

COMPASS

Finding Your Life's Direction



Doyle R. Pryor

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Introduction

DO YOU WANT TO OWN IT?

“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.

“Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant on the lookout for choice pearls. When he discovered a pearl of great value, he sold everything he owned and bought it!”

When Jesus wanted us to drive a point home he told a story. The four gospels are full of different stories (parables) that Jesus told to describe God's relationship that he desires for us, but every once in a while He would tell a story that would describe the level of desire, the holy aggression that God wants to see from us. One of the greatest couplets Jesus ever told is described in Matthew 13.

A man one day was walking through a field, whether he had one of the metal detector/treasure finders or not is unclear, but he came upon a treasure. We aren't told how much it was, but it was a lot. So much that the man went and apparently negotiated a price with the owner of the field who was ignorant of the fact that there was a treasure under his nose. Upon

¹Tyndale House Publishers: Holy Bible : New Living Translation. 2nd ed. Wheaton, Ill. : Tyndale House Publishers, 2004, S. Mt 13:44-46



discovering that the price for the field was everything that he had, he had a garage sale. Apparently this man wasn't wealthy, he was a commoner. So he gathered up all of his worldly possessions and he sold them all. His house, his car (or reasonable facsimile thereof), his clothes, any jewelry he might have had, he even hocked his wedding ring.

To this man, nothing was of greater value. Nothing else mattered. His job was now a tertiary issue. His family was second to this pursuit. Any hobbies such as his golf swing or his fishing schedule seemed to pale in comparison. He had a new pursuit, and if he were successful, this pursuit would change everything. His family would be better off. He would now be the one who decided how his life would be lived, not an overbearing boss. Even his hobbies might be given more attention. But for now he must be single-minded. He must be focused. He must not be deterred in his pursuit of this treasure. If life as he knows it is ever to be kissed goodbye and the life he could only dream about welcomed, then it would require everything, his possessions, his time, his undivided attention. So he set out to acquire that one thing that his heart longed for more than it longed for anything else. And upon finally collecting enough money he purchased the property and claimed his treasure.

The second of the mini-parables in this couplet describes a man who was wealthy. Apparently he was Jeweler. He dealt in precious stones all the time. He fancied himself as someone who could spot the cut, the clarity, and assess the cost of any stone. Business for him was good. But one day, he came upon a pearl that was greater than any that he had ever seen before. Like the single-minded bloke in the first story, he was possessed with possessing this pearl. So he sold the Mercedes, his family's primary home and their vacation home on the gulf. He even found someone to buy out his business. If he was going to own this pearl, it would require it all. So he had a fire-sale to buy that which could not be forged in a fire, but over years at the bottom of the ocean. Pearl's like this, opportunities like this come along only once in a lifetime, and he wasn't going to be a spectator in the game of life. He wanted to live like he had never lived before. He had lived a good life, a comfortable life, but something had always been missing. He had always been a good merchant, but in reality he knew that his life was but a blip on the radar screen of life that when extinguished would be easily forgotten.



This merchant did not want to be easily forgotten. He wanted his life to be significant. When merchants muttered his first name, he wanted no last name to be necessary. He would forever be the merchant who found IT! The pearl of greatest value. His status. His future. His hopes and dreams. Everything was dependent on that pearl of great price. So like the man before, he sold everything he had, and he bought it.

The very fact that you are still reading tells me that maybe you are like these men. Maybe you can identify with the commoner who wanted to aspire to significance. Everything up to this point in your life has been average. Maybe like me you grew up average. My family made an average income for where we lived. I was an average athlete. Maybe a little above average student, but compared to many others in my college experience, still average. Average personality. Average likes and dislikes. Like these men I knew that there was something greater, and I wanted it. Can I let you in on a secret? I found it. I sold everything and bought it. Why? Because I wanted to own it.

When Jesus called men to follow Him, he asked them to own it. In these parables the moral is clear. Jesus is the pearl of great price. A relationship with Him is like finding a treasure worthy of selling out everything that you have to possess it. Jesus Himself said, "I have come so that you might have life and so that your life might be full of life."² Over and over Jesus challenges us to be that treasure hunter with a holy aggression bent on following Him willing to pay everything to do so. Jesus words say as much as he informs us, "If any man follows after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me."³ There is some interesting language going on in that part of scripture. The word "deny" is actually a word in the original language that was used in real estate transactions. "Deny" was used to describe title deed to a piece of property that had changed hands. In essence Jesus was informing the treasure seeker if you want to experience this treasure you must sign over the title deed of your life to Him. Paul echoed these words by reminding us, "For you are bought with a price..."⁴ If you will do so, the price has already been paid for your purchase. If you are willing to sell everything that you have Jesus will buy it, and he will exchange it for a treasure beyond your wildest dreams: The treasure of significance and purpose. The treasure of hope, and maybe the greatest treasure of all, the treasure of a second chance.



²John 10:10 (NIV) ³Luke 9:23 ⁴1 Corinthians 6:20

Those who followed Jesus would learn this lesson well. Peter and John, two very average fishermen from Galilee had no education, they weren't known as polished or even very courageous. Remember how the disciples first reacted to Jesus' apprehension by the temple guards. Peter denied he even knew Jesus, and John seemed to be awol until we come to the crucifixion scene. After his death, they were hiding out in the "upper room" or attic of a sympathizer of Jesus. Yet after receiving this "treasure" they became bold beyond belief and after speaking in front of what would have been the Israeli parliament of their day these words were spoken of them, "The members of the council were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, for they could see that they were ordinary men with no special training in the Scriptures. They also recognized them as men who had been with Jesus."⁵ The councilmen knew them as ordinary, average joe's who now had been transformed into bold orators of truth, who had been with Jesus. What was the difference? They had been with Jesus.

So if you are satisfied with average, read no further. However, if you are willing to be a treasure hunter, then dig in. This book is written with one purpose in mind: To motivate you to want to be more than average. Instead of living life scattered, you can begin to live life with a holy aggression toward a single-minded focus. Instead of being "ordinary men (or women) with no special training scriptures" you can become someone who the world will notice has been with Jesus and you are continuing His mission.

So here is the question of all questions. Do you want to own it? There is a treasure here. To possess it you will have to accept the payment for your life from Jesus so that you can possess the treasure of His life. But how? How can you attain this treasure? Where is it and how can you find it? Everyone knows that to find a treasure you need a treasure map. And to use a map you really need a compass.

To teach you how to do that I want for the remainder of this book to use the illustration of the compass –this compass is pointing to your treasure.

Everyone knows what a compass is. A compass is a device that always finds true north based upon the earth's magnetic polarity. No matter where

⁵Tyndale House Publishers: Holy Bible : New Living Translation. 2nd ed. Wheaton, Ill. : Tyndale House Publishers, 2004, S. Ac 4:13



you are in the world you can go north. I have travelled to India and my compass would point north. From Africa there was a north. From China, still a north. Nicaragua, north. Mexico, north. Germany, North. The United States, north still. That's the reason a compass works it only points north. But when we know where true North is, we can determine East, South, and West.



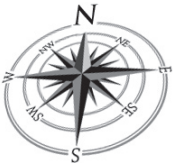
All of us have a compass in our hearts. And our compass is always pointing true North. That is the direction our heart and soul wants to go. It is the yearned for direction whether we know it or not. When we travel north our life seems to be at peace and there is a harmonic convergence in our soul, even if on the outside everything seems to be going to hell. So what is true north? What is this desired direction of our heart that seems to bring everything into balance? Why is it when we discover true north, that our world seems to have a sense of peace, and dare I say joy, even when the external circumstances don't seem to warrant it? I will tell you in a moment, but before I do consider this...

People, since the dawn of time, have tried to substitute some other direction for north. Some have tried a substitute path and maybe even called it north but in reality they were a few clicks off from north and their hearts knew it. Their heart lacked the absolute peace that true north provided. Their heart lacked the purpose of heading north. Understand, going north-east or northwest, while it may seem good, will still end in a disappointing destination. So let's use the 8 compass points to discover our true north and how to get there.



Chapter 1

North JESUS CHRIST



Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."¹

Our true north is Jesus. In His own words, Jesus said, "I am the way..."² What did he mean by that? Consider the words of Paul in his letter to the Romans concerning who He considered was true north. "through him (Jesus), we have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God."³ Look at the word, "access" again. Paul was writing in the language of Greek. Specifically market place Greek called koine Greek. It was a common language that was used so that everyone no matter what their caste could understand the teaching. In the original language the word used for "access" was also a word that was used in Caesar's army. There was an officer that was called the access officer. Normally he would have been one of the most decorated of all of the men in Caesar's military. His courage and ability in war was unmatched and as reward for his life of service he became the much sought after officer of access in Caesar's palace. This was called the Prosagogase Officer, or officer of access.

¹The Holy Bible : Holman Christian Standard Version. Nashville : Holman Bible Publishers, 2003, S. Jn 14:6 (All scriptures will be from the HCSB unless otherwise indicated).

²Ibid.

³Romans 5:2.



If someone wanted to see Caesar they would come to the doorway of the throne room and present themselves to the access officer. The access officer would keep a list of who was allowed to see Caesar and who wasn't. If the access officer knew you and approved of you, then you were allowed audience with Caesar and all the benefits that came with that. But if he didn't know you, and did not have a directive from Caesar that you should be allowed in the throne room, there was no way you were going to get in. The Bible says that Jesus is that access. Every thing that your heart truly desires, (not the Mercedes, big bank account, big house, or the trophy wife), but those things that bring peace to your life, that thing that creates that harmonic convergence when everything seems to make sense and your purpose for living and intentionality of mission is clear is in that throne room. You are at peace when you are there. You lack nothing. But to get there you must be granted access by the access officer. Paul said, "Jesus is that access." Jesus said, "I am the only, solitary, exclusive (as indicated by the definite article) way."

True North is Jesus Christ. The direction of our life is a person. Only when our life follows, as Peter says, "in His steps," do we gain that which every fiber within us cries out for. Once again Paul said that God's very purpose for making us was to "conform us to the image of His Son."⁴ Jesus is our true north. When we go in His direction, only then will our lives be lived with an intentionality that leads us to satisfaction.

Just like a compass on a journey, you can go north from anywhere. If you're messed up and confused, you can go north from there. If you are successful, yet unfulfilled, you can go north from there. If you are self-sufficient and self-absorbed and deep down self-disappointed you can go north from there. If you are new to trying to figure out this spiritual journey, you can go north from there. If you have been on the journey heading north for a long time, there is still some north to go. Wherever you are, whatever your situation, you can go north.

Here is a hint, until you do... you will never be satisfied. Why?, Because the compass of your heart is always pointing in the direction its Maker programmed in it the desire to go. It is like the theologian, writer C.S. Lewis declared, "our hearts will always be restless until they find their rest in Thee (God)."



⁴The Holy Bible : Holman Christian Standard Version. Nashville : Holman Bible Publishers, 2003, S. Ro 8:29.

How do you go North? Or rather, how do you live a northward life? That is defined in the other 7 points on the compass. They are each directions in themselves, but none of the other directions will substitute the direction your heart desires to travel.

THIS WEEKS COURSE CORRECTION



Read: John 14:1-11

Waypoint Scripture: John 14:6 (You might want to commit these waypoints to memory so that you will always have the map of scripture with you).

Action: : If you have yet to make Jesus your true north, why not do this first? It is very simple, according to the Bible, “if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 With the heart one believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth one confesses, resulting in salvation.”⁵ Simply put, place all of your trust for your life’s direction in Jesus, and commit to allowing Jesus to change the course of your life as your Lord or as your life’s navigator. If you have already trusted Christ as the navigator/Lord of your life, then correct areas of your life that are not heading true north.

Plan: If you are in a group: Come back next week ready to tell those in your group the corrections God is leading you to make so that your life is heading “true north.” This will provide the accountability you will need to maintain a life of northward focus.

