had experienced victory before. He had learned to trust God in the little things as a shepherd tending his sheep. 1 Samuel 17: 36-37 says, *"Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear, this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. The LORD who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine."*

David knew what to expect because he understood that the LORD had provided for him in the past and would continue to provide for him. He also knew that he wasn't going to win the victory by standing where he was - he had to first move into the valley and then the LORD would provide the victory. It is interesting that David entered a valley to achieve victory. Fourteen generations later, John 18 says "Jesus crossed the Kidron Valley with his disciples to a grove of olive trees." David entered a valley to conquer a giant - Jesus entered a valley to conquer death for you and me.

If you and I are to experience victory, we must be willing to fight the battle on our knees in prayer, trusting the Lord in what he has done and will do. Then, we must be willing to take the first step into the valley before us. The LORD will provide the victory – we just have fight like men on our knees and take the first step.



*Journey On*

January 15, 2019 - David Sullivan  
The Giving of Gifts  
Matthew 2:1-12



As I'm writing this, it is the Christmas Season. I'm winding up my shopping and checking off the last of my gift list and my mind wanders back to the wise men. I think not only about the gifts that they brought to Jesus, but also the sacrifice they had to make to deliver those gifts.

There are many things we don't know for certain surrounding their story. We don't know exactly how many wisemen there were, we say three because three gifts are named. Nor do we know where they came from, we are only told from the east. We do know that they traveled a long way and it took them a long time. Once in Jerusalem the sought the "one born King of the Jews." King Herod, to determine the age and whereabouts of the child, tried to make a deal with the wisemen. They told him when the star appeared, but being divinely warned not to return, Herod never learned the location of the boy. Using what information he had been given, Herod ordered that all Jewish boys under the age of two be killed.

Based on this narrative, many theologians believe the trip could have taken the wisemen as much as 18-24 months to deliver the three gifts we know of. And what strange gifts: Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh. We understand the symbolism of these gifts today:

Gold for the King of Kings;

Frankincense - an incense burned in the temple as part of worship;

and Myrrh - a spice used at that time to prepare bodies for burial.

What must have gone through Mary and Joseph's minds as these gifts were presented? What must a two-year-old boy have thought about gifts such as these? I know my boys would have wanted the latest Marvel Superhero to play with!

So, what's my point? It wasn't the gifts themselves that were significant. We know that these learned men left to find the promised Christ child as soon as they saw the star. They didn't wait. We know that they brought gifts at great expense. The money and time spent didn't seem to matter. Two years...think about that. We complain if we must wait in line for two minutes or must wait more than two days for Amazon to deliver what we ordered. What mattered was they put the giving of gifts first above any expense of money or time. In 2 Samuel 24:24, David said, "I'll not offer to the LORD that which cost me nothing." David realized that an offering not accompanied by sacrifice was not really an offering. The wisemen sacrificed money and time. They immediately left on their journey when they saw the star. With their actions they gave their firstfruits.

As you pray about what part God would have you play in this campaign remember that it's not the size of the gift that matters. Rather, that you pray, listen and then obey without hesitation. Those are the gifts that the LORD honors.

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January 16, 2019 - David Sullivan  
Put Another Log on the Fire

I love the outdoors! I love to hike; I love to camp; I love to be out in God's creation. But what I really like about all that is I get to build a campfire. I think deep inside I may be a pyromaniac, but not in a destructive kind of way!! As the weather has gotten cooler in the evenings, I've been building fires in my fireplace. Nothing beats watching what I call "fireplace TV" and the sound of wood crackling, and oh...s'mores – don't forget the s'mores! But as I sat last night warming by the fire, I couldn't help but notice that the real heat comes not from the flames but from the coals. Starting a fire takes a lot of work: you gather the tinder, arrange it, start the fire and then fan the flames until the logs are fully ignited. It's not until you get a good bed of coals that you really start to experience warmth from the fire.

Our church is lot like that. A small group of folks came together 150 years ago to worship in what is today known as First Baptist Church Plant City. It was a small group whose initial impact wasn't very big. No doubt they made some impact, but they had no way of knowing what their small group, their small fire, would grow into. They worked hard, invited their friends, and loved those around them to get this church going. That small group has long since passed, but the "coals" their work generated burns warm in our church today. We stand, energized by the warmth of the fire they started, and we reach people in ways and in numbers they never imagined. Over 200 lives have been changed since moving last February...the "fire" continues to grow. We hope to continue to share the warmth and love of Jesus in new and exciting ways not just in Plant City, but to the whole world!

As we make this journey and continue to add to the fire started long ago, I hope you will join with us in what God is doing. He calls each of us to play a part in advancing His kingdom now and for the generations to come. Wouldn't it be great to come back in 150 years and see what God is doing through First Baptist Church of Plant City! Reaching the world in ways and in numbers that we can't even begin to imagine today!

Will you join with us? Will you willingly play the part God wants and has designed you to play? It would be awesome if you would join us! It's a great place to be so come along beside us, pull up a chair and as the old song says...put another log on the fire.



