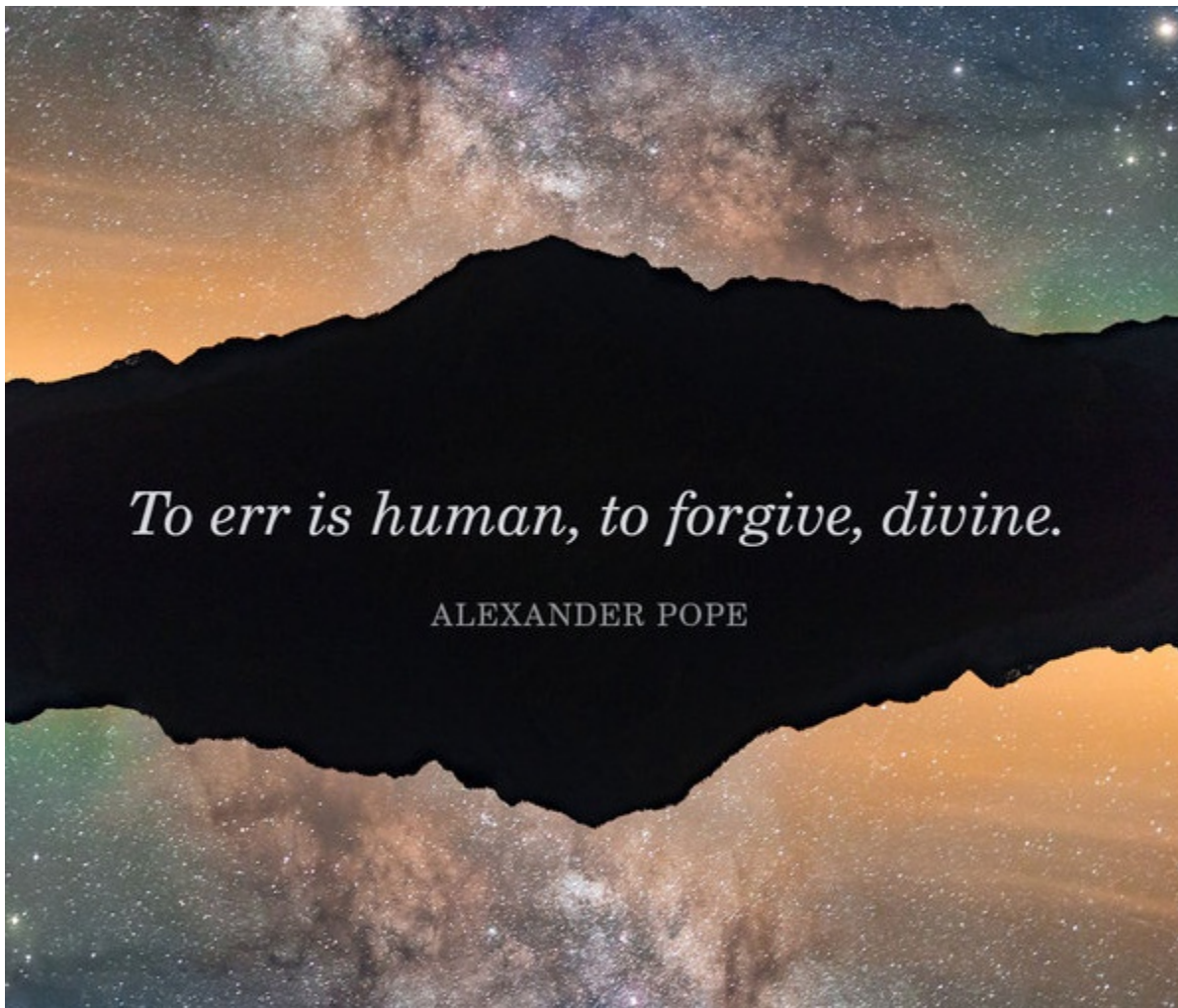


Book Three: **What 2 Believe**

aka . . .

A Christian's Consideration



The journey of faith . . .

(Who we are, what we worry about and what we should do)

Old **M**an **R**iver


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And a huge thanks to my family - for their love and inspiration.
[and remember]

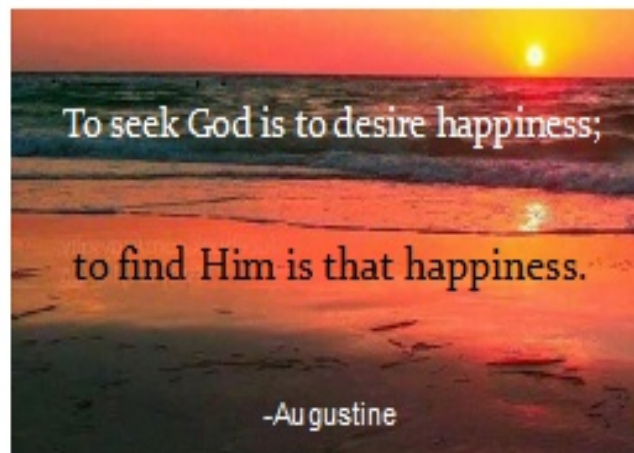
con·sid·er·a·tion

[kənˌsɪdərˈāSH(ə)n] 

NOUN

1. careful thought, typically over a period of time.
"a long process involving a great deal of careful consideration"
synonyms: [thought](#) · [deliberation](#) · [reflection](#) · [contemplation](#) · [cogitation](#) · [\[more\]](#)
- a fact or a motive taken into account in deciding or judging something.
"the idea was motivated by political considerations"
synonyms: [factor](#) · [issue](#) · [point](#) · [concern](#) · [item](#) · [matter](#) · [element](#) · [detail](#) · [\[more\]](#)
- thoughtfulness and sensitivity toward others.
"companies should show more consideration for their employees"
synonyms: [attentiveness](#) · [considerateness](#) · [thoughtfulness](#) · [concern](#) · [care](#) · [\[more\]](#)

Because . . .