⁵ The Holy Bible : Holman Christian Standard Version. Nashville : Holman Bible Publishers, 2003, S. Ro 10:9-10



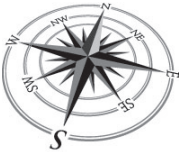


Chapter

2

South

THE WORD



“ In the beginning was the Word; and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.² He was with God in the beginning.³ All things were created through Him, and apart from Him not one thing was created that has been created.⁴ In Him was life, and that life was the light of men.⁵ That light shines in the darkness, yet the darkness did not overcome it... The Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We observed His glory, the glory as the One and Only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”¹

If our heart is a compass that consistently points us toward Jesus, then the Word, the Bible, is the map. Scripture consistently tells us that Jesus Christ is God revealing Himself to us, so that we can know what God is like, so we can understand the extreme sacrifice that God is willing to make so that our lives can go North.

In Genesis it said that “God said,” and every time that “God said” a part of creation came into being. Take a break for a moment from the compass analogy and just think about that. I heard on YouTube recently a sermon by Louie Giglio who said that God was the star speaking God. Think about it. God is the One who speaks light. God is the One who speaks stars and

¹John 1:1-5, 14.



planets, universes and molecules. God speaks the components of DNA and his very voice weaves DNA into humanity. His voice is precise. His voice is powerful. His voice is revelation. In everything that God speaks/creates He reveals something about himself. Paul said that even in the dark parts of Africa God revealed himself through creation.² God's ultimate unveiling of Himself is also our true North.

That's what John was saying, that when God spoke the greatest Word he ever spoke, He spoke Himself. "and you shall call his name Immanuel, (God with us)."³ Jesus' own disciple asked Jesus one day to show him the Father (God) and Jesus scolded and reminded Phillip, "Have I been among you all this time without your knowing Me, Philip? The one who has seen Me has seen the Father."⁴

Jesus is God's voice, revealing Himself to us. In the Bible, everything from Genesis through Revelation points us to Jesus. Jesus is also the measure against which we determine our interpretation of scripture.

Knowing what scripture says then is extremely important because it reveals Jesus. Sometimes the stories of different people in the Bible are stories of people who are heading North, albeit imperfectly. Sometimes the stories in the Bible are of people whose lives are trying every direction but North and we see the disaster that ensues as a reminder to keep our life direction consistent with our heart's compass.

Scripture also reveals to us the importance and indicators of a Northward life. What to do, why to do it. For instance, the psalmist tell us that we should memorize scripture (his words were "hide it in our hearts") so that we would not fall into sin and wrong choices.⁵

Paul also said that the Word of God reveals ourselves to us showing us where portions of our life are going anywhere but North as it lays open the deep recesses of our lives and reveals the smallest non-northward portion of us. Some people run from evaluation or examination of this sort like it is the plague. Others however run to it, realizing that a Northward life is a life that requires constant evaluation and directional re-alignment. Oswald Chambers, a World War 1 era preacher and probably a better thinker than most once said,



²See Romans 1:20.

³Isaiah 7:14.

⁴John 14:9

⁵Psalms 119:9, 11

“The initiative of the saint is not towards self-realization, but towards knowing Jesus Christ. The spiritual saint never believes circumstances to be haphazard, or thinks of his life as secular and sacred; he sees everything he is dumped down in as the means of securing the knowledge of Jesus Christ. There is a reckless abandonment about him. The Holy Spirit is determined that we shall realize Jesus Christ in every domain of life, and He will bring us back to the same point again and again until we do.”⁶

In the Bible, Paul said that his one aim, is to know Jesus.

“But everything that was a gain to me, I have considered to be a loss because of Christ. 8 More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of Him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them filth, so that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own from the law, but one that is through faith in Christ —the righteousness from God based on faith. 10 My goal is to know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death...”⁷

Paul, then said ‘I have but one direction,’ Christward, or for our analogy, “North.” Paul is indicating no other path that I have ever traveled, either positively enjoying my route, or negatively desiring a different one is worth replacing a northward course. My victories are rubbish (literally manure) compared to Him, my losses are at an even greater deficit when I consider all Jesus has sacrificed for me to travel this northward path.

I pastor a wonderful church in the heart of Oklahoma. Usually at the end of the message we offer people an opportunity to come forward to make a declaration of a northward decision they are making, we call it a time of invitation. I admit, sometimes feeling like a beggar asking people to choose my direction instead of the direction they are heading, but then I remember who Jesus is, the direction He is taking us, and the promised destination and remember, I am not begging you to go north, I am simply telling you that this is the only direction you have to go. There is no other direction of value. There is no other destination of merit. There is only one way to go ~ and I am simply reminding you that if you want the direction of your life to

⁶Oswald Chambers, My Utmost For His Highest, July 11.

⁷Philippians 3:7-10



navigate in the same direction as the compass of your heart is indicating, you have no where else to go. North is the only option. No wonder the wisest man in all of history said, *“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.”*⁸ I am not clueing you in on a shortcut – I am telling you that every other road is a wash out, and this is the only one that will arrive at the destination worth giving your life to.

Really, for just a moment try to convince yourself of another direction that will bring you fulfillment... really? Do you honestly think that you will reach fulfillment in life if you do more of the same stuff you are already doing? Have you hallucinated an outcome that somehow allows you to do the same things your have always done, yet arrive at a different destination? I don't mean to be harsh... but really? Do you really think that if you lose that 20 lbs, that much more meaning and purpose will be added to your life and you would have arrived? Do you think that if you make partner in your firm, that somehow that harmonic convergence will bring everything together in a peaceful unity? Really?

Maybe you have convinced yourself that in order to have your heart's desire satisfied you have to change jobs, or at least make more money. Possibly the answer to your life's question is being attempted to be answered through a more stern commitment to what you are already doing. In the words of the T.V. shrink, “How's that workin' out for ya?”

You really don't have any other direction you can go and achieve the goal, the desire of your life. Like the Psalmist said, “Take delight in the LORD, and He will give you your heart's desires.”⁹ Why? Because when we head north, then Jesus is our focus and the desire of our heart is directly tied to the destination to which God desires and created in us a compass to provide direction towards.

So where does the Bible fit in all of this? On a compass the needle is a full needle and one half of the needle (usually the red half) is indicating north, while the white or plain half of the needle is of course indicating south. Our northward life will not be on course unless the Scripture provides the paradigm through which we understand our direction and life's purpose. Herschel Hobbs, a great Baptist thinker once wrote, “The Bible is our guide to faith and practice.” He is right. If all we have is a Bible and the compass

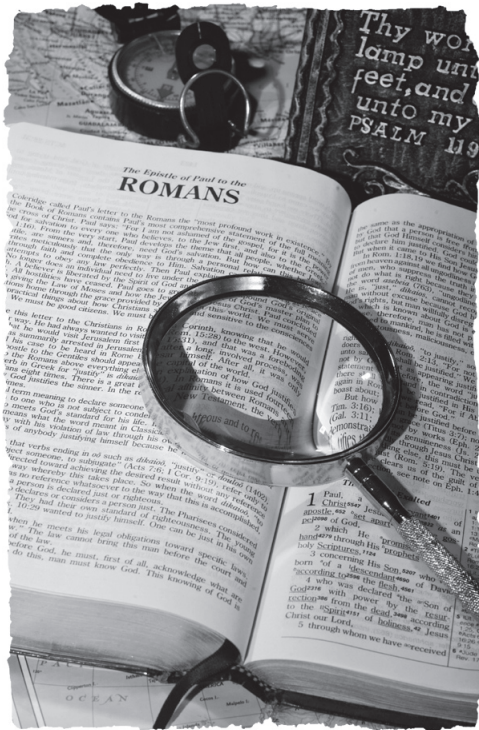


⁸Proverbs 14:12

⁹The Holy Bible : Holman Christian Standard Version. Nashville : Holman Bible Publishers, 2003, S. PS 37:4

God placed in our heart we can go north from here.

The more familiar you are with the map, the less potential detours will be a problem. For the traveler who knows where he or she is going, side excursions rarely offer a favorable alternative because there is no side excursion that can offer what true north offers.



So how do you do that? How do you so familiarize to the map that you become confident of your Northward life. In the post office of the town where I live hangs several pictures on a bulletin board. Across the bottom of the pictures it says "FBI MOST WANTED," these are people that the Federal Bureau of Investigation hopes that someone will recognize and call the local authorities or the 1-800 number across the bottom of the flyer. I have watched people intently look at those pictures so that they can identify the perpetrator of some heinous crime, usually a combination of murder and drug trafficking of some sort.

Not meaning to overstretch an illustration, but like the "Most Wanted" poster, the more intently we look into scripture the more completely we are able to know and recognize

Christ. Remember Paul's words we have already quoted, "I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord."¹⁰ To Paul, if he doesn't recognize Jesus, knowing Jesus intimately, then he considers everything that he has done in life no matter how big an accomplishment as a loss. Think about it, Paul was saying that if I don't discover the Northward life, then all those churches I have planted, all those people who I have taught, all those hard miles that I've logged have been for nothing. By studying of the scripture Paul can know Jesus so well that North doesn't become some dense brush covered path that has to be hacked through with a machete, but a path that although new, is somehow familiar. Almost like... the way home.

¹⁰Philippians 3:8.



The map, scripture, tells us of several things that can be done with scripture to help us not just know what Jesus said, but to know Jesus.



Hear it. This is what you are doing right now. It is feeding your faith and your faith is helping you to discover your true north.

“So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ.”¹¹



Read it. Every once in a while someone comes to me and talks so positively about a movie they have seen or a book they have read that I have to check it out for myself. It isn't some forced or coerced thing. It is natural. I want to read the book, or I want to see the movie with great expectation. Hoping that the effect that it had on my friend will be duplicated in my experience. The Bible is like that, reading the Bible gives us an overall image of Jesus, and a clearer view of True North. More times than not, the book or movie was much better than just hearing them talk about it. You can attend church and listen to people try to unpack a northward life for you, but you need to get into the word, not to say that you satisfied some legalistic regimen but to realize that the truer your northward journey the more complete you are because you are going the direction your heart longs to go. Consider what the last book of the Bible says,

“Blessed (happy, to be envied) is the man who reads aloud (in the assemblies) the word of this prophecy; and blessed (happy, to be envied) are those who hear (it read) and who keep themselves true to the things which are written in it (heeding them and laying them to heart), for the time (for them to be fulfilled) is near.”¹²



Study it. I have never been a very gullible person. I grew up with a father and grandfather that were always trying to pull some joke or prank on me, so I grew up learning to not take anything at face value. The truth is you can hear anything, and with the advent of the internet you can also read anything, and it is very difficult to discern what is true north and what is just a substitute North.

“The people here were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, since they welcomed the message with eagerness and examined the



¹¹Romans 10:17.

¹²Revelation 1:3 (Amplified Bible).

¹³Acts 17:11.

Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.”¹³

After discussing this topic recently of true north a friend of mine who is an airline pilot sent me an email with a keen insight. Here is Harvey’s insight from the perspective of a pilot:

“As a student pilot, one of the things we learned that magnetic north (think compass) and true north (think North Pole) were not the same. If you started your journey near the equator, it was not something to consider, but if in the USA or Canada, you needed to crank in some “correction,” especially as you go further north. So, it looks like as we get closer to HIM, we need to put some correction in our flight.”¹⁴



What an incredible insight! I learned a long time ago that God’s revelation is progressive. The more truth I have the truer north I can travel. As I faithfully travel what I have familiarized myself with, through the intent study of scripture Jesus reveals even more of Himself to me to insure that the destination I ultimately arrive at is where He is.


Not to be redundant, but as I know more, I know more. I learn that the legalism I started out with in the northward life which was somewhat necessary becomes a burden as I travel further north. That legalism was needed to help someone who didn’t know much stay on the path. Think of legalism for a new northward journeyer like those cars you drive at an amusement park that have the rail between the wheels so your kids can get the experience of driving without having to be able make the split second decisions that sometimes is needed in a regular automobile. But before long, those amusement park cars become boring and not very much fun once you have experienced the real thing. The further north you travel, the more you study

¹³Acts 17:11.