*Journey On*

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January 17, 2019 - David Sullivan  
You've Got Talent  
Matthew 25:14-30



Believe it or not, you've got talent! The parable Jesus used in this passage talks about three slaves, each of whom were entrusted with a certain sum of their master's gold. The master left, returned some time later, and asked for an accounting of what had been given to them. Two of the slaves doubled the money, while the third, living in fear, hid his money and gained nothing. In anger, the master took that away from him and gave it to the first who had 10 talents.

This parable illustrates two forces that are always at work in our lives: faith and fear. Obviously, the first two slaves didn't lose sight of their mission, though the master was gone a very long time, each worked diligently to earn him a return. They were faithful and properly rewarded. The third, motivated by fear, buried what was given to him and likewise, was rewarded in a negative fashion.

As I read this and meditated on it, I saw something for the first time. I've always read this parable with the mindset that when the master returned the slaves gave all the gold back to their Master. But they didn't! Verse 28 says "So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags." What they had earned, they got to keep along with the initial gold the master had given them! Then I wondered, what would have happened had they failed or lost their master's gold? If you notice, Scripture doesn't even contemplate a "loss" of the master's investment in us. When we put it to work there is gain, it's only when we don't put it to work that we lose!

As a literary tool, many writers of the Bible would purposefully withhold information to add emphasis. Jesus never mentioned the possibility of failure when using our God-given talents for the kingdom. When we are faithful in using what has been given, there is not failure, nor is there the possibility of failure. The opposite is true, there is a guaranteed return on your investment!

We each have been entrusted with talents, our Master's gold, if you will. What we do with it is entirely up to us – and the decision impacts our reward. We can walk in faith and reap the benefits, or we can walk in fear - the opposite of faith. In this parable both actions reaped results opposite of each other.

What about you? Are you walking in faith or in fear? In this parable Jesus never mentioned the possibility of failure! And the increases in your talents of which you are a steward, you get to keep! A guaranteed return on your investment. So, get out there, get to work and swing for the fence and see what kind of return you can generate.

📍 January 18, 2019 - David Sullivan  
📍 Cheerful Giving  
📍 Luke 21:1-4; 2 Corinthians 9:7

The other day I had the dubious honor of having to renew my license. I had previously been able to renew it online but this time I had to go into the licensing office. While I can't say it was an unpleasant experience, I can't say it was a pleasant one, either. You see, I made an appointment, was received on time and expeditiously, but the individual that managed my renewal process was simply unavailable to me. She handled things quickly and in a perfunctory fashion. But while fast in her service, she never made eye contact with me, never smiled, and never called me by name. She simply performed her task and wanted me out of the way, so she could move on to the next task that stood between her and 5 o'clock.

We've talked a lot about giving. In fact, this series of devotions is being written to support a pledge campaign our church called Destination Next. We want to encourage you to play the part the LORD would have you play. We've talked about "honoring the LORD with your wealth" and "not equal gifts but equal sacrifice." But the LORD looks beyond all that; He always looks at the heart.

In Luke 21, Jesus witnesses a poor widow put two small copper coins into the temple treasury and Jesus said; *"this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."* Over two millennia later, this small gift of two coins is a standing testimony to her going all-in, in this case giving all she had, to the LORD. You see it's not the size of the gift that matters, rather it's the condition of the heart that gives it.

2 Corinthians 9:7 says, *"Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."* So often we go through the routine of what we as "Christians" should do, often completing our daily check list of "Christian things" such as daily quiet time, church attendance, and even tithing. Let me encourage you to listen carefully over these next few days as we complete this campaign. The LORD will speak to you in a way only He can and will let you know your part. Then, He will honor your obedience as you give.

While I received prompt service at the driver's license office, it wasn't pleasant because it wasn't friendly. God loves a CHEERFUL giver. How about you? Does the LORD enjoy it when you give back to Him from what He has given you? Let's listen and joyfully give as we each purpose in our hearts to make the LORD smile.



*Journey On*

📍 January 19, 2019 - Brian Stowe  
📍 Valuable!  
📍 1 Kings 12:26-18



Jeroboam was the first king of the Northern Kingdom when the kingdom of Israel split. Rehoboam, Solomon's son, refused to listen to the wisdom of his elders, which led to that split of the kingdom that David and Solomon ruled for many years. Though Jeroboam initially had good intentions to rule the Northern Kingdom in ways that would honor the Lord, it didn't take long for the king to get selfish and off course. Jerry Bridges, author of *The Pursuit of Holiness*, wrote (page 115), "We could well think that Jeroboam had not even heard God's command and promise, so flagrantly did he disregard them. He certainly heard, but the message he heard of was of no value to him because it was not combined with faith (Hebrews 4:2)." That phrase, "the message he heard was of no value to him" is especially strong and convicting.

How many times have I encountered God's Word and the message had little or no value to me? Frankly, that scares me that I would treat a word from the Lord as not valuable.

What is my reaction when I don't know what to do? Solomon taught us (Proverbs 3:5-6), "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding; in all your ways know Him, and He will make your paths straight."