Prologue

It was not the best of times or the worst of times but it was the start of a new year. 2020 was now behind us and at best, and it was a sad, Challenging and frustrating year all wrapped together. Looking back at it, I maybe should have realized a 'Crapper of a year' was beginning to unfold. It started January 26th, 2020 when we heard the sad news that Kobe Bryant, his 13 year-old daughter Gianna and seven others died in a helicopter crash (bad weather). You just don't think that world famous people can die like that, but then you realize . . . yes they can.

Then, a month and a half later (on March 11th), President Trump gave a 10 minute speech to our nation about the threat of the Coronavirus pandemic that was beginning to spread world wide, along with the massive impacts that will happen - travel stops, business and school closings, sporting events canceled, etc.

As that 'yuk' unfolded, social unrest began to unfold with the tragic deaths of Ahmaud Arbery (February 23rd), Breonna Taylor (March 13th) and George Floyd (May 25th) . . . which unleashed protests, lootings and arson with various others injured and/or killed in the violence that followed. People were mad about the senseless deaths, out of work due to the COVID-19 mess and frustrated with our state and national politicians because nothing was getting better. And the virus related deaths continued and continued. Fortunately, by mid December, vaccinations were approved and a better outlook was starting to be seen.

Our country still had so many frustrations to work through that I thought I needed to get back to and to complete this book. January 2021 then enabled the following.

Introduction

Hi everyone. This book begins with the understanding that where this started – has gone through some pauses as I jotted down what I believe I wanted to get out, but then I wanted to pause and ponder to make sure,

Is this what God wants me to share? It is then in thinking on that question, that I then decided to go down this path. That being, **everyone has their life to live and as we pursue it, we should try to learn as we go.**

Some things we will like and embrace while other things we will work to avoid. In doing so, we will have times we are glad we did what we did and yes there will be times where we are rubbing our heads and wondering . . .

'What was I thinking?'

So, knowing that people are different and what some would like as to a format, a content, etc. can vary greatly – I am going to try a somewhat different approach for the pages that follow. All I ask is that you consider what I have learned and then you embrace the things that you believe may help you in going forward. And we start with the following.

Some of us are in faith, some not and many are not sure or have turned away from faith or if you simplified that – you, me and everyone else across this world are all different, but we may have some common characteristics and goals. Now I don't want anyone who reads this book to think that there is only one way to look at faith and the aspects around it that I share. All should know it is a very complex subject and there are many different faiths, or beliefs or decisions to not pursue a faith. All I ask is that you consider the following as one way that you can look at one person's perspective on the Christian faith, and then you can decide if there are any aspects to embrace or not (we all get to choose).

Now, with that said, I want to give you a framework as to what all is contained in this book. As I thought on this I made the decision to use a conversation type of an approach – which is basically me sharing some thoughts, questions and challenges that would help you to look at our faith.

And to do so, I will share from three different perspectives, or more correctly stated as three sets of considerations. They are offered for you to ponder, to possibly accept at least some aspects to use as a challenge to dig further and to find more that helps you to move further forward in faith. Aka as insights to consider so that you can pick and choose those things that you like and ignore what you don't.

For example, **what if God really exists, that Jesus lived and died for our sins as our Savior and if the Holy Spirit does talk, warn and encourages us?** How would you share that with others? For me [and hence this book], I would share my story of accepting and growing in faith. Why? Because if others can see what it has done for me, verses just hearing, "it is what you must do", they can hopefully see the relationship aspect verses just hearing about a religious expectation. And that is - yes there is a lot to consider.

For Christians, the Bible is the 'go to' document but sadly, many Christian's don't go to it. They [and maybe you] have a foundation of faith and they work to grow their faith understanding and pursuits as best they can. While others believe but have limited actions in faith and then those who just struggle with it or they have become frustrated and have now turned away. So yes, a lot to ponder, what then is best to do? I hope you keep reading.

And what you will find are the three following looks at faith . . .

A Christian's Code, A Christian's Challenge and **A Christian's Conduct**

With a mix of fonts, colors, images & quotes to keep you on your toes (and I think this will trigger a tweak or two of it as time unfolds). Why? Look back at the cover page. **The Journey . . .** reminds us that most often we will embark on actions to learn, to enjoy and to experience all that we can - only to realize when we are done - we think we probably missed somethings along the way. So know this - the following is what I call my first pass. There is a chance I may go back and tweak it here or there. But until then, just know that initial thoughts are always a good starting place and what you see, just may give you some good initial thoughts.

You've got to begin somewhere.

A journey always starts with one's first step and where it will lead us depends on the plans and actions that we pursue. Like this time lapse picture below - the moon orbits the earth regardless of what we here on earth are doing. Basically life goes on - the good, the bad and the ugly and that is all okay because it all comes together for **good** (for example, just the aspects of a lunar eclipse is fascinating).



Now what that **good** is, all depends on our perspectives. Let me explain via the following: I believe some things unfold because of plans and deliberate actions and some things unfold because chance is also a wild card in every life.

[and by this I mean the following]

First, what is the **plan and deliberate** aspect? I believe we have a God - who Christian's call our 'Father in Heaven', who is more than we can comprehend by what we can see and understand.