¹⁴Email from friend Harvey Morris.



the map (scripture) the greater understanding you have of grace and you make course corrections along the way to insure your destination is where Jesus, your True North, really is.


 **Memorize it.** I know it sounds like I am returning to legalism, but really it isn't. The Psalmist, King David, was called a man that was after God's own heart. If anyone in the Old Testament of the Bible knew a northward life it was David. Listen to the value King David placed on memorizing scripture:

“How can a young person live a clean life? By carefully reading the map of your Word. I'm single-minded in pursuit of you; don't let me miss the road signs you've posted. I've banked your promises in the vault of my heart so I won't sin myself bankrupt.”¹⁵

“Banking God's promises in the vault of my heart” as David said, is nothing more than memorizing the map so that our lives don't fall off the cliff spiritually, or wind up “spiritually bankrupt.”

One of my mentors is a man named Max Barnett. Max is a modern day spiritual giant if there ever was one. Max taught me as I studied the Bible to memorize key scriptures of each major section of the Bible so that I can remember the story. In other words remember or memorize the promise so that I can pick up the story like a handle and remember what direction true north is. Or as the old King James Version says, “Thy word have I hidden in my heart that I might not sin against thee.”¹⁶

Please understand, I don't memorize so I can boast of scripture quantities I have banked, but because I so desire my life to be where Christ is, that I want to know the map, the direction so well that when an alternate route is offered, I will be able to discern its intent and destination. (By the way, Satan is quick to always offer an alternative detour that if taken can lead to destruction).

 **Meditate on it.** Only when we quit trying to legalistically ingest scripture, and meditate on it, then we begin to be granted a vista into the heart of Jesus Christ, our true north. We then begin to experience that harmonic convergence between our life here in the temporal, and the heart of Christ and it brings us sheer delight.



¹⁵Psalm 119:9-11, (The Message).

¹⁶Psalm 119:11, (King James Version)

“Instead, his delight is in the LORD’s instruction, and he meditates on it day and night. He is like a tree planted beside streams of water that bears its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.”¹⁷

Sounds good doesn’t it? To live a life that is productive, purposeful, and prosperous. It is only the product of a life that makes its only aim going North.

DANGER ~POTENTIAL ROAD BLOCK AHEAD

There is a danger in making South your aim. I know many well meaning people who call themselves followers of Jesus, who study and study so that they can prove that they have studied and studied. These people can win an argument on just about any topic in the Bible, they can take verses both in and out of context for their own defense. They memorize, they study the history, surrounding, they study the cultural context of the passage of scripture, but they don’t allow the knowledge in their mind to make the southward journey to their heart. Scripture for them ceases to be a map, a lamp for their feet or light for their path and it becomes a constitutional document to be defended, argued over and won.

Please don’t misunderstand me, I have spent most of my life studying the Holy Scripture. I love the study of God’s Word. There is no one I know that gets more joy from studying out a passage from the original language and doing all of the necessary homework for true biblical understanding to take place, but unless intense study is matched by passionate application, all our studying and discourses will prove to be just another direction leading us to no where of any satisfactory end. As James said, “But be doers of the word and not hearers only deceiving yourselves.”¹⁸ The difference between the student of scripture and the Northward life is application.

¹⁷Psalms 1:2-3

¹⁸James 1:22



THIS WEEKS COURSE CORRECTION



Read: John 1

Waypoint Scripture: John 1:1,14

Action: Decide now to begin a habit of regularly studying the Map of the word of God so that you will become so familiar with the way north that you will have trouble getting off course. A good method to use is to find a yearly Bible reading calendar and follow it so that you read the Bible through each year. The more familiar you become with the Word, the more that you will know the Living Word. Remember the bulk of God's will is found in God's Word. If you want to discover true North, it will only be done through interaction with God's Word.

Plan: Decide to come back next week and ask one of your group members to hold you accountable to the study of God's Word. (Consider using a Bible reading plan).

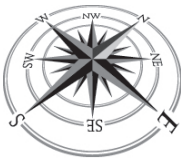


Chapter

3

East

FELLOWSHIP



“I give you a new commandment: that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you should also love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”¹

“And let us be concerned about one another in order to promote love and good works, 25 not staying away from our meetings, as some habitually do, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”²

The six other directional indicators on the map will help you stay your northward course by always keeping them in their proper alignment.

As I have already mentioned I am a pastor. That probably doesn't mean a lot to you, but after doing this for 25 years, I have learned the hard way how to mediate conflict. If you have been involved in a church for any period of time the aforementioned verses are probably the exception more than the rule, aren't they? But, also I have witnessed both verses work wonderfully when a person's life direction is North.

¹ John 13:34-35
² Hebrews 10:24-25



Imagine an experiment with me for just a moment. If you have a piece of rope and one end of the rope is tied around you and the other is tied around another person while the middle of the rope has a loop tied in it and is connected to a hook on a crane. As the crane lifts the rope up (connected to you and your friend), what will be the disposition of your location? Will you become closer as the rope is lifted or further away? Of course you will get so close in this illustration that you will begin to bounce off of one another.

Fellowship then, happens when more than one person heads true North, the longer they travel north, the closer they become. The only way they don't become closer is if one of the individuals cease to travel north. At the risk of over illustrating, let's say that two individuals were going to a meeting at the same place. The place is found at 200 South Elm Street in Sapulpa, Oklahoma, the address of the church I pastor. (People everywhere are saying slowly sap-ul-pa with all of the vowels making the short sound). Let's say since Sapulpa is roughly in the middle of the United States, one person starts out in New York City and the other one starts in Los Angeles of course the closer they get to Sapulpa the closer they will be together. But let's say they are in towns that are relatively close together in proximity. Let's say one person starts in Dallas, Texas while the other starts in Fort Worth, Texas. They are already pretty close to one another but the closer they get to 200 South Elm Street the closer they will be, and they will probably even be on the same road (Highway 69, or I-35 depending on which road they take). But the longer they travel toward the destination the closer they will be together.

The same thing is true for the follower of Christ. A northward life is forever increasingly intimate with everyone else who is living a northward life. This truth is of paramount importance to God. So much so that the longest prayer Jesus prays is for the unity of those who live northward...

I have revealed Your name to the men You gave Me from the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. 7 Now they know that all things You have given to Me are from You, 8 because the words that You gave to Me, I have given to them. They have received them and have known for certain that I came from You. They have believed that You sent Me. 9 I pray for them. I am not praying for the world but for those You have given Me, because they are Yours. 10 All My things are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I have



been glorified in them. 11 I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, protect them by Your name that You have given Me, so that they may be one just as We are... I pray not only for these, but also for those who believe in Me through their message. 21 May they all be one, just as You, Father, are in Me and I am in You. May they also be one in Us, so that the world may believe You sent Me. 22 I have given them the glory that You have given to Me. May they be one just as We are one. 23 I am in them and You are in Me. May they be made completely one, so that the world may know You sent Me and that You have loved them just as You have loved Me. 24 Father, I desire those You have given Me to be with Me where I am. Then they may see My glory, which You have given Me because You loved Me before the world's foundation. 25 Righteous Father! The world has not known You. However, I have known You, and these have known that You sent Me. 26 I made Your name known to them and will make it known, so that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them, and that I may be in them.³

One would be hard pressed not to find the over arching theme of this incredible prayer of Jesus for us. Unity. Not the kind of hold hands and sing “kumbayah” kind of unity, but the kind that is solidified when a group of individuals start following the same compass applied to the same map desiring the same direction. Jesus’ prayer is that we would end up in the same place, look at it again, “Father, I desire those You have given Me to be with Me where I am.” Jesus’ desire is that we wouldn’t necessarily wind up at 200 S. Elm Street, but where He is – Jesus is our address. Remember God’s desire is for us to become like Jesus as previously stated in Romans 8:29. Jesus telling of his own death on the cross was trying to bring comfort to His followers shortly before the dreary day, He gave these words of comfort, “I am going to prepare a place for you... so that where I am, there you shall be also.”⁴

We can use any number of analogies here and they all would work to express the desire of God for the unity of His children through Jesus Christ, but the most powerful comes from Jesus own lips when teaching about how to restore fellowship and when to restore fellowship with someone who is supposedly living a northward life as well. Jesus said in His first recorded sermon,

³ John 17:6-11,20-26

⁴ John 14:3



So if you are offering your gift on the altar, and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift.⁵

How important is fellowship to God? Your relationship with others on a northward journey is so important that God instructs the northward traveler to cease to worship until he or she has went to the one who has the offence and try to make amends. God gives the person permission not to bring his gifts to Him due to the breach of fellowship! To God, every person has incredible value. As is often said in evangelical circles, “Jesus would have died even if it only saved one lost soul.” But, every lost soul, every hurt heart is important to God, and God desires for that lost soul, that hurt heart to be as important to us as it is to Him. Remember, God desires that our address would be Jesus. Where Jesus lives – every lost person, every sheep to borrow an analogy from scripture is important to God. So important that Jesus would leave the 99 to find the 1, and he expects us to leave our gift and the other 99 at the altar so the 1 never forgets their value both to God and us.⁶ Our ability to go after the 1 is indicative of our direction and location. If we so value the group that we lose the value of the 1, then we have demonstrated a life that might be going East toward the group, but it sure isn't going North toward Jesus, our address of destination.

I have heard preachers who were more full of themselves than they were Jesus proudly declare that if someone didn't agree with them on a tertiary issue, they could find another church that was less spiritual, less alive, and led by a lesser leader. In my younger days, I was that preacher. Now I am quite sure that the one who was stung the most by my words besides me is Jesus. I can't stop people from having personality difficulties with me, I have a tendency to become harsh when my direction is not true north. And I am not saying that there is not a time to invite people to leave the fellowship when sin issues arise that affect everyone else's northward journey. Fellowship is a natural by-product of a northward life, if a life refuses to go or be led north, that life then according to Jesus should not be allowed to hinder the northward direction of everyone else. The goal is restoration of that traveler. But if the traveler resists the leadership of other northerly travelers, then Jesus instructs in detail how to handle such breaches in fellowship.⁷



⁵ Matthew 5:23-24

⁶ Read Luke 15 for Jesus story on the Lost Sheep.

⁷ Read Matthew 18 for instruction from Jesus on discipline of a wayward traveler.

However, for our study, let's just agree that us getting together not just to meet, but to share common purpose, a common direction, and a common goal is intensely important to Jesus. If someone were to say that their life is heading "true north" but not being lived through a local fellowship, or even if in their fellowship they have someone who has an offence against them that has not been made a priority to correct, then "true north is going to be a virtually impossible direction to maintain.

THIS WEEKS *COURSE CORRECTION*



Read: John 17, Matthew 5:23-24

Waypoint Scripture: Matthew 5:23-24

Action: : Usually when someone is offended by us, we know it. As men especially, we even sometimes pride ourselves in being offensive. However, as we see in scripture, it is extremely difficult to be offensive and correct in our life's navigation. In light of this ask God to show you of any other northward travelers you have offended and make contact with them to try reconcile your relationship. (This would even be a good practice to use on the non-northward travelers as well). Remember this is extremely important to God and the only reason you are ever given not to offer an offering before God.

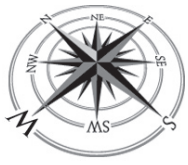
Plan: Report back to your group what happened when you worked to restore a relationship that was severed. If you had a difficulty, talk about it so that the other northward travelers can help you in restoring these vital connections that God has put in your life. Remember - he said to leave the 99 to find the 1.





Chapter

4



West

WITNESSING

The path of the righteous is level; O upright One, you make the way of the righteous smooth. Yes, LORD, walking in the way of your laws, we wait for you; your name and renown are the desire of our hearts.¹

*For I was born a sinner—yes, from the moment my mother conceived me. But you desire honesty from the womb, *teaching me wisdom even there. Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Oh, give me back my joy again; you have broken me—now let me rejoice. Don't keep looking at my sins. Remove the stain of my guilt. Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me. Do not banish me from your presence, and don't take your Holy Spirit* from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you. Then I will teach your ways to rebels, and they will return to you.²*

Growing up in a Southern Baptist Church in the Bible belt that was known for its great efforts of evangelism I have heard every guilt laden sermon angle that was supposed to prompt me to greater evangelistic heights.