What do I do when I have pressing needs or concerns? Jesus said (Matthew 6:33), "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you."

What do I do when I am overwhelmed? Paul said (Philippians 4:6-7), "Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."

What do I do when challenged to give? Jesus said (Luke 6:38), "Give and it will be given to you; a good measure - pressed down, shaken together, and running over - will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you."

Treat every part of God's Word as valuable! You won't regret it!

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📍 January 20, 2019 - Claude Walker  
📍 A Life of Faith  
📍 Hebrews 11:23-26

Hebrews 11:23 states “By faith Moses...”. With the beginning of those words we delve into the life of Moses. What an interesting life it was. From birth, his parents knew he was a special child. In God’s great plan He would spare Moses from death as an infant and actually train him in all the ways of the Egyptians because he was taken by Pharaoh’s daughter as her own son. In fact, Moses was probably in line to be the next Pharaoh had he remained in Egypt. He was endowed with all the “wisdom of the Egyptians,” meaning that he excelled in every area of life. Though he knew all about Egyptian life, deep down in his soul he knew that he was a Hebrew; one of God’s chosen people.

Moses reached manhood and burning deep inside him was the mission God had planned for him. The problem was that Moses wanted to do God’s will his way. That did not work out as Moses had planned. The result was that he tried to deliver the Israelites by killing an Egyptian, thinking the Israelites would rally around him as their leader, and he would lead them to freedom. It did not work out that way. In fact, when he was found out to be a murderer, he fled to the Midian desert. For the next forty years he would be a shepherd for his father-in-law, Jethro. During those forty years of solitude there is no record of communication with God. At the age of eighty years, God spoke to Moses from a burning bush revealing his mission for life. After offering every excuse he could think of as to why he could not do what God called him to do, Moses yielded himself and went to Egypt to be the man God would use to lead Israel to Canaan.

Did Moses rely on all of his prior education and skill to accomplish that tremendous task? No, he simply headed to Egypt with a staff in his hand, a resolve in his heart, and his faith in God. Every step of the journey and every encounter with a rebellious pagan ruler, required a trust and faith in God to do what He had promised. After God destroyed the nation with the ten plagues, the day came for Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt.

The next forty years would be filled with adventure and great wonder as Moses relied on his faith and watched God part the Red Sea, give manna from heaven, and water from a rock. All this because one man was willing to step out by faith and trust God. May each of us in like fashion trust in our great God and walk by faith. The journey is great, but God is greater!



*Journey On*

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January 21, 2019 - Daniel Helms  
Is God Anti-Wealth?  
Matthew 27:56-61; Acts 16:13-15; 1 Cor. 10:31



Does the Bible teach God is against Christians having financial wealth? The simplest answer to the above question is, no. The preceding question helps us wrestle with how God views financial success. To help us answer this question, let's look at a couple of people from the New Testament.

Joseph of Arimathea (Matt. 27:56-61) by his culture's standards would have certainly been considered wealthy. He provided the tomb Jesus was buried in. Since he had a tomb to generously give to Jesus then undoubtedly this indicates God used an affluent man to accomplish His kingdom purposes. Another example of God using a well-to-do person is found in Acts 16:13-15. Lydia was a merchant from the city of Thyatira. She allowed the church to use her home as a gathering place. In the first-century only the most upscale citizens had homes large enough for a church to meet. Once again we see God using a successful business woman's wealth for His divine plan. The point is clear, God has chosen to use the financial success of many believers as leverage for His own glory (1 Cor. 10:31).

As a young follower of Christ, who grew up in a middle-lower class family, I developed this antagonistic attitude towards wealthy people in my church. I genuinely believed God favored the poor and destitute over rich people. After much study, the Scriptures are clear, God uses wealthy and poor people according to His good and perfect plan. The problem isn't money, rather the problem is with sinners who constantly want to worship false idols. The problem arises when a person begins to love their money more than they love Jesus (1 Timothy 6:10). So is God anti-wealth? This truly is a poor question. God is against anything which would encroach on the supremacy of His Son and threaten to steal the affections of our hearts. The final point is clear, if you have a lot of money or a little bit of money, use it to make the name of Jesus the most famous name in all the universe. If you are not doing this now, repent and start today!

Questions to consider:

1. In what ways do we use our money for our own fame rather than the fame of Jesus?
2. Do you find it easier to tithe when you are making more money? Should the amount of a person's salary determine if they tithe or not?
3. When was the last time you used your resources (great or small) to maximize God's glory in your family, church, workplace, or community?

January 22, 2019 - Kay Morris  
Noah  
Hebrews 11:7

In the familiar account of Noah in Genesis, we often focus on the ark, flood, and rainbow, and perhaps overlook the faith of this righteous man. The Bible tells us the world was so corrupt that God decided to destroy earth and all its inhabitants with a flood. "Noah, however, found favor with the LORD... Noah was a righteous man, blameless among his contemporaries; Noah walked with God." (Genesis 6:8-9) In this time of unrestrained evil, Noah remained faithful to God.