We know that He is at least a God of order (there is consistency and precision across so much that we see) and that we have been given such great opportunities to learn and to embrace what we would call the good things in life (keep these in mind as you read further).

Second, as to the **wild card** aspect in life - yes there are so many examples of what that is or how that has been a variable across time for us all (natural disasters, a 'chance encounter' etc.) but for now, I'll point to one specific event that I did not expect.

That being the event that happened in October of 2016. It was our son Alex's first book being published. We knew it was 'in the works' and we were looking forward to seeing and reading it, but the 'what surprised me' - was what it triggered within me.

I did not know the title of it then or the impact it would have on me until we saw that it was to be available to order via Amazon. It was seeing his book's title, that triggered the thought in me, '**What is the Christian's Code ?**' I then just started jotting down words that came to me. Then the pictures and quotes that you see via the pages that follow, all came together quickly as a framework to guide this book's 'Part One'.



So if you would like to find out and to ponder "**A Christian's Code, Challenge and Conduct**", then please consider the following and then read on through the pages that follow. And ask yourself . . .

Are there aspects in your life or in your awareness where you see order or things that have something to them and maybe a super natural nuance or "God" may be involved in some way ?

And / or . . .

Are there chance events or things that may be hard to understand as being controlled - or you think - seems to point away from "God" or away from faith or a religion of some type ?

The questions above, as well as any you may also have at this time, are good to start with because they may prompt you to jot down notes, ideas or actions that you may want to pursue at some point as you consider the insights shared in this book. Here goes . . .

Part One



**Taking a look at who we are
via pursuit of
a deeper view of values.**

(I know you are now thinking . . . Wow, this got deep fast)

Note 1 (aka B 4 we begin):

After I had drafted this book, I let it sit so I could circle back to it to see – has anything changed or would I add to it?

What I found in my re-read through were some miscellaneous spelling and punctuation fixes required (and don't be surprised if I missed some still), and the thought . . . am I really getting the key points across that I want? For example, at the bottom of page 4 I wrote that my intent was to share some thoughts, questions and challenges that would help you to look at our faith. And that is what I find myself wanting to make sure you understand before you read on any further.

The key – what would help you to look at your faith?

Well, what this Part One is intended for, is to challenge you to take a deeper view of your faith – a type of – am I really thinking about this as I should? Now as to why? Everything I have found out is that a lot of people get exposed to a faith pursuit and if they are kids, they go a long with it because they are basically taken every week to church (a type of listen, be good and know that this is what you should know). In looking back, my wife and I were raised this way and we pretty much did the same to our kids when they were little. What I didn't realize at first is that initially in growing up, I heard and read the Bible stories, I got at least a pretty good understanding of the basics – but nothing really sunk in for me to really appreciate it for what it was.

So, I'd like you to think about as you read the following . . . is **why should I embrace this?** (and I'll address this on page 48).

Part One Contents

This is laid out as slices from the big pie of values . . .

The first topics are in what I call, the '**starting to think**' mode:
Awareness, Belief, Compassion, Determination, Empathy.

The second set are via the '**starting to appreciate**' mode:
Attitude, Behavior, Character, Discipleship, Education.

The third set are via the '**starting to pursue**' mode:
Acceptance, Brotherhood, Courage, Destiny, Endurance.

So then, if you are ready for something different, then read on.

[and we start with] For your awareness:

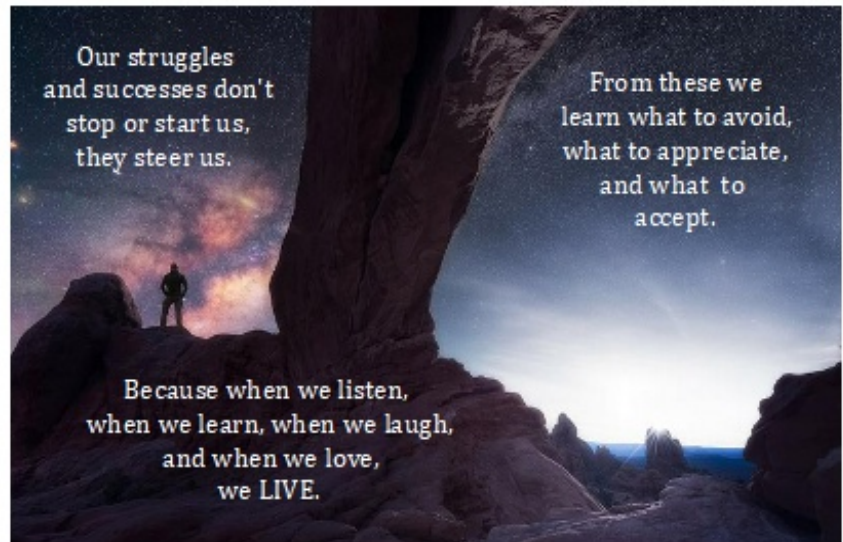
I wrote this via the '*better late than never*' mindset and in getting older, you realize you can't force your wishes upon others but you do like the challenge - '*can I help others?*' My hope is that you will see this as an easy to read, good to ponder and yes, a different type of a look at how you view your life and the decisions that you make.

As to **Why?** In looking back over the years at my faith journey, I saw I had the desire (like a lot of people) but not the commitment that was needed. I wondered, were my kids or others caught in the same type of '*good intentions*'? I realized that it took me time to connect the dots and to really see what was unfolding in my life. These '*dots*' were the code I unlocked, that others leverage as well, and yet some don't.