¹ The Holy Bible : New International Version. electronic ed. Grand Rapids : Zondervan, 1996, c1984, S. Is 26:7-8

* Or from the heart; Hebrew reads in the inward parts.

* Or your spirit of holiness.

² Tyndale House Publishers: Holy Bible : New Living Translation. 2nd ed. Wheaton, Ill. : Tyndale House Publishers, 2004, S. Ps 51:5-13



Somehow, if I had the ability to smell the sulphur of hell, I would be more vigilant. And if I could see the flesh melting eternally and hear the screams wailing then I would not dare to allow someone I know or love to go there without completely understanding what they were going to experience by not submitting to the call of Christ.

I do believe all of the aforementioned motivators are true, however, I don't believe that they are, at least for me, the greatest motivation. The greatest motivation is a northward life that remembers what it was to go in a wrong direction. A life that realizes the forgiveness and purpose that was given by Jesus Christ is quick to make the fame of the One who is his life's direction spread. My fame when I travel northward is secondary to the fame of my true North, Jesus Christ.

When a person relates regularly to the Word, and becomes intimate with the direction of their lives, then their personal desire will mirror the desire of the One who is their true north.

Isaiah says it this way, "Lord, walking in the ways of your laws (The Word), we wait for you; your name and renown are the desire of our hearts."³ Let me show you what I mean. Growing up as the son of Howard Pryor meant something to me. My father is a hulk of a man, well over six feet and six inches tall, weighing about the average of a large NFL lineman, he is at 70, still as strong as the days when he played football. I idolized him growing up. Because of that, many of my preferences were shaped by my father. I like to hunt and fish because he liked to hunt and fish. Coconut cream pies, white cakes with butter-cream icing, and vanilla ice cream are likewise my father's contribution to my heritage. I like the University of Oklahoma Sooners because it was bred into me (BOOMER....this is where you say.... SOONER). Likewise I have my DVR set to record all of their games and the games of the Dallas Cowboys. Why? Because my father instilled in me a love for the things he loves. I'm not saying I didn't deviate in some areas. He likes Ford, I like Chevy... I didn't say my dad was perfect. But the point is because I wanted to be like him I started to like what he liked.

I have also noticed that the further north I travel the more I am beginning to lay down some of my preferences and adopt Jesus' preferences. What is important to Christ is becoming more important to me everyday that I travel



north. So for me this idea of witnessing is an inside out job. The more the character of Christ is working into me, through time in His Word, and moments of divine fellowship, the more I want the same things that Jesus wants. A man that I have had the pleasure to meet several times and look up to wrote in his classic book this quote...

“This is the new evangelism we need. It is not better methods, but better men and women who know their Redeemer from personal experience – men and women who see His vision and feel His passion for the world – men and women who are willing to be nothing so that He might be everything – men and women who want only for Christ to produce His life in and through them according to His own good pleasure. This finally is the way the Master planned for His objective to be realized on earth, and where it is carried through by His strategy, the gates of hell cannot prevail against the evangelization of the world.”⁴

Evangelism then, flows out of a northward life. It isn't something that you have to coerce, or program. It isn't something that requires a program or presentation. It is natural. Just like talking about my father seems natural, or talking about my sons is as easy as breathing, the more northward my life is lived, the easier it is to talk about my relationship with Jesus, my talk seems less like the holy speech of Pharisees, or of people who are trying to sound holy to impress someone who they don't know and probably don't even like, and more like the natural conversation of one friend telling about another friend they really ought to meet.

I love networking relationships. Not just to accomplish a task, but to learn, grow and enjoy others whose Northward trek is further north and advanced than mine. I like introducing friends to other friends and seeing those relationships mature as well. I don't have an acrostic to introduce my friends to each other or to network two people who I know are trying to achieve a similar task, I just introduce them, and the merits of their personhood seem to take over. The commonalities that they enjoy or are working toward welds them together like brothers in arms.

Let me illustrate. I really enjoy riding motorcycles. If you don't get motorcycles, I'm sorry, there is kind of an unspoken brotherhood among those of us who ride. You will notice it as you ride down the road and pass another



motorcycle. It is a cool wave. For some they simply wave, for others they have a signature wave, like the hand flat down wave (it works better than the sideways hand wave that is caught by the wind at 65 mph and will rip your shoulder off), there is the point and nod, there is the two fingers down, peace wave, then there is the I'm a new rider and the hand cannot leave the bars for more than .5 seconds without my feeling out of control wave.



When I stop and park next to another biker, although they don't know what I do, and I don't know what they do, we accept each other. We enjoy the road, the freedom, the feeling of not having anything around us as we travel down the highway. They can look as nasty as any biker stereotype and they will talk to me just because I rode up on my bike. Walking down the street, I am not offered the same pleasantries since my job also comes with some stereotypes of being judgmental and narrowly bigoted of anyone who doesn't agree with all 95 theses of some unknown document.

It is as natural for me to talk about my relationship to Jesus as it is to pull up to another biker and start talking about the Harley-Davidson electra-glide that he is riding and I was wishing was in my garage. (No, not coveting, wishing). I have no problem redirecting relationships I make in the biker world toward the northward life. I also have no problem directing relationships that I make in the business world, or the sports world, or dare I say even the church world toward the northward life. Although in the church world is so difficult because so many people are convinced they already have it all figured out and nothing more to learn or network about.

It hasn't always been that way and honestly it is a relatively recent development in my life. I use to think that I had to have some cute way of

presenting the gospel to look like I had all the answers. Then I realized that witnessing is just helping someone else find true north, and being patient enough to allow them to discover and traverse some of the same roads and boundaries I had to cross.

Please read carefully, if you rely on an acrostic or program to share your relationship with Christ, you are in a far better position than someone who isn't sharing their relationship with Christ.

All I am saying is that witnessing is something that naturally flows from a life that is heading true north. Take the apostles for instance.

Once again borrowing from Robert Coleman in his masterpiece *The Master Plan of Evangelism*,

“It all started with Jesus calling a few men to follow Him. His concern was not with programs, but with men whom the multitudes would follow. The initial objective of Jesus’ plan was to enlist people who could bear witness to his life and carry on his work after he returned to the Father. These first converts had little immediate effect on the religious life of the day, but their lives, in time, would have an impact throughout eternity.”

None of the men Jesus chose seemed to be key people. They weren't prominent in the synagogues, educated or wealthy. They were “unlearned and ignorant,”⁵ but Jesus saw in them the potential to be leaders in the Kingdom. They weren't the men you would expect to win the world for Jesus, but they were teachable. They had a yearning for God and the realities of His life. They truly lived northward. Jesus will use anyone who is willing to point the direction of their life north.

When Jesus wanted to win the world, he chose 12 men and taught them how to go north. In turn he expected them to make investing relationships that would teach others how to go north, who in turn would teach others and so on. Paul, passed on this wisdom to his young northward mentee, Timothy as he wrote to him these words, “The things you have heard of men from many witness, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”⁶

⁵ Acts 4:13

⁶ 2 Timothy 2:2



Jesus also stayed with them. He made it a practice to be with them. His wasn't drive by witnessing, but of life investment. These men were quick to go north as best they understood it. Their lives after the ascension of Jesus were captivated with the practice of north, so much that they would forfeit their lives for the fame of Jesus Christ to spread. Read carefully the words of John R.W. Stott:

For the sake of His name, we should be 'jealous'... for the honor of His name when it remains unknown, hurt when it is ignored, indignant when it is blasphemed. And all the time anxious and determined that it shall be given the honor and glory which are due to it.”⁷

Jesus' fame not ours, Jesus name, not ours, Jesus mission, not ours until we head north then we realize that his fame is ours, his name is ours, and his mission is ours.

When we are witnesses of the fame of Christ, it is then that we can know that we are heading north – because Jesus Christ Himself said that His main mission in life was to “seek and to save that which was lost.”



THIS WEEK'S COURSE CORRECTION



Read: Matthew 28:18-20, Luke 15, Acts 1:8, Acts 4

Waypoint Scripture: Matthew 28:18-20

Action: If your life is heading “True North,” then the things that are important to Jesus are starting to become important to you as well. Do you grieve when you see someone heading in a direction other than northward whose life is spiraling out of control? That person has intrinsic value to Jesus. You have what or maybe I should say, “Who” they need. It is just networking. You helping someone else to know where to find help because you found help there yourself. Purpose to live your life as a navigator who is ready to help people to find “True North.”

Plan: we all have someone in our life whose life has taken a detour to destruction. For me I have family members, college buddies, friends, and old work associates from my pre-church vocation days. These people I still love and see from time to time. My goal is to help them find the direction the compass of their heart is pointing towards. I know that they will never feel complete or at peace until the compass of their heart is pointing in the direction they are heading. Make this your goal as well.



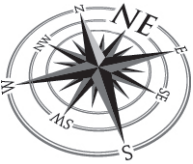


Chapter

5

Northeast

PRAYER



If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you want and it will be done for you.¹

Take delight in the LORD, and He will give you your heart's desires.²

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named. I pray that He may grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, and that the Messiah may dwell in your hearts through faith. I pray that you, being rooted and firmly established in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and width, height and depth, and to know the Messiah's love that surpasses knowledge, so you may be filled with all the fullness of God. 20 Now to Him who is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think—according to the power that works in you—to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen³

Pray without ceasing.⁴

¹ The Holy Bible : Holman Christian Standard Version. Nashville : Holman Bible Publishers, 2003, S. Jn 15:7

² The Holy Bible : Holman Christian Standard Version. Nashville : Holman Bible Publishers, 2003, S. Ps 37:4

³ The Holy Bible : Holman Christian Standard Version. Nashville : Holman Bible Publishers, 2003, S. Eph 3:14-21

⁴ 1 Thessalonians 5:17



When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you. "When you pray, don't babble on and on as people of other religions do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. Don't be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him! Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us today the food we need, and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one."⁵

Look at the verse found in John 15:7, if I understand it correctly if Jesus is the focus of my life and I "remain" in Him, then I will experience God's provision in receiving what I ask for. That is one powerful verse. Think about it for a second. When my life is heading "True North" focused on the person of Christ, then I have all of God's power and provision at my disposal. Does that mean that if my life is heading north I can "wish" for that new Ranger 18 ½ foot bass boat and I will receive it? Or you could wish for the Lexus or the new job or the new spouse or the new home? Probably not. No, because when my life is heading "True North" it is then that I am consumed with Jesus Christ. His desire becomes my desire, therefore "whatever I want" to ask for will be whatever Jesus wants me to ask for.

If you haven't figured it out yet, God is smart. And if I were as smart as God is, I would want for me exactly what God wants for me. Why? Because God is able to see the big picture while we tend to lean toward myopic tunnel vision. One of my favorite verses in the Bible is found in Jeremiah 29:11, it is often quoted as a reminder of what God thinks of us, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."⁶

God only wants what is best for us, and we really cannot pray according to what is best for us until we head "North." Until Jesus is our focus, we



⁵ Tyndale House Publishers: Holy Bible : New Living Translation. 2nd ed. Wheaton, Ill. : Tyndale House Publishers, 2004, S. Mt 6:5-13

⁶ The Holy Bible : New International Version. electronic ed. Grand Rapids : Zondervan, 1996, c1984, S. Je 29:11-13

really don't understand how large God's desire for our good really is. God's desire for our good is to conform us to the image of His Son Jesus Christ.⁷ We see this same idea of "remaining in Jesus" which leads to us receiving "whatever we ask," repeated in the Old Testament book of Psalms. "Take delight in the LORD, and He will give you your heart's desires."⁸ If Jesus is our delight, then we already have our hearts desires, and what we want will mirror what Jesus wants for us.