Noah had an abiding, deep relationship with God which equipped him for the task set before him. When God told Noah of the impending flood and commanded him to build an ark, there was no hesitation. By faith, Noah believed God and went to work! According to Genesis 6:22 and 7:5, he did everything that God had commanded him. He built the ark according to God's specifications. We can imagine what Noah's neighbors must have thought. Here was a man, building a huge boat (the length of 1½ football fields) on dry land, talking about a flood which they could not even comprehend, and after many, many years, loading animals onto the boat! Surely they ridiculed him, but Noah persevered. His faith was not fleeting; it endured through years of labor while living in a corrupt world surrounded by evil men.

Finally, Noah completed the ark and God instructed him that it was time to enter the ark along with his family and all the animals, for the rain would begin in seven days. Once again, by faith Noah trusted God and obeyed. As we have often heard, it rained for 40 days and nights and "the waters surged on the earth 150 days." (Genesis 7:24) When God commanded Noah to leave the ark, his first act was to worship God through building an altar and offering sacrifices. Once again, God was pleased. (Genesis 8:20-21)

Because of God's grace and Noah's faithfulness, God blessed Noah and his sons and established a covenant to never again destroy the world with a flood. As a sign of this promise, God sent His rainbow. We often view the rainbow as a reminder of God's promise to us, but it should also serve as a reminder of Noah's great faithfulness. Noah pleased God, trusted God, believed God, obeyed God, and worshipped Him. He lived a life of faith and provided us with an example of how we could walk with God in faithful obedience.



*Journey On*

January 23, 2019 - Ricky Lindsey  
Joseph



George Bailey in “It’s A Wonderful Life” wished he had never been born. As a result, he was given a glimpse of a world that did not include him. He discovered what so many of us long to know – why we go through the joy, the pain, the highs and the lows. Romans 8:28 states that “for those who love God all things work together for good...” Not that everything is good, but that all things work out according to His plan.

For a recent Bible Study lesson I was preparing, I studied the life of Joseph. His journey started out on a smooth path. He was the favored son of Jacob who had dreamed that his family would bow to him one day. He probably never imagined the path that would take him to that point. Joseph was sold into slavery in an unfamiliar land, falsely accused by Potiphar’s wife, and later forgotten about in prison. When he went before Pharaoh, God gave Joseph the interpretation to a dream and this resulted in him being promoted to the second highest position in the land, second only to Pharaoh. The Pharaoh’s dream became reality involving seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. Joseph’s destination was preceded literally by being thrown in a pit, but ended with God’s plan of saving countless lives, including his own family, from starvation. Joseph’s situation kept the Hebrew people and the lineage of Christ intact.

We have the benefit of looking at Joseph’s entire story. Can you imagine being in the middle of it? We cannot see where God is taking us, but we know that the God who created the universe has a plan. When Esther was concerned about going to the King to save the Jews, Mordecai replied, “And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” There was genuine concern because of a real threat of death, but Esther went, and her people were spared. Perhaps you were born for such a time as this. What is God calling you to do that might be difficult?

In Jeremiah 12:5, God answers Jeremiah, “If you have raced with men on foot, and they have wearied you, how will you compete with horses?” In other words, how are we to stand firm in the Gospel during trials if we have never experienced adversity? How is God preparing you for the future? What are you going through right now that will further the kingdom?

Be encouraged that even though trials may come and bring pain, our final destination was secured by the One who has “overcome the world.” Take your life experiences and the story of how you came to know Christ to those around you, for you never know what part you are playing in God’s plan.



January 24, 2019 - Steve Morris

Barnabas

Originally named Joseph, this native of Cyprus would eventually be called Barnabas, the Greek name meaning “son of encouragement.” Imagine yourself being so known for any trait that your actual name is forgotten, and everyone begins to refer to you by that trait. You would certainly want it to be a positive trait. Everything we know of Barnabas is found in the Acts and the Pauline letters. We know him to be generous, having sold a field and laid the money “at the apostle’s feet” for their use in caring for the needy. Paul tells us he supported himself in ministry by his own efforts, not by the churches he served.

After Paul’s conversion Barnabas, at great risk to himself, vouched for Paul to the fearful church leaders in Jerusalem. At this critical, decisive time, Barnabas was faithful to his name- encourager. Without his influence would Paul have gained the support of early church leaders? Would he have become a missionary? Would he have written a large portion of the New Testament?

Barnabas not only recommended Paul, he went on to serve alongside Paul in their first missionary journey where churches were planted across Asia Minor (Turkey). On this trip the young John Mark dropped out early and returned home for reasons unknown. Paul was not inclined to give second chances, refusing to take Mark along on a later missionary journey. True to his name, Barnabas would not give up on Mark. He split with Paul and took Mark on a separate mission to his native Cyprus and presumably other places, thereby expanding the outreach of the church.