For example, what if you read these words from **Newsweek** that was published on October 25th, 2017 ?

“The universe as we know it should not exist” scientists working at CERN, the European

Organization for Nuclear Research, have said: After performing the most precise experiments on antiprotons that have ever been carried out, researchers have discovered a symmetry in nature that they say just shouldn't be possible.



Some would view those words as *“I told you there is a God”* and others would just think *“Yep, a lot of unknowns and they'll figure it out some day.”* So, life goes on and we either accept or ignore & push forward. It boils down to doubts or distractions can be had by all. This book is not to convince you that God exists or which faith you should pursue. It will give some insights to faith that I gained over time and my wish that all would ponder and then decide if they need to take some action.

Whether that be in the broader aspects of their life or just with a focus on their faith. The challenges are there, we just have to decide.

As you read on, you will find that each of the topics covered are not intended to tell you what to think, but to hopefully help you start to think deeper on aspects that are critical to you. For me I've learned that a faith journey is one **'of thinking, of training and of testing'** so we can see the transformation we will go through as we appreciate life and grow in faith. I know that some may wonder, will this be of any benefit ? That is the good question, it depends on your approach.

I recommend you pursue this via the following type of actions. The first, is to ponder these words below on this, '**The Journey.**'

Do they trigger any initial thoughts (like, dislike, or other) ?
“As you journey through the years, there will be some steep hills to climb and sometimes the road seems treacherous. You aren't sure which route to take, at times you may feel like you are on the brink of falling, and there may be many curves in the road ahead. As you make your way through the ups and downs of life, may you know God's presence with you through each tunnel, every steep climb, every curve, at the mountaintop, and through the slippery storms of life. May He walk you down through the valleys, and up the mountains. May He take your hand and guide you to the light, that He put a hedge of protection around you, and help you to find joy and excitement as you travel, and may He fill you with amazement at the beauty He provides along the way. So take the time to smell the flowers, to admire His handiwork and to enjoy the journey. May His love flood over you and fill you until you overflow in praise of Him for all He has done.”

The second, as you read through the rest that follows - take some notes (as to ideas, concerns, etc.). You will find those of later benefit. Then third, once done, please consider my final request at the end of this section aka **“Should I now do something in follow up ?”** Because, if there is any follow up required, you can then put actions in place that make sense for your time ahead [as you deem best].

There you go - plenty to think about. For some, they may be on the edge of faith via a '*kind of doing but kind of not.*' Or you may be wondering, '*Am I missing something ?*' That is all okay. Sometimes there is a nugget of insight or an experience that we have that pushes us to next steps. Life is interesting that way - with many surprises along the way, and yes, with many challenges as well.

So, then let's go with the following to ponder.

[Starting to think about . . .]

Awareness

Christians represent just one of the many religions found across this world and I will not take on any issues or nuances of the other religions because this is only intended to give you some 'food for thought' on the Christian faith. And yes the number three is a big factor in our faith, so I'll start with the following three points.



First, from page 10, I shared the words on ***The Journey***.

When I first saw all of those words, they struck me as a thought provoking way to look at life and what we all can call our *journey through it*.

I encourage you to embrace the aspect of a journey, because life like pursuit of faith, is a journey.

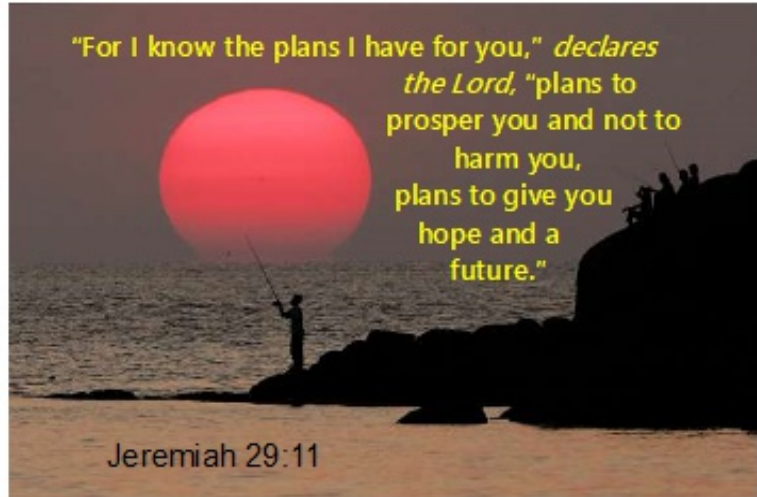
Second, **Awareness** is where this journey begins (your actions in reading these words on a **Christian's Code**).

All of our journeys start at our birth. Some would say we start as cute kids with minds of mush that get molded or at least guided down a starting path by those who raise us. I'll assume you generally agree.

To build on our agreement, we are what we learn but is that the whole story? Some believe we all have down inside of us, some awareness to 'right and wrong' and some also believe that we have an awareness to "GOD" or some type of a 'creator'. So please keep those in mind and I'll address through this book - what I would like to share on faith.

Which brings us to the third point and that is in regards to the three stages of learning that our kids go through.

Think of the following as a framework concept for your focus as a parent.



Ages 0 - 6 (the child years) are the first years to share, to teach awareness to what right and wrong is, to interact and share with them of the faith that we want them to know. Ages 7 - 12 (the kid years) are the second set of years where lessons and skills are learned. Ages 13 - 18 (the teen years) are the third set of years where what we have taught and encouraged are as well . . . tested and validated.