Now here is where we blow it. We really undervalue what God wants for us. God's desire for us is so much greater than we could ever desire for ourselves. Paul reminds us in Ephesians 3:21 "Now to Him who is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think —according to the power that works in you— to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen"

I heard an old Bible teacher by the name of Ron Dunn say one time, "God always meets His people at the level of their expectation." I am finding out that the longer I live the more true I discover that fact to be. God rarely, if ever disappoints me. He usually gives to me and provides for me exactly what I expect. Let me explain.

I have been a pastor now for 22 years. I can look back over those 22 years of preaching and ministry and honestly evaluate that I have aimed too low. My level of expectation has never been up to God's level of performance. If I ever notice that there are things that God did not do, it is probably directly correlated to what I expected Him to do or to not do. So my praying ought to always keep in mind the One to whom I am praying and not insult Him with my low expectation of Him when He has challenged me to pray realizing that He can do "above and beyond" anything that I could ever ask of Him, and even conceive in my mind.

So with this truth in mind, prayer is HUGE! Prayer is the key to the communication with the Father, it is the key to the blessings of God, and it is the key to witnessing the power of God on a scale we have never even thought of conceiving, coming upon us for our good. So how do we do it? How do we pray? How do we live our lives in such a way that prayer is not just something that we do, but even personifies us as a person who is in constant contact with the Lord and direction of his or her life?

⁷ See Romans 8:29

⁸ Psalm 37:4



There is a real simple outline I was taught years ago that helps to remind me to pray with great expectation.



1. Adoration

Spend the first part of your praying just reminding yourself of Who God is, and what He has done for you. In your praying “adore him.” There is much to adore. He made you. That ought to be a pretty good start. He provides oxygen for you to breathe. He holds the earth just far enough from the sun that you are warmed by it instead of fried by it. He rotates the earth on its axis where you can experience the seasons (if you live in Oklahoma where I live you can experience all four seasons in one week sometimes). You can adore Him for loving you. For giving Jesus so that you could head “North.” I have heard many well meaning preachers say this phrase, “Praying is just talking to your best friend.” Well, yes that should be true, but if my best friend happens to be the King of all Kings of all the universe, then my approach to Him will be one with a great deal of respect and awe. My adoration of God through Jesus is diminished if I act so familiar with God that I somehow believe that He is no more than a spiritual bellhop ready to perform all of my wishes like a genie in a bottle. Be careful. Remember, your best friend, your father is the God who will not be mocked. He will not be blasphemed and he will discipline those He loves. In my adoration of Him, I exalt Him. Not that I am giving Him any higher office or position than He already has, but I am giving Him the place of preeminence in my own life.



2. Confession

The Psalmist said, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.”⁹ We need to confess any known sin or areas of our life that is not heading “true North” so that our line of communication with God will not be interrupted and our focus will be on Jesus.

I heard of a lady one time that came forward and she wanted to be saved, but refused to admit that she had sinned. This lady asked the pastor, “Which sins shall I ask forgiveness for since I don’t know if I have committed any?” The wise old pastor said, “Just guess, I bet you’ll get them right.” She did. When you repent (to head in the opposite direction) and confess your sins in prayer, God promises to forgive you of those sins and remove any resulting stain of them from your life.¹⁰ Look at confession as course correction. Every time we sin, we cease from our desired heading of “true North.” Asking God to forgive us and repenting of our sin allows us to get back on course being made in the image of Jesus Christ.



⁹ The Holy Bible : King James Version. electronic ed. of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version. Bellingham WA : Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995, S. Ps 66:18

¹⁰ See 1 John 1:9



3. Thanksgiving

If someone was to heal me of a terminal illness, the least I could do is say "Thanks!" We need to get in the habit of gratefulness to God. Sin is a terminal illness that would result in our destruction were it not for Jesus.¹¹ In light of what God has done for us, thanks is a very small acknowledgement of His sovereign work in our lives. Please understand, we are not entitled to God's grace, healing and provision for eternal life. No, God gives it to us purely out of His own perfect motivation of love which overlooks all of our inadequacies. We don't deserve it, we can't earn it, we can only receive it by grace through faith.¹² Therefore the proper response is...Thank You.

Thank God for His provisions of life, of sustenance, of grace, of salvation, of strength, of knowledge, of wisdom, of creation, of friends, of family, of a Church family. There is really no end to the things for which that you could thank God.



4. Supplication

Here is where we make our requests known. God already knows what we want, but He wants us to ask for it. Just like at my home where I live with my wife and two sons – if one of my sons points toward the salt and grunts, he probably will not get the salt. However, if he asks for it politely, he will get it every time.



One of my favorite characters in the Bible is Daniel. Daniel lived an upright life and honored God with his life of prayer. In the middle of one of Daniel's prayers that he was praying on behalf of the salvation of the city he said, "Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, O Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary. 18 *Give ear, O God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy.*"¹³ When Daniel made a request, he didn't do so out of a sense of entitlement because he deserved it, instead out of an intimate friendship with his God. He knew that God loved him, and wanted the best for His people and that God

¹¹See Romans 3:23, 6:23

¹²See Ephesians 2:8-10

¹³The Holy Bible : New International Version. electronic ed. Grand Rapids : Zondervan, 1996, c1984, S. Da 9:17-18

God was merciful toward those He loves. That became Daniel's motivation. Daniel knew how to pray – he was faithful to it, even when it would land him in a den of lions. And when he was in that primal predicament what did Daniel do? The same thing he did every day, he prayed. What did God do when Daniel prayed? He answered and shut the mouths of the lions so that the king could see the provision of God and worship Him alone. Our supplication, our requests should be consistent with what we know about God from scripture, and with what we have experienced with God in our own lives.

For instance, if you are worried about a particular situation, maybe your job situation or family situation and you need peace, the scripture says,

“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.”¹⁴ God is more willing to meet your need than you are to voice it to Him.



Jesus while teaching on the subject of asking something of the Father said, *“You parents—if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? 10 Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not! 11 So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask Him.”¹⁵*

So with this simple acrostic, ACTS – you can Acknowledge, Confess, Thank, and ask for God's Supply as a model to get you started in your life of communication with the Father.



¹⁴ Tyndale House Publishers: Holy Bible : New Living Translation. 2nd ed. Wheaton, Ill. : Tyndale House Publishers, 2004, S. Php 4:6-7

¹⁵ Tyndale House Publishers: Holy Bible : New Living Translation. 2nd ed. Wheaton, Ill. : Tyndale House Publishers, 2004, S. Mt 7:9-11

THIS WEEKS COURSE CORRECTION

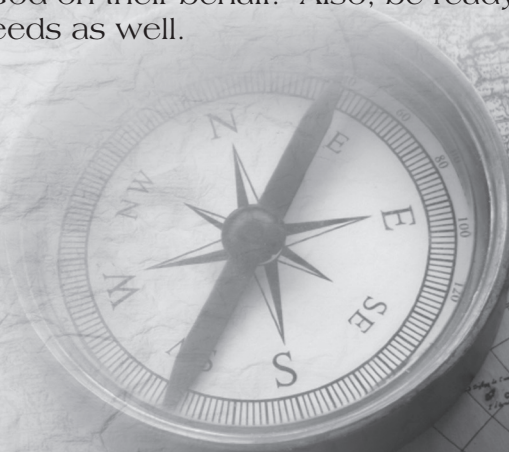


Read: John 17, Matthew 6:5-13

Waypoint Scripture: John 15:7

Action: Begin by daily employing the A.C.T.S. method in your prayer time. If you don't have one, then set aside a time every day, preferably the same time to adore, confess, thank and ask your requests of God.

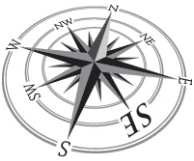
Plan: Let your group know what time of day you are praying and ask if there is any needs they have that you can lift up to God on their behalf. Also, be ready to share your own needs as well.





Chapter 6

Southeast COMMUNITY



As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend.¹

Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. 10 If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble. 11 Likewise, two people lying close together can keep each other warm. But how can one be warm alone? 12 A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.²

Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other.³

So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.⁴

You must warn each other every day, while it is still “today,” so that none of you will be deceived by sin and hardened against God.⁵



Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. 25 And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.⁶

True North is impossible... alone. The truth is, we need each other. Even a casual reading of the Bible and one has an innate understanding that the northward life is to be lived out in concert or Community. At the risk of sounding redundant, true community is different than fellowship. Fellowship, for the sake of this book's usage, means that we are unified and are going in the same direction. Community happens when we actually share life together. When I allow you to get "in my business," and you allow me into yours. Why would I want to do that? Because unless I do, I will not experience the pleasure of a Northward life. I will not know the blessing of being one of Jesus' devoted followers and all the intangible benefits attached. For me to head "true North" I need some help with the area of navigation.

This is where spiritual accountability comes in. It is at this level that we keep each other heading true north by being true friends who are not afraid of asking one another the tough questions in reference to what we see, what we listen to, what our motivation is at our jobs, or in our hobbies, what is our time management practice, and even where our heart is concerning being focused on Christ.

As I have already mentioned, I really like to hunt. It is one of the few things that provides me with a temporary escape to refocus and enjoy creation. I even tried to get my doctoral supervisor one time to let me do a study on "the therapeutic effects of killing wild game on the local church pastor." He said no. My favorite hunting trip every year comes during an Elk hunt in Colorado. Me and three or four close friends drive a truck and trailer about 1,400 miles to the southern part of the Rockies, set up camp, scout the area, and prepare for the hunt the next day. (This is the part where I need the accountability of my friends because to be honest without them I would probably hunt on the scouting day). I enjoy the hunt, tracking elk finding the big bull and liberating it from the mountains to find a place in my freezer. (If you are not a hunter and this offends you, I am sorry, but if I read my Bible correctly God was the first hunter). However, my favorite part isn't



the kill, or the hunt it is the time spent talking, joking (and there is a lot), and sharing life with my friends. We promise that whatever happens at hunting camp, stays at hunting camp. Although we have never done anything I feel the need to repent of, it is just a fun time of guys being guys.



As their pastor the guys have several questions for me, in return I learn as well about things like business, agriculture, hunting, and their lives. When men with men and women with women begin to experience life on that level a deeper friendship is formed. It is a friendship that allows someone else to question my judgment, that allows them to ask me the hard questions, that allows them into my world so much that they know me and no matter what kind of front I put up, they call me on it. It is only when we reach that kind of community that we have a Northbound support system that helps us stay on track. The guys that I hang around with aren't holier than thou. They are real. One of them, who was new to this trip, we were trying to convince to take a key leadership role in the church I pastor. He spent the whole week trying to convince us why he shouldn't take it. In His words, "I am not nearly holy enough for that job." After spending a few days with us, we didn't convince him to take it, but he noticed that we didn't have any pretense and we accepted him as he was, while all the time encouraging him to be more.

It is very dangerous to not have a friend, or group of friends with whom to share life on this scale. Left unchecked, all of us tend to prove our sin nature is still in there waiting for the right moment to ruin our lives. Consider the man in the Bible who was called "a man after God's own heart."

In the spring of the year, when kings normally go out to war, David sent Joab and the Israelite army to fight the Ammonites. They destroyed the Ammonite army and laid siege to the city of Rabbah. However, David stayed behind in Jerusalem. Late one afternoon, after his midday rest, David got out of bed and was walking on the roof of the palace. As he looked out over the city, he noticed a woman of unusual beauty taking a bath. He sent someone to find out who she was, and



he was told, “She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite.” Then David sent messengers to get her; and when she came to the palace, he slept with her. She had just completed the purification rites after having her menstrual period. Then she returned home. Later, when Bathsheba discovered that she was pregnant, she sent David a message, saying, “I’m pregnant...” When the period of mourning was over, David sent for her and brought her to the palace, and she became one of his wives. Then she gave birth to a son. But the LORD was displeased with what David had done.⁷

David made three very critical mistakes that led him to this predicament. First, he ignored a covenant he had made as king to lead his troops to battle, instead he stayed behind while they went to fight the battle for him. It doesn't seem like a big sin, but the problem with sin is that it will never be content to stay small. It snowballs, as we will see in David's life. Had David had a spiritual friend who was allowed to be accountability for him the snowball would have stopped there. But he didn't. Instead in arrogant pride he made his second mistake that is all too common for many of us, He overestimated the power of his own flesh.