Barnabas is noted for mediating conflict between Jews and Gentiles, an ever-present issue in the early church. Paul and Mark were eventually reconciled, though it is unknown what role Barnabas may have had in this. We know this because of a letter to Timothy written by Paul shortly before his death. Paul asked Timothy to come to Rome and bring Mark because he was very useful to him.

Though not one of the original apostles, not a prominent Biblical hero, nor an author of epistle or gospel, Barnabas was faithful to his calling. His nature of peace and reconciliation were made available to the Lord at a pivotal moment in the early church. As we make ourselves available, our intellects, efforts, resources, or influence can likewise be used by the almighty God to accomplish whatsoever He may choose.



*Journey On*

📍 January 25, 2019 - Mark Rothman  
📍 Giving Testimony  
📍 Matthew 6:24; 1 Timothy 6:17-19



Growing up I went to church inconsistently. I accepted Christ at the age of 7 and was baptized shortly after, but nothing truly changed in my life. No one came alongside and discipled me and I did not understand what it meant to be a Christian. I thought that because I prayed the “sinner’s prayer,” got baptized, and tried not to do bad things, that I was a Christian.

As I got older, my life did not resemble that of a Christ Follower. The world dictated my desires rather than God’s Word. I was solely pursuing the things of the flesh. I felt guilty about my sin but I never truly repented. I got to a point where I was tired of the way I was living and knew there had to be a better life. I was ashamed of myself for all the years of claiming the Christian faith but never seeking after God by reading His word or surrendering to Him, in all aspects of my life.

One Sunday, I surrendered my life to Christ and immediately made a commitment to read through the Bible in one year. As I began to read God’s word for the first time, the words came alive to me. I realized I never really knew the God I claimed to believe in and worship my entire life. I started to pray the verses in the Bible and would ask God to put His desires in my heart and remove my selfish desires.

God began to reveal the sin that had a stronghold in my life: money. When I attended church in the past, I never even thought about tithing. I was looking for joy and security in money and material things, but I was still empty. I was a taker and not a giver. I read that God was the creator and owner of all things and that I couldn’t serve two masters. It’s either God, or money. It was apparent to me who my master was and it was not Jesus Christ. If I could trust God with my eternity, how could I not trust Him with my finances?

I desired God to be the Lord of my life and I wanted to please Him. I needed to surrender all things to Him. The bible says faith without works is dead. I learned that giving and tithing are acts of obedience and worship. When I began to give and serve at church, my relationship with Christ really started to grow.

My desire is for God’s purpose to be fulfilled in the life of every Christian. Your relationship with Christ starts with true surrender in every part of your life, including your finances. We are never more like Jesus than when we give our time, talents, love and resources to further the gospel of Jesus Christ.

January 26, 2019 - Jay Strike  
What's Next? By Faith...  
Jeremiah 29:11-13; Hebrews 11

As you read this today, our church is asking the question, "What's next?" Our new church building was not the finish line, so "What's next?" As we pursue all that God has for us as a church we are compelled to ask that question. Each of us ought to be asking that in our own lives as well. The answer to "What's next?" is not one formulated in our own minds, based on our limited resources and limited reasoning. The answer comes from God.

To paraphrase Jeremiah 29:11: God has good plans for you, He will take care of you and not desert you. He wants you to have a hope-filled future. How do we learn His plan? He says in verses 12 and 13 that when we earnestly and humbly seek Him, through his Word and in prayer, then He will faithfully be there for us. Is the answer to "What's next?" always a specific series of events or an itemized list of things to do? No. But it is what's best because it is from God.

So, we **know** that God has good plans for us. We **know** that when we seek Him He will give us the "What's next?" answer. It is now up to us to respond. The question becomes what Pastor Brian asks each week: "What now?"

I think that Hebrews 11 give us the right response. This chapter is like the "Faith Hall of Fame." While this is not an exhaustive list, it is full of names all Christians should know: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, and more. God revealed to each of them a plan according to His purpose and pleasure. By His name He made promises and gave oaths that He would fulfill what He said. How did each of them respond? "By faith..."

In the complexities of our lives this response seems too simple. We might say: "What God is asking doesn't make sense;" "The numbers don't add up;" "It is just unrealistic to think that way." God is not limited by our uncertainties, He is a keeper of promises. God had made a promise to Abraham that he would be the father of nations and Abraham trusted God at His word. What uncertainty Abraham must have had when God tested him regarding Isaac. His response: "By faith Abraham ... offered up Isaac. He considered God to be able even to raise someone from the dead (Heb 11:17,19)." Abraham's God, our God, is as faithful and true to His Word today as He was then.



*Journey On*

As you consider what part God wants you to play in Destination Next, don't let your uncertainty limit God's plan. When you respond by faith to what's next, He will be faithful and true to the promises you find in His Word.

January 27, 2019 - Adam Cunningham  
Jim Elliott  
Psalm 96:1-12



"Our hopes are up but no sign of the 'neighbors' yet. Perhaps today is the day the Aucas will be reached...."

The journal entry above was made by a man who understood Jesus' command to make disciples of all nations (Matt 28:18-20). It was made by a man whose only aspirations were to be obedient and lead people into a relationship with Jesus. This man would lose his life in his obedience to Christ. This man, Jim Elliot, would be martyred while attempting to reach the Aucas for Christ that day.