And now, realize that you will need to make a decision on your faith before you pursue it (or not) with your kids. This is just one of the many subjects that you and your spouse need to be in agreement on. Therefore, keep these age groups as shared above, in mind because it may impact what, when and how you raise your kids, not just for faith but for everything that you believe is critical for your kids.



So then, with that shared above - do you have an awareness to faith that you are comfortable with?

And as you ponder this - are there any notes, ideas or actions that you would jot down for faith

awareness as we continue on ?

[and remember - for Christians . . .]

“Be still and know that I am God.

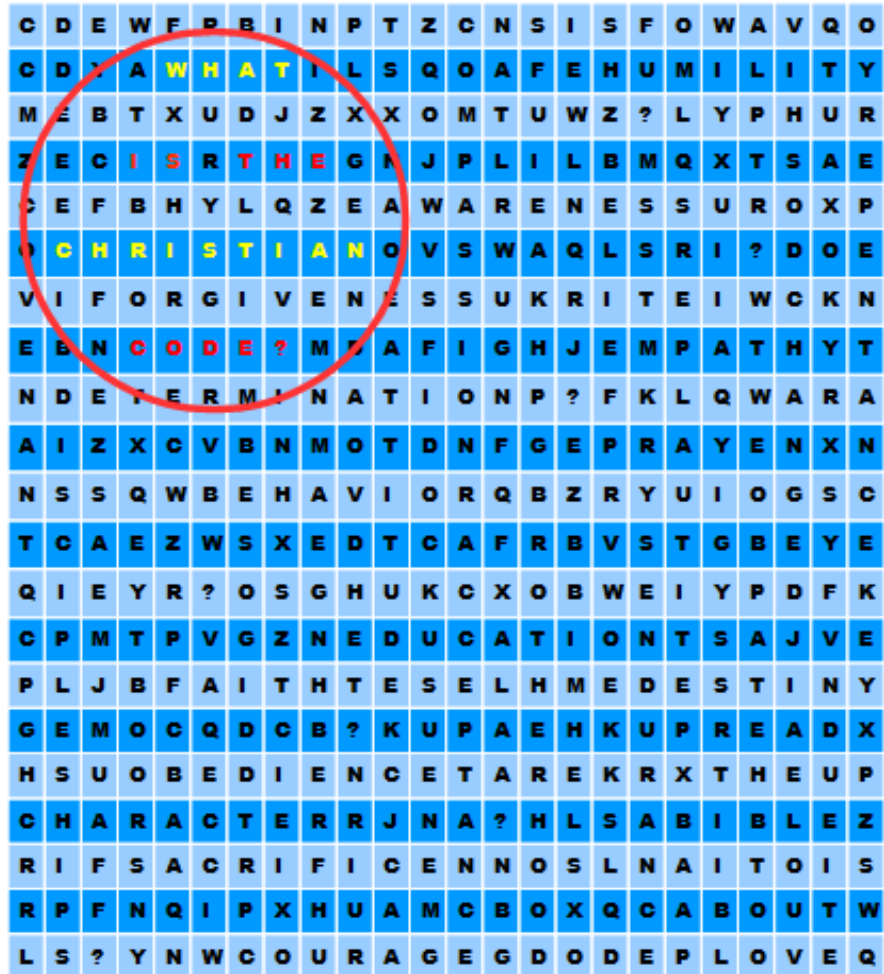
My name will be exulted by all nations.”

Psalm 46: 10

[Starting to think about . . .]

Belief

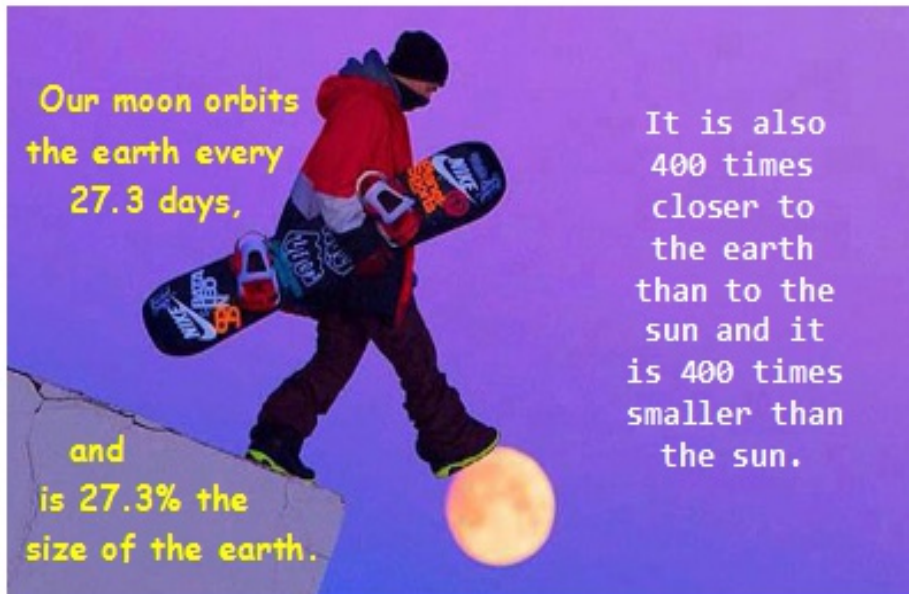
How we progress down a path (a journey) of faith all depends on the **Belief** that we are exposed to and then embrace. I will assume at this point you are at least considering the Christian faith. And as we pursue this journey, consider this → matrix, our visual introduction to a **Christian's Code**.



Next, remember what I shared about those early (0 - 6) years? If you as a parent want your kids to be aware of and to start sharing your beliefs and show how you pursue that faith.