David thought that he was strong enough to handle whatever temptation would come his way. He wasn't. It only took one look and he crumbled from the “man who was after God's own heart” to an adulterer, a liar, a con- niver, and a murderer. It was a colossal fall to occur in such a short period of time.

The third deadly mistake that David made was that he underestimated the consequences of his own sin. He thought he could get away with it. Enter Nathan. Because David did not have anyone in his life that would be his accountability, God raised up Nathan to call David on his sin. It was something that David had when he was younger. His best friend was Saul's son, Jonathon; they desired to be pleasing to God. But since Jonathon died, and David became king, we really don't see anyone fill in that role of accountability in David's life. David's sin ultimately cost him dearly. It cost him his son, the baby that Bathsheba bore died shortly after childbirth. Tragedy from that time on became normative in David's household where cases of incest, rape, murder and betrayal plagued the lives of many of his children. I heard



⁷ Tyndale House Publishers: Holy Bible : New Living Translation. 2nd ed. Wheaton, Ill. : Tyndale House Publishers, 2004, S. 2 Sa 11:1-5, 27

someone say, “sin will always take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and make you pay more than you want to pay.” David discovered this truth the hard way. Left to ourselves, we usually don’t make the best choices. We need each other. No wonder the writer of Hebrews challenged us with these words. *“Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. 25 And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.”*⁸

We usually don’t need much encouragement to sin, we were born with that nature. But over and over again we are told in scripture to encourage one another toward love and good works. A good method to do this is in a small group of like-minded brothers or sisters who are allowed to ask each other the hard questions. Here is a sampling of the questions that are asked in my group, they did not originate with me, the first time I saw them was in a book by Steve Farrar, but whoever wrote them knew how to get to the heart of the matter:

1. Have you been a testimony this week to the greatness of Jesus Christ with both your words and actions?
2. Have you been exposed to sexually alluring material or allowed your mind to entertain inappropriate sexual thoughts about another this week?
3. Have you lacked integrity in your financial dealings or coveted something that does not belong to you?
4. Have you been honoring, understanding and generous in your important relationships this week?
5. Have you damaged another person by your words, either behind their back or face to face?
6. Have you given in to an addictive behavior this past week? Explain.
7. Have you continued to remain angry toward another?
8. Have you secretly wished for another’s misfortune?
9. (Your personalized accountability question.)
10. Did you finish the reading and hear from God? What are you going to do about it?
11. Have you been completely honest with me?

⁷ Tyndale House Publishers: Holy Bible : New Living Translation. 2nd ed. Wheaton, Ill. : Tyndale House Publishers, 2004, S. Heb 10:24-25



These questions are possibilities to be asked of one another in a weekly meeting of accountability (Proverbs 27:17). They are to stimulate conversations of character and confession of sin in a safe environment, which values honesty, vulnerability, confidentiality, and grace. We all read the same passage of scripture that week (usually one to three chapters that we read over each day) and share what we learned of God and of us through the scripture.

It is when we have friends that are allowed to ask questions like these that we reach a level of community that is a launch-pad for a northward life. Understand we might slide into sinfulness, but we don't slide into righteousness any more than you fall all the way up a mountain. It is planned. If the commitments we make to live a northward life are serious and sincere, we are going to need each other in order to keep them. Why not include the insurance to bring them to reality by adding accountability to them? In doing so we are not so independent and self-sufficient.



THIS WEEKS COURSE CORRECTION



Read: Hebrews 3:13, 10:24-25; Galatians 6:2;
1 Peter 4:8, Romans 12:10, 1 Thessalonians 5:11;
Ecclesiastes 4:9-10,12

Waypoint Scripture: Proverbs 27:17

Action: Make yourself accountable to someone.
How, by doing these simple things:

1. We must invite another person into our lives. Remember that accountability is more relational than informational. Two things are very important at this point. Whoever you invite into your life must be adequate to carry out this role. This has to be more than a pal you enjoy running with in life. It has got to be someone who will ask the hard questions, give sound Biblical council, and love you with grace. Remember you are asking a brother into your life for accountability, not someone to lord over you in legalism. Cults are known for this very thing. Your authority is Christ.

2. We must decide in what area of life we need accountability. What area of your life or commitments are you concerned about? Is it personal, family, devotional? Is it a sin or habit that concerns you? Is there a spiritual discipline where you need some help. Specificity is very important for you and them. Don't ask a person to hold

Continued on page 50



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you accountable in 20 different areas of your life. Choose one or two where you can really identify need. The act of accountable discipline in one area surprisingly spills over into other areas of life.

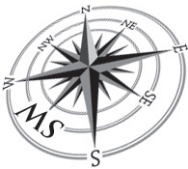
3. We must remember that our ultimate accountability is to Christ.

Plan: Pray about and invite someone to hold you accountable and to help you in your northward journey.



Chapter 7

Southwest FINANCES



“Again, the Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of a man going on a long trip. He called together his servants and entrusted his money to them while he was gone. 15 He gave five bags of silver to one, two bags of silver to another, and one bag of silver to the last—dividing it in proportion to their abilities. He then left on his trip. “The servant who received the five bags of silver began to invest the money and earned five more. The servant with two bags of silver also went to work and earned two more. But the servant who received the one bag of silver dug a hole in the ground and hid the master’s money.

“After a long time their master returned from his trip and called them to give an account of how they had used his money. The servant to whom he had entrusted the five bags of silver came forward with five more and said, ‘Master, you gave me five bags of silver to invest, and I have earned five more.’

*“The master was full of praise. ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let’s celebrate together!’**

“The servant who had received the two bags of silver came forward and said, ‘Master, you gave me two bags of silver to invest, and I have



earned two more.'

"The master said, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together!'

"Then the servant with the one bag of silver came and said, 'Master, I knew you were a harsh man, harvesting crops you didn't plant and gathering crops you didn't cultivate. I was afraid I would lose your money, so I hid it in the earth. Look, here is your money back.'

"But the master replied, 'You wicked and lazy servant! If you knew I harvested crops I didn't plant and gathered crops I didn't cultivate, why didn't you deposit my money in the bank? At least I could have gotten some interest on it.' "Then he ordered, 'Take the money from this servant, and give it to the one with the ten bags of silver. To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away. Now throw this useless servant into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

I heard the famous Christian motivational speaker, Zig Ziglar say one time, money is not the most important thing in the world... but it is reasonably close to oxygen. For this chapter I want to admit that I am not a financial guru, I practice principles that I have been taught just like you and I am the better for them. Therefore for this chapter I want to borrow from the teachings of Ron Blue taken from the study series "Seven Areas of Life Transformation."

Most people in this world think that money is great and the more it they can get, the better off they will be. King Solomon is a person who had a lot of money but had this to say about it. *"Those who love money will never have enough. How absurd to think that wealth brings true happiness!"*² Other people believe that "Money is the root of all evil." And therefore, the less of it they have the better off they will be. What does the Bible say about money? Is it good or evil? The truth is that the Bible doesn't say, "Money is the root of all evil." It actually says, "The love of money is at the root of all kinds of evil." *"For the love of money is at the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows."*³



² Ecclesiastes 5:10

³ 1 Timothy 6:10

GOD OWNS IT, YOU MANAGE IT

The most important truth about money is that it all belongs to God. *“The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, says the LORD Almighty.”*⁵ God owns everything. You are not the true owner of anything. You are merely a manager over the things He allows you to possess. *“Now a person who is put in charge as a manager must be faithful.”*⁶ If you are a manager over God’s money then you ought to make sure you are doing what He wants you to do with it. The Bible gives clear guidelines or boundaries for being faithful with money. The Bible also makes it clear that God blesses those who are faithful. *If the master returns and finds that the servant has done a good job, there will be a reward. I assure you, the master will put that servant in charge of all he owns.*⁷

Even though God actually owns all the money you possess, He allows you to enjoy it. *“And it is a good thing to receive wealth from God and the good health to enjoy it. To enjoy your work and accept your lot in life—that is indeed a gift from God.”*⁸

There are really only 4 things you can do with money. You can:

1. Earn money
2. Give money
3. Spend money
4. Invest money

We will look at what the Bible teaches about each of these four things. The key to enjoying money and experiencing financial freedom is to do each of these four things in a way that is faithful to God who is the true owner. Financial freedom comes as a result of financial faithfulness.

Earn Money Honestly

Before there is any spending, giving or investing, you are to EARN MONEY. Do you think it matters to God how you earn money? The Bible teaches that “get-rich-quick schemes are a waste of time. *Wealth*

⁵ Haggai 2:8 (NLT)

⁶ 1 Cor. 4:2

⁷ Matthew 25:46-47

⁸ Ecclesiastes 5:19 (NLT)



from get-rich-quick schemes quickly disappears; wealth from hard work grows.⁹ Have you ever wished that you could win the lottery and have so much money that all your troubles would be over? Most lottery winners go on to be miserable after they “get-rich-quick.” Of course, most people who play the lottery never win so they have a hard time believing that getting money quickly would be anything but great.



Another way people try to get rich quick is through “pyramid schemes.” These schemes always have one thing in common – the promise of getting rich quick. People put their trust in them and usually are disappointed with the outcome. Some people gamble, some people steal, some people buy cheap stocks, and some people pray, all with the hope of getting rich quickly.

The truth about “get-rich-quick” schemes is that most of them don’t work; but even if they do, the wealthy they gained from them usually doesn’t. The Bible teaches that your ability to earn money is a gift from God. *“He did it so you would never think that it was your own strength and energy that made you wealthy. Always remember that it is the LORD your God who gives you power to become rich...”*¹⁰ It is not your own effort that allows you to succeed at earning money, it is God. It comes from God and once you get it, it is still His. If God gives you the power to get rich, it probably won’t happen overnight.

HARD WORK

The Bible teaches to earn money through hard work. *“If you are too lazy to plow in the right season, you will have no food at the harvest.”*¹¹

And finally, the Bible teaches that when you earn money, earn it honestly. *“Unless you are faithful in small matters, you won’t be faithful in large ones. If you cheat even a little, you won’t be honest with greater responsibilities.”*¹² Earn money without cheating, lying or taking advantage of others. Every time you get money, someone has given up money. If you earn money from



⁹ Prov. 13:11

¹⁰ Deut. 8:7-18

¹¹ Prov. 20:4

¹² Luke 16:10

a job, your employer gives up money each hour that you work. If you get money by selling something, the buy gives up some money to get what you are selling.

All transactions exchanging money involve one person getting and one person giving. What happens when one of the people in the transaction is not honest? The other person loses. In fact, the other person or the other party gets robbed. Even if that other party is a big company, it is still robbery. *“The LORD demands fairness in every business deal; he sets the standard.”*¹³

Have you ever misrepresented something you were selling in order to get a better price for it? If you are not honest on your tax return, the money that you keep because of lying you stole from the government. *“Wealth created by lying is a vanishing mist and a deadly trap.”*¹⁴

When you earn money, God expects you to do so honestly. Earning money, even if you earn a lot of it, doesn't lead you to financial freedom. Freedom comes only when you earn it within the boundaries of financial faithfulness.

GIVE MONEY GENEROUSLY

After you earn money honestly God challenges you to give generously. *“Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the best part of everything your land produces. Then he will fill your barns with grain, and your vats will overflow with the finest wine.”*¹⁵ When you give generously, instead of running out of money, God multiplies your money. *“If you give, you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full measure, pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, and running over. Whatever measure you use in giving—large or small—it will be used to measure what is given back to you.”*¹⁶ (editor's note – while this material is not completely copied for your viewing, in an entire lesson on Giving Generously the author makes the strong biblical point that the place we are to begin giving is through giving a tithe – or 10% of our gross income to God. By doing so we acknowledge that it is His anyway, we help the needy and we participate in spreading the Gospel).



¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Proverbs 21:6

¹⁵ Prov. 3:9-10

¹⁶ Luke 6:38



SPEND MONEY WISELY

When you earn honestly and give generously, financial faithfulness requires you to spend it wisely. The first priority is to spend it on your family needs. *“Who is a faithful, sensible servant, to whom the master can give the responsibility of managing his household and feeding his family?”*¹⁷

The Bible says that God will supply all your needs. *“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”*¹⁸

Have you ever spent money on things you didn't need before you paid for all the things you did need? If you are in serious debt, I would bet you can trace it back to spending money on things you wanted but didn't need.

INVEST MONEY CAREFULLY

When you earn money honestly then you can give it generously and spend it wisely. With the remainder, invest it carefully in order to bring an increase.

*“The servant to whom he had entrusted the five bags of gold said, ‘Sir, you gave me five bags of gold to invest, and I have doubled the amount.’ 21 The master was full of praise. ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let’s celebrate together!’”*¹⁹

Investing God's money is another issue of faithfulness. The goal of investing money is to make the money grow. Spending money on something that goes down in value, like a car or boat, is not investing. Hoarding money in a place where it does not grow is not investing either. *“Well, you should at least have put my money into the bank so I could have some interest.”*²⁰

Investing is buying something today that can be sold for more money in the future. Investing carefully is another way to earn money honestly. Earning money honestly starts the whole cycle over again. Eventually, you could have enough money invested that the money you get from your investments could pay for all your giving, spending, and reinvesting.

How could you spend your time in ministry if you had financial freedom?



¹⁷ Matthew 24:45

¹⁸ Philippians 4:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ Matthew 25:20-21

²⁰ Matthew 25:27

“For you have been called to live in freedom—not freedom to satisfy your sinful nature, but freedom to serve one another in love.”²¹

FINANCIAL FREEDOM

Financial freedom actually lies within the boundaries of these four principles. Though it may seem at times that freedom could come from breaking outside the boundaries defined by financial faithfulness, the truth is that only misery, slavery, and death wait for you on the outside.

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will direct your paths.”²²

Slavery and loss are on the outside of financial faithfulness.

- If you don't earn money honestly you could end up in prison.
- If you don't give generously, you will miss out on God's blessing.
- If you don't spend money wisely, you might end up in bankruptcy.
- If you don't invest carefully, you will never have income from investments to pay for your spending and giving.

While I have borrowed these biblical principles from Ron Blue, Dave Ramsey and others and applied them to my own life, I can attest to their validity. There is a lot of freedom in earning money honestly, giving money generously, spending money wisely and investing money carefully.

One of the books that have been a great resource to me is *The Total Money Makeover*, by Dave Ramsey, I have found his principles to be scripturally based and his premise of getting out of debt a doable solution for many people in the church I pastor. His class that you may desire to look for in your own church or ask if you can have it is called, “Financial Peace University,” this class will help you to become a student of money and teach



²¹ Galatians 5:13

²² Proverbs 3:5-6

THIS WEEK'S COURSE CORRECTION



Read: Matthew 25:14-30

Waypoint Scripture: Matthew 6:33

Action: Talk to God about your finances. Write down what He shows you. Are you willing to do whatever He wants you to do with your finances? Take action on what God has shown you in His Word.

Plan: If this is an area of need in your life, then please find a biblically based financial class to participate in. (Crown Financial Ministries founded by Larry Burkett, and Financial Peace University founded by Dave Ramsey are two of the better one's out there that will teach you how to get out of debt and live in this financial freedom. If one of these classes is not available, then locate the book either in print or on audio cd called The Total Money Makeover to give you a better understanding of how to control your money instead of your money controlling you.

Chapter 8

Northwest SERVING



I read about a man in France man by the name of Michael Atito. Michael had a goal to be entered in the Guinness World Book of Records by eating metal and glass. He began in 1959. He would grind up the metal, rubber, and glass of different objects into his food. By 1966 he had eaten: 10 bicycles, 7 televisions, 6 chandeliers, and one Cessna airplane in Curacaos, Venezuela. Can you imagine the metal detectors if he were to walk through airport security today. Can you imagine this man standing before the Lord. What have you done? I ate an airplane.

The mark of greatness. When you are gone will you be missed?

What is the mark of greatness? When you head north, everything gets turned upside down. There is a great story that illustrates our point of view versus Jesus' point of view.

"Then the mother of Zebedee's sons approached Him with her sons. She knelt down to ask Him for something. "What do you want?" He asked her. "Promise," she said to Him, "that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right and the other on Your left, in Your kingdom."



But Jesus answered, “You don’t know what you’re asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?” “We are able,” they said to Him. He told them, “You will indeed drink My cup. But to sit at My right and left is not Mine to give; instead, it belongs to those for whom it has been prepared by My Father.” When the 10 disciples; heard this, they became indignant with the two brothers. But Jesus called them over and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles dominate them, and the men of high position exercise power over them. It must not be like that among you. On the contrary, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life—a ransom for many.”¹

James and John wanted to be the Vice-President and the Secretary of State in the Kingdom of God. They really didn’t want to ask for themselves so they asked their mom to stump for them. The other disciples became indignant with James and John – probably because they didn’t think about it themselves. The disciples still hadn’t figured out the key to the Kingdom. If you want to be great, then you have figure out that it is not about you, or about your position, or your reputation. It is about your service.

There was a famous composer by the name of Aturo Tskanyini who presented of Beethoven’s great works. The hall was crowded. Everything went just right. When he was done the hall exploded in applause. People shouted and whistled. He bowed and bowed again. The orchestra bowed repeatedly. He took the baton and rapped it on the music stand. Quietness fell. He looked at the orchestra and said, “I am nothing. You are nothing. Beethoven is everything.

Our lives will become a whole lot easier when we begin to realize that I am nothing, we are nothing, Jesus is everything. He is our goal. He is our destination. He is our model. And if Jesus is our model then that means that we shape our lives according to the mold of his life. *“just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life—a ransom for many.”²*

Jesus in essence was telling everyone, “I have come to give my life for yours!” Do you want to be great in the Kingdom of God? Are you into



¹ Matt 20:20-28 (HCSB)

² Matthew 20:28 (HCSB)

prestige that lasts? Are you interested in being someone who gets God's attention? That doesn't happen by your great knowledge of Scripture, or by the hours you spend in prayer, or by your faithful attendance in church or even your efforts to tell others about Christ. That happens by your service.

“Above all, keep your love for one another at full strength, since love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining. Based on the gift they have received, everyone should use it to serve others, as good managers of the varied grace of God. If anyone speaks, his speech should be like the oracles of God; if anyone serves, his service should be from the strength God provides, so that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To Him belong the glory and the power forever and ever.”³

Peter was one of the inner three, who spent all of their time with Jesus. He was one of the ones on the mountain of transfiguration. One of the ones asked to pray in the Garden. Quick to try to defend Jesus by cutting off a soldier's ear. After spending all that time with Jesus, what would personify his life? Would it be his preaching like it was on the day of Pentecost? No longer boastful, or proud, Peter's goal now was to serve according to the gifts that he had been given in the power of the Holy Spirit.

John was another one. Originally, he wanted to be the vice-president or the secretary of state in the Kingdom, but toward the end of his life he was willing to lay down his life for his brothers, just like Jesus had laid down his life for him. Listen to John's words toward the end of his life, *“This is how we have come to know love: He laid down His life for us. We should also lay down our lives for our brothers.”⁴*

After teaching this concept of a Northward life by using the compass diagram at our church one of our men sent me an email. I love it when the people I have been called to serve step out and teach me something of Jesus I didn't know from the passages of scripture that I was teaching them with a spirit of humility. Here is the email:

Without going into detail about the magnetic fields around the earth magnetic pole being hit by particles from the sun in the ionosphere (about 70 miles up), these lights must be something to see.

³ 1 Peter 4:8-11 (HCSB)

⁴ 1 John 3:16 (HCSB)



Some of the video I have seen is beautiful.

So, looks like as we journey north, we see more of the light.

As I recall, light is the purest form of energy. Looks like when we get to heaven we will see the LIGHT in its purest form.⁵

The further you travel North, the more you are willing to give your life for others, the more you see and reflect Jesus' light. This is so true of all of us. The further north we travel, the more we will be exposed to the light. The more we are exposed to the light, the more our lives will reflect Jesus' own light.



When we serve; When we say, "my life for yours" it is then that we know that our lives are heading north. Jesus, who did not shirk from laying down his life for us, invites us now to lay down our lives for one another. That will mean different things for each of us depending on our spiritual development. For years there have been two different strains of people in Christendom. There have been those who contemplate their spiritual lives and they want to know everything there is to know about God, but their knowledge in their head and I believe to a degree even in their heart has never made it to their hands and their feet. Then there are those who go mach 2, they serve, they witness, but they never get around to really knowing Jesus, they just try to appease him by their flurry of divine activities. Both are tragic.

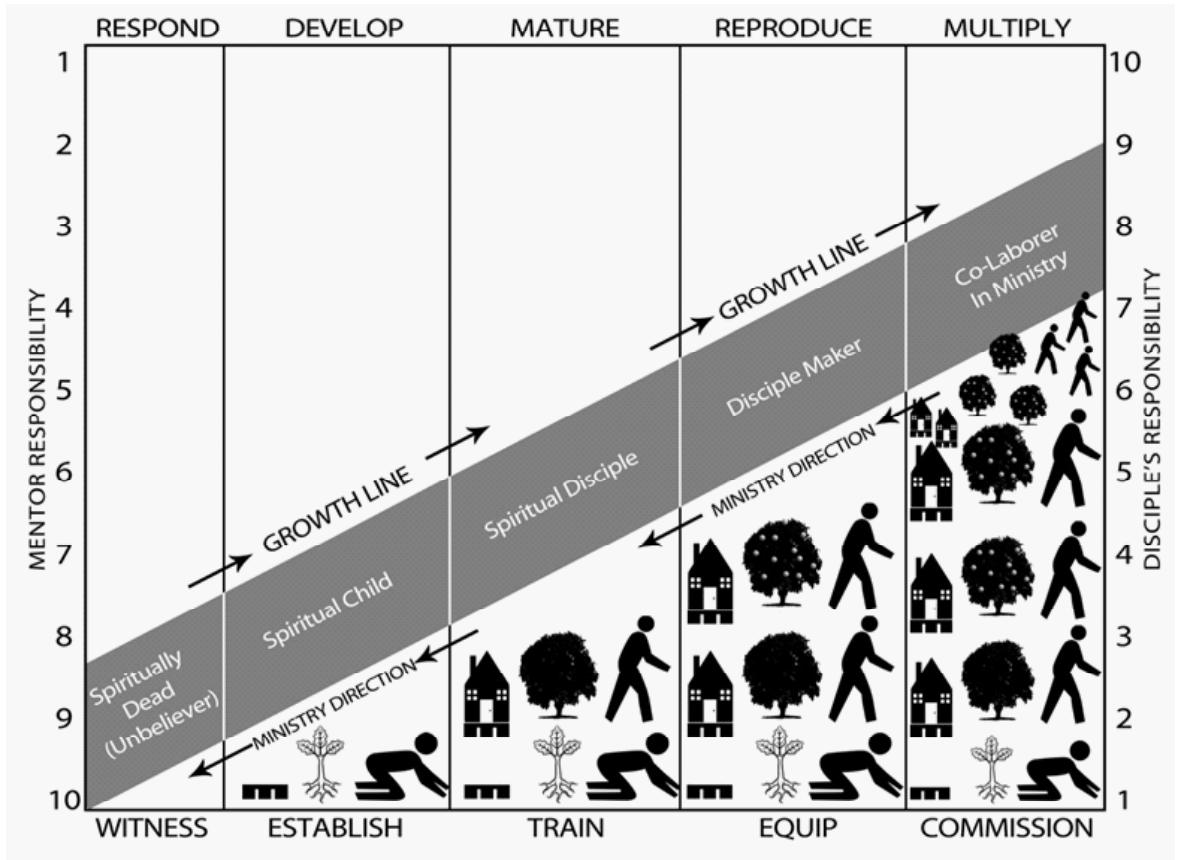
I learned years ago that a disciple is expected to grow up in his faith in Jesus and if he doesn't it is because there is something going on that has caused a spiritual cessation of growth. It could be a lack of spiritual food that caused the Christian to quit growing. It could be a lack of spiritual exercise, (service). Or it may just be disobedience or laziness when it comes to spiritual things.