Jim could never have imagined that this one single act of obedience would lead to the repentance and conversion of not only the men that slaughtered his friends and him that day, but also many Aucas years later. Nor would Jim have ever conceived that this next step of obedience would create a modern missionary momentum still felt today that energizes and mobilizes believers all over the world.

It wasn't the challenge of living in the jungle that drove Jim to the Aucas, nor was it the thrill of engaging such a hostile tribe of people. The motivation behind Jim and his four friends giving up their lives was to be obedient to the next steps that they knew God was leading them to do. Jim did in fact give up that which he could not keep in order to gain that which he could not lose.

Now the question is before us: Will I? Will you be willing to do the same? One might question, "How do I know what these next steps are?" For Jim, his conviction and motivation were to see God's glory taken to the nations. Psalm 96 communicates that every believer should "sing," "declare His glory," and "ascribe to the Lord glory due His name." I pray that this would be true of you, but maybe it's something much simpler. Maybe it's just saying "yes" to whatever God puts in front of you so that you can join His work in our city, the nation, and all over the world.

Prayer: Father in Heaven, lead me to have the courage to pursue whatever my next steps are. Give me the boldness to get out of my comfort zone and to trust you for all the details. Use my life however you see fit, for Your honor and glory. Amen.

📍 January 28, 2019 - Bill Bender

📍 Persevering

📍 Psalm 71:17-19

Billy Graham is an example of someone who has persevered through the decades in the transmission of the Gospel. I was moved to tears upon hearing of his death. He was a rock that God used until he drew his last breath. I recall with fondness the memories of him mustering all the physical, emotional, and spiritual energy, enabled by the Holy Spirit, on those cold evenings in the Rose Bowl, as he faithfully proclaimed the Gospel to tens of thousands of people. I, for one, am encouraged by his example to continue, to persist, and to persevere in holiness, and share his faith with others, who, in turn, will share their faith to the generations to come. (2 Tim. 2:2)

Billy Graham is more than just an important historical figure. He visited the old Baltimore Colt's Stadium in 1981. My small church loaded up a rented yellow school bus to attend the revival. I was just ten years of age, and my mom and dad "heavily encouraged" my siblings and me to go.

I was a stubborn child. It was just a show for me to witness. George Beverly Shea would sing, Billy Graham would preach, and hundreds of people would respond. However, on the last night of the revival, something happened. His words became clear. My heart was burdened, and I couldn't wait to run down onto the football field to surrender my life to Christ.

Over the past week, I came across this passage in my devotions that expresses the importance of perseverance in the transmission of the Gospel to the next generation. It reads:

Psalm 71:17-19

17 O God, You have taught me from my youth;  
And to this day I declare Your wondrous works.

18 Now also when I am old and gray-headed,  
O God, do not forsake me, Until I declare Your strength to this generation,  
Your power to everyone who is to come.



*Journey On*



📍 January 29, 2019 - Jay Strike  
📍 The Grace of Giving  
📍 2 Corinthians 8:1-15



As Paul is writing his second letter to the church at Corinth he comes to the issue of generously giving to the church in Jerusalem. The church there was suffering greatly from famine and was in need of help from other churches. In this passage, Paul lifts up the abundant generosity of the impoverished church at Philippi as an example. They gave in spite of their own circumstances. Paul sought to give encouragement as he addressed this issue of giving.

Paul lifts up the Corinthians for the fact that they have excelled in their faith, speech, knowledge, diligence and love. These are most certainly references to the Spiritual Gifts within the church of which Paul spoke in his first letter (1 Corinthians 1). Paul then adds, “excel also in this grace,” that is, the grace of giving. God gives gifts to each of us as believers for the development and edification of the church - not just to the local body, but to the greater ministry needs that occur. This grace of giving is meant to encourage and provide while giving credit to God’s love. It involves being good stewards of what God has given and can include the adjustment of one’s lifestyle in order to excel in this gift.

At issue here was not their ability to give, but their availability (or willingness) to give. They were moving forward in the use of their gifts in the church, and for whatever reason, they were falling short in their generosity. Many times, we can make an excuse for not giving because we serve in different ways. Warren Wiersbe shared this,

“We must never argue that the ministry of our spiritual gifts is a substitute for generous giving. ‘I teach a Sunday School class, so I don’t have to give!’ is not an explanation—it’s an excuse. The Christian who remembers that his gifts are *gifts* will be motivated to give to others and not ‘hide’ behind his ministry for the Lord. I have met pastors and missionaries who have argued that, since they devote their whole time in serving the Lord, they are not obligated to give. **Paul argued just the opposite: since you are wonderfully gifted from God, you ought to want to give even more!**” (*Emphasis added*)

Our motivation for giving comes in light of all that we have received! We have received eternal life through the gift that God has given us in His Son. We have received gifts to build up the body of Christ and expand the Kingdom of God here on earth. We have been given much and entrusted with much by the God who owns it all.