Let me share two examples. The first is the harder one - teaching about God, Jesus (His Son, our Savior) and His Holy Spirit (our Counselor). These are not easy because they are a set of 'just trust me to start on this'. The second is in those things that can be seen or at least understood in a physical perspective - like the sun, the moon or the stars (how we see them and what we know of them can be described to others).

And yes belief is as they say, '*easier to share, harder to show*'. It is comprised of some aspects that seem simple to embrace and yet other aspects are harder to accept (and does that help or hurt us?).



Like this example to the left points to our moon (its size and distance), is a great topic to ponder and share.

Is it a real 'fluke' as to the statistics stated, or is God at work? I myself believe the size of the moon, our earth, the position of all things in our solar system as well as the placement of everything out in space, is the work of God our Father in Heaven. Then, look at the variety and complexity in all the various animals and plants across our world as well as look at the beauty in nature [all the colors]. I think . . . 'Wow, wow, wow!'

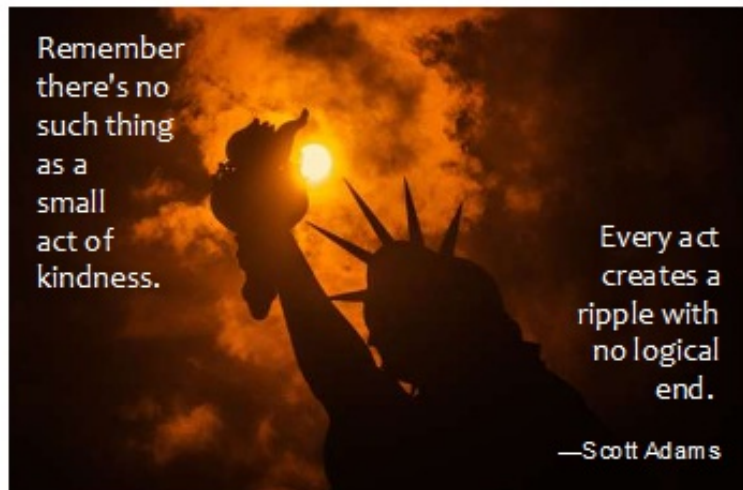
For me, all that we see, points to our Creator but there are some who think everything just started via a big bang and since then - evolution has done it all. Therefore, we have decisions to make. For example, did everything just happen or is God at work? As you think on this, determine if there any notes, ideas or actions that you would jot down at this time as you consider **belief** further? [and know this]

“For God so loved the world that He gave his begotten Son, that who ever believes in Him shall not die, but will have eternal life.” John 3: 16

[Starting to think about . . .]

Compassion

I hope you are starting to see some things you may have missed in the past or realize, you want to ponder further. Review of the letter matrix as shown on page 13 is just another way of showing that things in life can appear to be a mess but when we slow down and look at things, we begin to see what is there. And yes, some things in life are easy to see and to pursue but some are also much more challenging.



For the '*challenging*', **Compassion** is a good example.

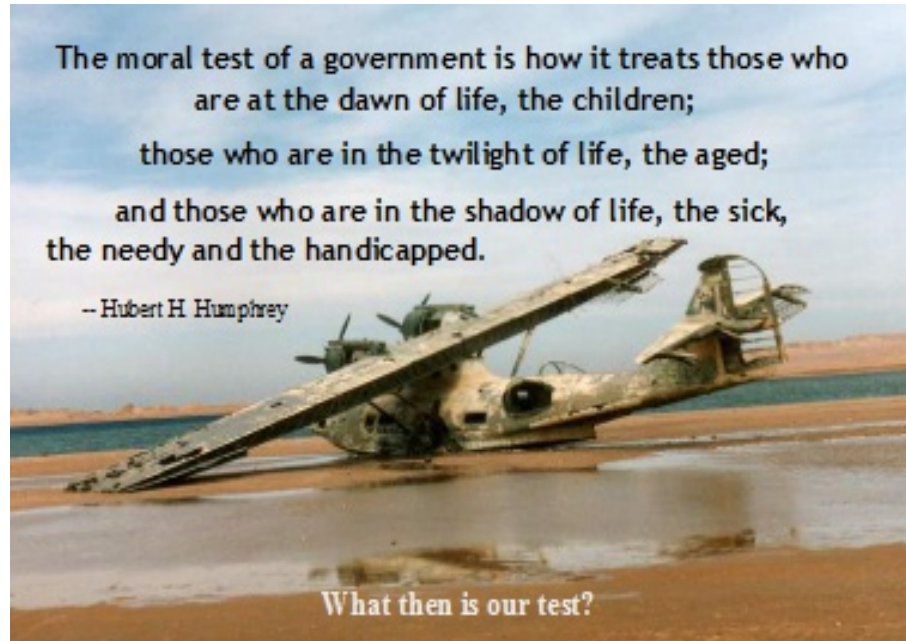
As adults we can understand that word and we can probably see how and where at times we have been compassionate.

But what about those '*youth*' years - is compassion embraced then? Most likely if shown and modeled by parents but the big unfortunate is that there is a good chance that compassion doesn't get the focus like it should in those early years of growing up. Yes there is the '*be nice to your little brother*' or the '*don't tease your sister*' comments that have been repeated by so many parents over so many years but those are '*control influencing comments*', not acts of compassion when done.

That challenge is what makes compassion such a very interesting characteristic to embrace. It is great when we learn it at a young age but if missed then, fortunately we do get time and time again to learn it and to appreciate it more and more as we grow older (but do we?).