While taking a course on what it means to be a follower of Christ 20 years ago called MasterLife, written by a man who I now call a friend, Avery Willis Jr. I was introduced to the MasterBuilder diagram. It is a diagram that shows



⁵ Email from Harvey Morris

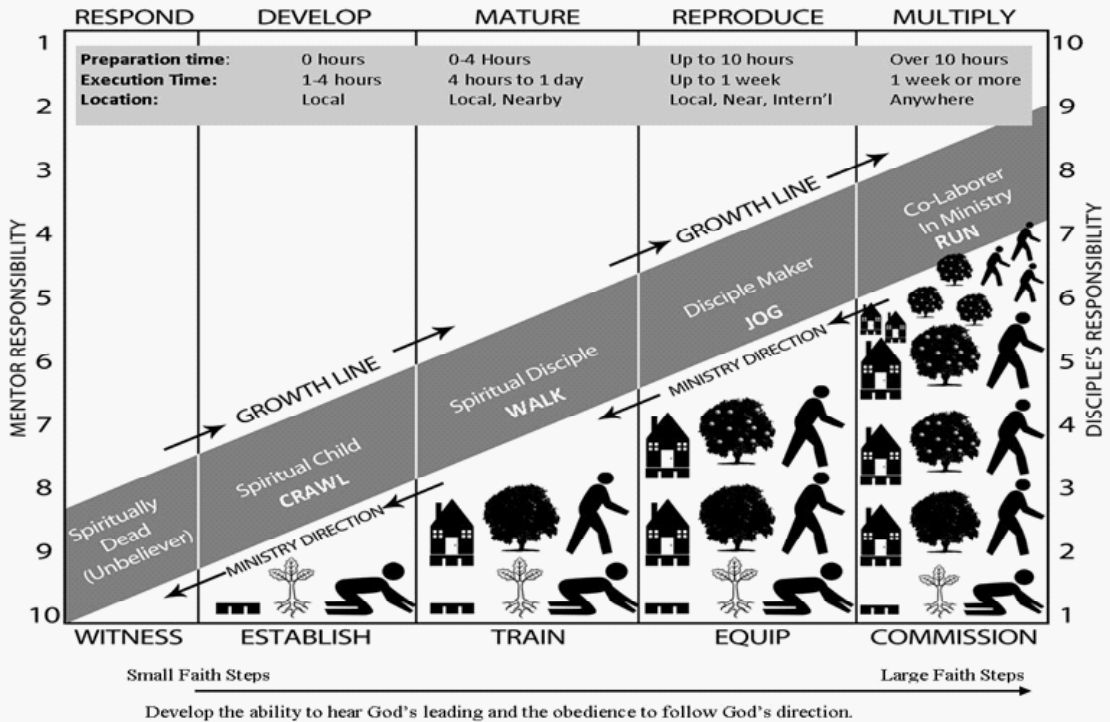
the expected growth of a Christian and the responsibility of the spiritual parent or mentor to help the spiritual child to grow. Here is that diagram:



I realized however, that for a Christian to fully develop, besides leading people to Christ and walking with them through their spiritual development, there needs to also be physical action at each level. Just like people first learn how to crawl, then walk, then jog, then run. Those things ought to be true in the lives of each Christian at various points of his or her development. After seeing a very simple diagram which came from Rick Warren's church that just emphasized what a person did, we put the two diagrams together and call them the M.A.P. Strategy. M.A.P. is an acrostic for Ministry Activity Pathway, and it looks like this:

MINISTRY ACTIVITY PATHWAY

Goal: To get people into and move them along the pathway



Each box represents a person at a different level of spiritual development. For instance, if a person is an unbeliever, then I want them to respond to the message of Christ and to begin heading true north by accepting Jesus as their Lord. Therefore, I am going to witness to them. Once they begin following Jesus they are called a spiritual child. I want for them the same thing I wanted for my two sons when they were little, I want them to develop. Therefore I am going to establish them by giving them some basic instructions. This very book is written to help the person who is a Spiritual child

take the next step of spiritual maturity. Every person who is a follower of Jesus has been given “gifts” of various kinds to employ in the service of their Lord. Although they might not be fully developed gifts, just like muscles when exercised, they become strong and able to accomplish much. So we have ministries that these spiritual children can perform within and without the church walls. We call these “crawl steps.” We have plenty of crawl steps at our church. They greet people at the doors, they help with various projects around the church. They help when one of our older members needs something done around the house. There are plenty of ministry opportunities that don’t require any preparation and can be done in a relatively short period of time.

Every Spiritual child can minister and encourage unbelievers to make the same decision they have made to direct their lives “northward” toward Jesus. So they can be responsible. The man who taught me these principles is Mike Story, he used to tell me all the time that in order to lead someone you only have to be one step ahead of them and to be able to show them where to step. As that Spiritual child begins to learn some basic disciplines of that are indicated on the compass diagram as directional indicators such as living in the Word, fellowshiping with other believers, witnessing to the world, praying in faith, living in honest community, giving over control of your finances to God, and the giving of yourself in service the jump is made to the next growth cycle.

A spiritual disciple is someone who is starting to get some things figured out. They haven’t arrived yet but they are on their way toward being a person who is well equipped and ready to be used by Jesus. Consider them like a teenager. I have a son who is a teenager this year, he is trying to grow up so fast and there is this whole new set of issues that come with that “growing up.” It is not unlike that with a Spiritual disciple. We want a spiritual disciple to mature so we must train them. We also want them to continue growing so we also increase their level of responsibility in ministry. We call these walk steps, they usually require a little preparation time and a little more execution time than a crawl step. We are stretching their spiritual growth by giving them opportunities to serve at the next level. Some of these tasks are teaching under the supervision of a more mature believer, local, statewide, and national mission trips. And especially the growth of someone who is a spiritual child into a spiritual disciple. All of these things



can be very effective ministries and are not meant to be taken as a comprehensive list.

As a Spiritual disciple matures he becomes a “disciple maker.” This is someone who is not just a disciple himself but he is leading someone to be a disciple as well. We want these people to reproduce. We want them investing their lives in other people and teaching what they know, so we are going to equip them. This person is witnessing to unbelievers, training up spiritual children, they are helping disciples take that next step and at this stage they begin leading ministries themselves. This level of leadership requires preparation time and a commitment to see the Great Commission carried out in their world and around the world as they go. We call these “Jog Steps.”

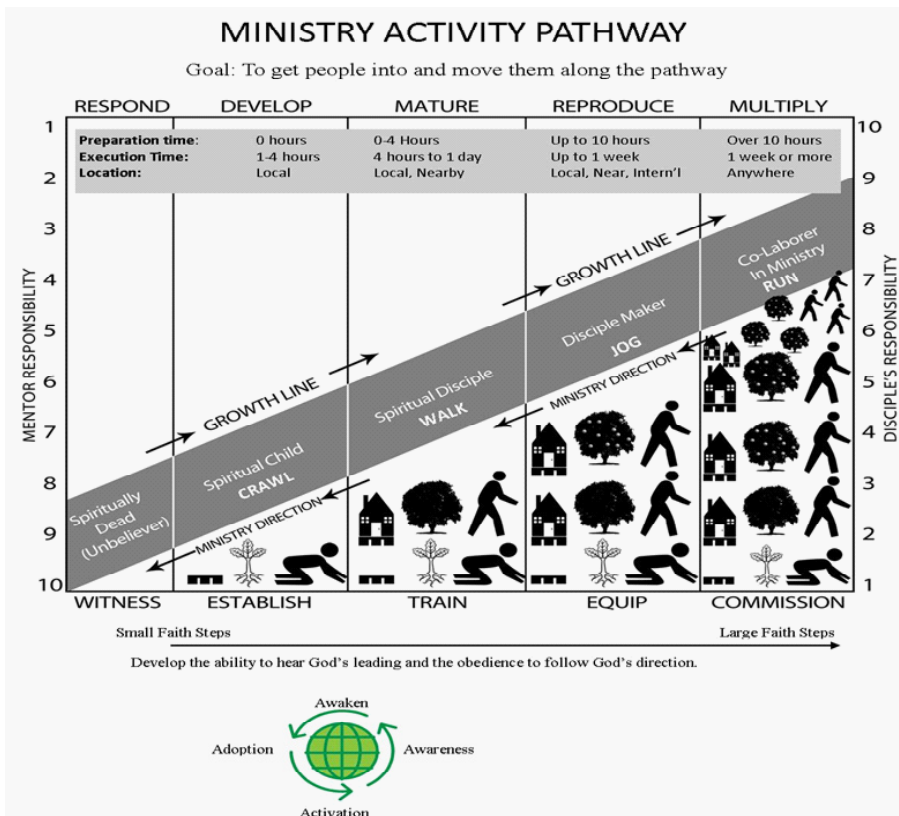
In most churches I speak in, the old Pareto Business principle is still true: 20% of the people do 80% of the work, and give 80% of the money while the 80% consume 100% of the resources and energies. The reason why is because most churches have less than 20% of their people who are disciple makers. That number will not change unless we grow people into becoming disciple makers and as we will see in a moment, co-laborers. The last category is fully devoted follower of Christ who has matured into what is called a “Co-Laborer.” Toward the end of his ministry this is the word that Paul used to describe his mentee Timothy. Timothy now was equipped to do everything Paul could do. And in some cases do it better based upon his own experience with Christ and set of particular spiritual gifts. We want a Co-Laborer to reproduce, so we commission them. We turn them loose on the world to spread the grace they have received and reproduce themselves through others. Let me show you what I mean.

Dawson Trotman was the founder of the Navigators. A Christian organization committed to knowing Christ and making Him known through disciple-making. Dawson Trotman disciple a young man by the name of Waylon Moore who is still alive and a friend of mine serving with me on the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. Waylon has disciplined many men in his over 50 years of ministry and one of those men is Max Barnett. Max also committed his life to making disciples and spent over 38 years doing so on the University of Oklahoma campus who put more people on the mission field than any other state university in the nation. One of the



thousands of men that Max invested in was Mike Story, my mentor who was a long time pastor of the Community of Grace in Aurora, Colorado and recently transitioned to give his life to college students as well on the campus of Oklahoma State University. Twenty-five years ago Mike Story invested in a young youth minister who was not even a member of his church and right now you are reading his book on discipleship. He commissioned me to go out and do what he had taught me to do.

The Apostle Paul once told his disciple Timothy these words, *You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others.*⁶ This is the heart of the Ministry Activity Pathway. The revised diagram is below.



⁶Tyndale House Publishers: Holy Bible : New Living Translation. 2nd ed. Wheaton, Ill. : Tyndale House Publishers, 2004. S. 2 Ti 2:2





About the Author

Doyle Pryor is the Senior Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Sapulpa. He began that work in January of 2000. Doyle has been married to his wife Sarah for 21 years and they

enjoy their two sons. Doyle is a product of Oklahoma Baptist University, Southwestern Theological Seminary and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is also a popular speaker on college campuses, mission emphasis and to church-wide events. Doyle has served as the Chairman of Trustees for Oklahoma Baptist University, various state and denominational boards including currently serving as a trustee on the International Mission Board of the SBC and currently as Chancellor of Meridian University for Biblical Training. Doyle is very active in international missions, leading his church to reach the unengaged and unreached people groups of the world, as well as personally training both pastors overseas and pastors in the states to lead their churches to adopt unreached people groups for the fulfilling of Matthew 24:14 through creating church planting movements.