Excel at this grace of giving!

January 30, 2019 - John Foxx  
Abraham  
Hebrews 11:17-19

Hebrews 11:17-19, “By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac. He received the promises and yet he was offering his one and only son, the one to whom it had been said, ‘Your offspring will be traced through Isaac.’ He considered God to be able even to raise someone from the dead; therefore, he received him back, figuratively speaking.”

A graphic illustration of Abraham’s faith is in The Akedah or The Binding of Isaac (Gen 22). Isaac was the son of promise and the only son (22:2) YHWH recognized in His illustration of redemption (John 3:16). Abraham loved Isaac (22:2) – this very first mention of love in the Bible is between a father and his only son. The first mention of love in the New Testament is also between a Father and Son (Matt 3:17)! Abraham was to offer Isaac on Mount Moriah (22:2), which is the same plot of land David would purchase to offer sacrifices to YHWH, where Solomon would later build the Temple (2 Chr 3:1), and where the Father would sacrifice Jesus. Abraham went three days knowing his son was as good as dead (22:4); Jesus was in the tomb for three days. They took a donkey (22:3); so did Jesus. They took two servants (22:3); Peter and John followed Jesus to His trial (John 18:15). Isaac carried the wood (22:6); Jesus carried His cross. Abraham provided his son as the sacrifice, saying, “God will provide Himself a lamb” (22:8); and God did – Jesus is the Lamb of God (John 1:29). A substitute was found (22:13); Jesus is our substitute (Isa 53:5-6). The ram was caught by his horns in the thicket (22:13); Jesus wore a crown of thorns. Abraham revealed the prophetic nature of this, calling that place YHWH-Yireh, or YHWH will Provide (22:14). Hebrews 11:17-19 reveals Abraham’s secret: faith. YHWH had made promises to Abraham through Isaac; if Isaac were to die, YHWH would have to raise him from the dead, for His Word cannot be broken! That is faith! Isaac was spared after three days, like a resurrection; Jesus rose from the dead after three days! All this was fulfilled 2,000 later with perfect accuracy. The Bible is God’s Word and Jesus Christ is the Cipher, through the Holy Spirit, to understand its absolute perfection.

Prayer:

Oh, YHWH God Almighty: Father, Son, Holy Spirit – perfect King, Savior, and Friend. Thank you for revealing to us the faith of Abraham. He gave all to follow You, never seeing the fulfillment in his day, because You are worthy, and Abraham knew it. Help us to walk in the faith of Abraham. Help us not only to believe every single Word of the Bible, but to obey. We trust You, we love You, and we thank You in the name of Jesus. Amen.



*Journey On*

January 31, 2019 - David Sullivan  
A Giving Story  
Proverbs 3:9-10



Early in my business career I was blessed to have a client, who became a mentor, who shared insight into his success. What he shared had a lasting impact on me.

He shared, “If you’ve ever driven a boat then you know that as you drive, if you look back at your wake you can see a long way back the path you have taken in the water. Likewise, as you get older and look back at your life’s accomplishments and failures you can see “in your wake” what you have accomplished and whether it is good.” He attributed the success in his life to one simple act – that of giving and being obedient to give when he felt the Lord wanted him to do so.

Shortly after he and his wife were married, he felt impressed to give a gift of \$500 to an individual (we will call him Jim) from his church whom he didn’t know well. This was a significant amount because he and his wife only had \$700 in their savings. When he approached his wife about the Lord wanting them to give most of their money to a near stranger, she replied, “If the Lord told you to do it then you better do it!” Unsure how to approach Jim, he gave the money to their pastor to give the gift anonymously to Jim. Like all good pastors he gave the gift to Jim AND told Jim who the gift was from! Jim had recently started a business and could not afford health insurance. The following day his wife had a doctor’s appointment and needed to make a payment of \$500.

This gift lead to a friendship between Jim and my mentor. Through this friendship, my mentor had an opportunity to buy his first business. After acquiring this business, he was able to open a second location, all while remaining employed full-time at another company. One of the senior executives in the company learned of his success and moved him to the company headquarters which greatly boosted his career. He became friends with this senior executive and within a few years they had the opportunity to start a company. They, along with a couple of other executives, successfully ran this business for several years and then sold it for a handsome sum.

My mentor attributed all this success to this one simple gift of \$500. Over the years, he continued to give and to tithe, but he attributed all his success to that one simple act of obediently stepping out in faith when he truly believed the Lord told him to do so. Like the feeding of the 5,000 with two small fish and five small loaves, he said that when he believed the Lord and gave the \$500, He multiplied it 5,000 times!

What about you? Are you stepping out in faith? When you look back at “the wake of your life” does your financial life glorify God and point others to Him?

February 1, 2019 - Tonya Groninger  
Tithing Testimony  
Psalm 50:5-12

I believe that God's word is very clear on tithing! We are definitely supposed to do it! God does not need our money because God owns the cattle on a thousand hills and basically everything on this planet and every planet! He does, however, want us to show our love and commitment to kingdom work by tithing.