Think of it this way. A good person will try to be nice or at least as compassionate as best they can. A Christian knows this is critical as one of the attributes that Jesus displayed and modeled for us.

When we embrace compassion, it no longer becomes 'How much can I achieve?' that makes us happy. It becomes 'How much can I help?' Which leads to the next big question; **do you pursue compassion ?**



The moral test of a government is how it treats those who are at the dawn of life, the children;
those who are in the twilight of life, the aged;
and those who are in the shadow of life, the sick,
the needy and the handicapped.

— Hubert H. Humphrey

What then is our test?

I also know that the words shared above from Hubert Humphrey are a good challenge on our government - but it is also a good framework of challenge for each of us as well. So ask yourself today . . .

'How am I treating others (those that I know and don't know) ?'

My hope is that as you ponder awareness, belief and compassion, you would agree that we all are '*diamonds in the rough*' going through life, learning as we go and that it takes time for us to truly be better.

So, to close on this - are there any notes, ideas or actions that you would jot down at this time as you consider **compassion** further ?
[and don't forget this is easier said than done . . .]

**”Let no one seek his own good,
but the good of his neighbor.” 1 Corinthians 10: 24**

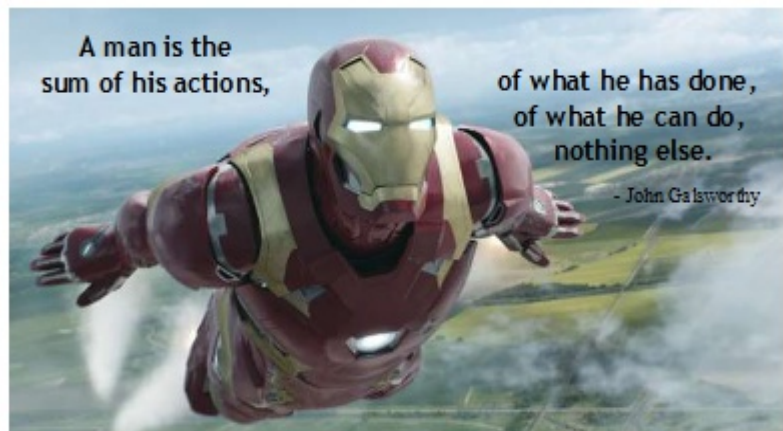
[Starting to think about . . .]

Determination

As we now look at this next point, I do hope what I've shared so far has you thinking a bit deeper as to the notion - does a pursuit of faith make awareness, belief and compassion seem a bit different now? For Christian's they are just a start of the characteristics that they see coming together within them and growing as their years unfold.

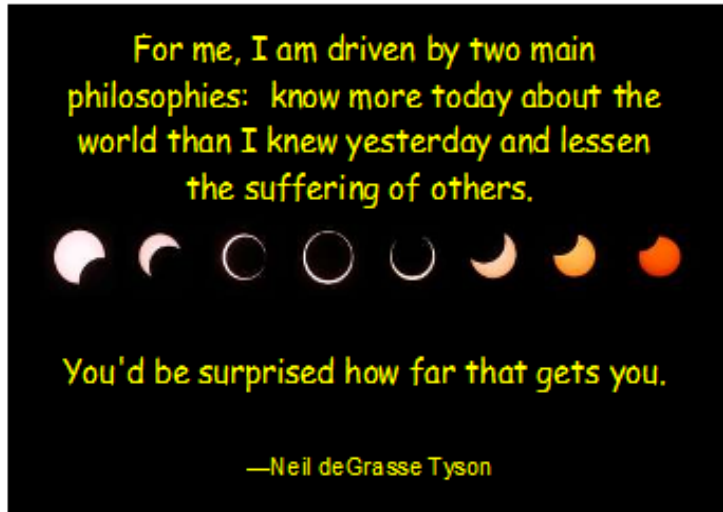
So, first consider the characteristic of **Determination**. When we are children, we find that determination is not so much what we are taught, it's what we have as a part of our foundation. For example, we are determined to sit up, to roll over, to crawl, then walk and even run.

Yes as little children our parents do encourage us but it is that fire within, our determination that pushes us, even though there are numerous stumbles or failures along the way.



The second consideration points to our '*kid years*'. Where through our experiences we are starting to see things we like or want, and in these years we do what we can to get those. But that is where the goodness that drives us is often tripped up by the devious (we may be dishonest or use inappropriate actions to get what we want). These years of successes and failures if pursued well and learned well, begin to hard wire our brains as to what is right and what is wrong. So, if we as parents do well to encourage the positives and to teach from the negatives, our kid's learning years going forward will be better.

Which leads to this third consideration - that being our teen years and years after that. The 'ability to be determined' is in each of us as a tool within us that can be used to achieve the good things in life (that stand the test of time) or the bad things (that we later regret).



The key is in channeling our determination to that right direction.

As Christians we work to leverage it as best we can for what we believe God is directing us towards (are you seeing it in you?).

I also know that too many are getting turned off or tripped up by the aspects of religion and they are missing the opportunity for what God wants - and that is a relationship with us. So please ponder that.

And that now brings up the question, **where is your determination at** (on the good things or not so good things)? I state this last question as a key reminder to us all. Without faith, we can be determined to be rich, or to have '*lots of stuff*' or possibly just to be happy. When we are pursuing our faith, our determination is on growing our faith and on pursuing what God wants - His Will and our purpose to be achieved.

With the above in mind, are there any notes, ideas or actions that you would jot down at this time as you consider **determination** further? [and know that you can do more than you think, because . . .]