The local church is where the good news goes out to a lost and dying world! We have seen many new believers added to our numbers through our new church facilities and all the outreach to our community. These activities and all the ways that we reach out to the lost are funded by the tithe.

I have experienced many blessings by tithing. I can remember times in my life when I wasn't making very much money but I tried very hard to remain faithful in tithing. I was a struggling single Mom not having an easy time making ends meet. God would always come through in one way or another! When I became self-employed, I would give and then pray that God would come through with the manna and He always would. God is my great and awesome provider, and I trust in Him fully!

I also believe that we are to give of our time and our talents. There is nothing that compares to giving to one in need or helping those who are less fortunate than you are. One of my goals in life is to let my light so shine so others see my good works and glorify my Father in heaven.

I wish I could tell you that I have had a perfect record in tithing, but I don't. I believe highly in the principle and I am ever striving to be better and do better towards the goal. I know that God knows our heart and one way He knows who truly loves Him is through tithing!



*Journey On*

February 2, 2019 - Jay Strike  
The Cheerful Giver  
1 Corinthians 9:6-7



As Christians we have all probably heard the phrase, “God loves a cheerful giver.” It’s in the Bible so it’s true but somehow that doesn’t always make it easier to hear. The interesting thing in this passage is not so much the truth about how God feels, but that the source of the giving lies within our heart. Where is your heart in giving?

Paul starts the passage with an agricultural analogy, something that most of his readers would understand. The point is this, if you give sparingly you will be rewarded sparingly, if you give generously you will be rewarded generously. This is not any sort of prosperity formula, Paul is not compelling his readers, or us, to give in a certain way. We are to give as we have decided in our hearts.

Giving is therefore a heart issue. It is a reflection of the condition of each of our hearts - a reflection of the sanctification or Christlikeness that has occurred in each of us as believers. Don Whitney, in his book “Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life”, shares this thought,

“We ... will give to the extent that we believe God will provide for us. The greater our faith that God will provide for our needs, the greater will be our willingness to risk giving to him. And the less we trust God, the less we will want to give to Him. Your giving can be - and probably already is - a tangible indication of how much you believe that God will provide for your needs (174).”

The greater your faith and belief in God and His provision, the greater your propensity to give.

God’s desire for us is to give joyfully! For the believer this comes through the transformed heart. It is a growth issue for each one of us. “As he has decided in his heart,” means it is up to you. When your heart has been transformed and *is being* transformed this is an easier thing. This is our sanctification - our Christlikeness - and it comes through the time we spend in His Word, in prayer, in earnestly seeking His will, and humbly obeying His way for us.

Robert Rodenmeyer said, “There are three kinds of giving: grudge giving, duty giving, and thanksgiving. Grudge giving says, ‘I have to’; duty giving says, ‘I ought to’; and thanksgiving says, ‘I want to.’” Where is your heart in giving?

Begin earnestly seeking God and what He desires you to do for Him in all areas of your life - including your giving. When He gives you that word, obediently step out in faith, trusting in His provision because of who He is, and give with thanksgiving!

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📍 February 3, 2019 - Tommy Warnock  
📍 The Difference Just One Day Can Make  
📍 Luke 5:1-11

It was a time when Jesus was in the early stages of helping the disciples to know Him. It was just one day in their journey of coming to understand who Jesus was and why He came, sort of like us. Jesus was teaching crowds on the seashore including some disciples who had been fishing.

In the New Living Translation, it reads like this:

(verse 1) “One day, Jesus was preaching on the shore of the Sea of Galilee.” (verse 2) He noticed two empty boats and (verse 3) He stepped into one of them and continued to teach. I recognize this same pattern, not only in my journey with the Lord, but also in many with whom I serve. Just any given day the Lord will notice something about our lives and step in. It might be our circumstances, or an opportunity for growth. It might be the Lord preparing us for what is ahead, or it might be Him protecting us. It might be His calling us to join Him in His plan and purpose. Whatever the case, one day then becomes a very important day as our great God is working in our life for His perfect purpose.

(verses 3 & 4) Once in the boat Jesus continued teaching and then said, “Now go,” to them. It was Jesus saying I want you to go and put into practice what I have been teaching you. In this case specifically, He was telling them how to do what they had been doing, differently. (verse 5) They had been fishing, but Jesus told them to go out again and put down their nets. They responded by saying we’ve fished all night with no results but finally said, “but if you say so” we will, and they did. When done God’s way, the result was very different. (verse 6) Their nets were so full (verse 7) they had to shout for help. Their boats were filled.

(verse 8) “When Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus.” He was overwhelmed in his experience with Jesus, as were the others with him. (verse 10) Then Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Don’t be afraid. From now on you will be fishing for people.” (verse 11) And, when they landed, “they left everything and followed Jesus.”

On any given day Jesus will notice a moment in our lives. He will speak into our lives, and we will have to respond. When we follow Him the results will be His. May our response to the Lord always be, YES Lord, I choose to follow you and your way.



*Journey On*

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