”For I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

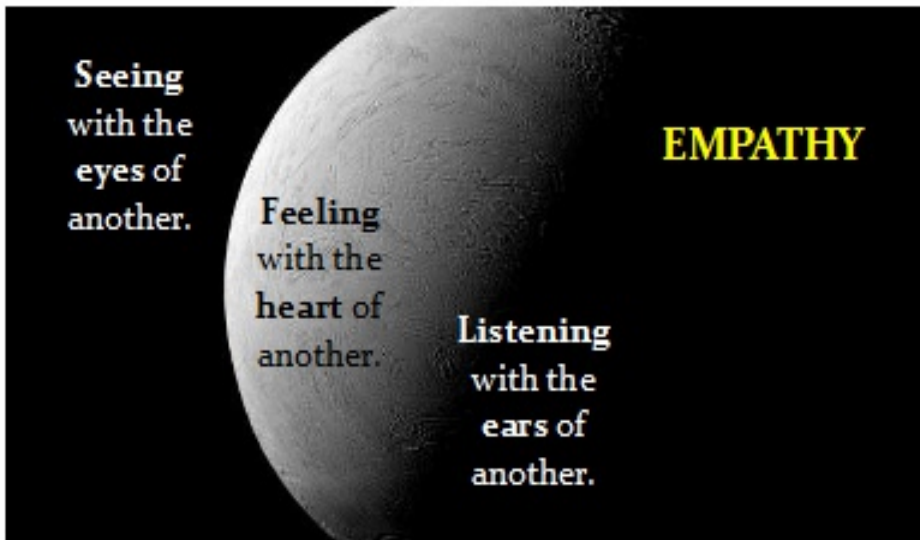
Philippians 4: 13

[Starting to think about . . .]

Empathy

Seeing, feeling and listening - from another perspective is the fifth example that we are now looking at. It is possibly one of the hardest things that we'll pursue, yet we can develop and utilize it correctly.

Consider the following . . .



First, can you recollect when you experienced **Empathy** (that feeling where you are sympathetic to the difficulty that others are dealing with) ?

If you are like most of us, this characteristic is one that we tend to learn better as we get older. It is an value that is built upon what we have learned through various aspects of sympathy that we've had and have shared over the years (like the loss of a loved one).

Second, in seeing the various times in our life where we had sympathy for others, we're also seeing their actions, emotions and words (which began giving us insights to the feelings of others). Having all of those insights, helps our character to develop further - which allows us to consider words like these from Plato (his insight from the ages):

**“Caring about the happiness of others,
we find our own.”**

The third point now leads us back to looking at the Christian. We, like non-Christians, can have empathy but as we remember from John 11: 35 **“Jesus wept”**; we Christians try to help others when we can, we weep with others in sad times and we do what we can to have a broader perspective so that we try to act appropriately in all situations.

But wanting to be more aware, to have empathy is yet another 'harder to do'.

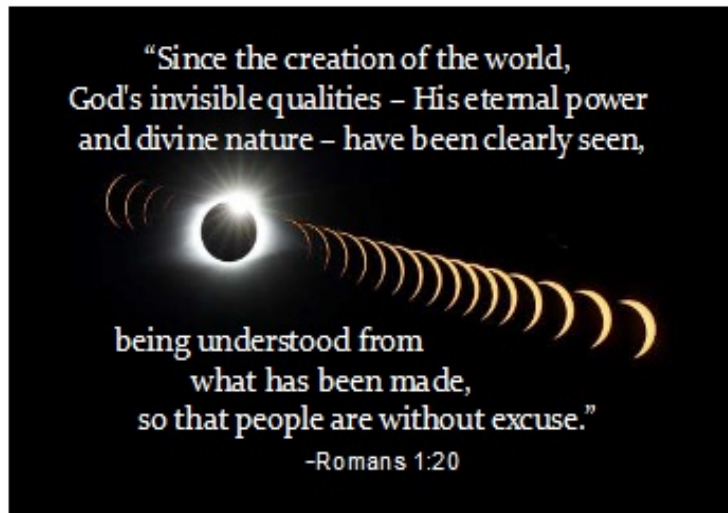
To help on this, please make the time to read the Bible. Look at all that God wants us to learn - He gives us examples of good and bad.

What we need to do is to be open to what God has shared - to let the Holy Spirit work in us to learn what will help us to grow as Christians. God has patience if we have the desire to pursue His word. Which leads to, do you desire it ?

Now comes your assignment. For your days ahead, I encourage you to watch others (family, friends, coworkers, etc) to see if they have characteristics of awareness, belief, compassion, determination and empathy. Are they Christians or not, are they good role models or not (and then, as you observe them, take a look inward - how about you) ?

To close on this - are there any notes, ideas or actions that you would jot down at this time as you consider **empathy** further ?
[and when you can . . .]

**“Be happy with those who are happy,
and weep with those who weep.”** Romans 12: 15



[Our second look has us starting to appreciate . . .]

Attitude

We all have an **Attitude** - the big question is if it is a good one or a bad one or so-so. The phrase '*Is your attitude worth catching ?*' is one we all would benefit from if we asked this of ourselves each day.

And in thinking on that - consider the following . . .

First, think back - can you remember any recent time when you saw someone with '*an attitude*' ?

Most likely, we all remember the bad ones and not the good ones.

Why is that ?



Could it be that attitude now has a negative connotation by most ? And if we are a part of that mindset (ask), are we tripping up on our Christian journey ? The Apostle Paul wrote (from Colossians 3: 2) **“Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.”**

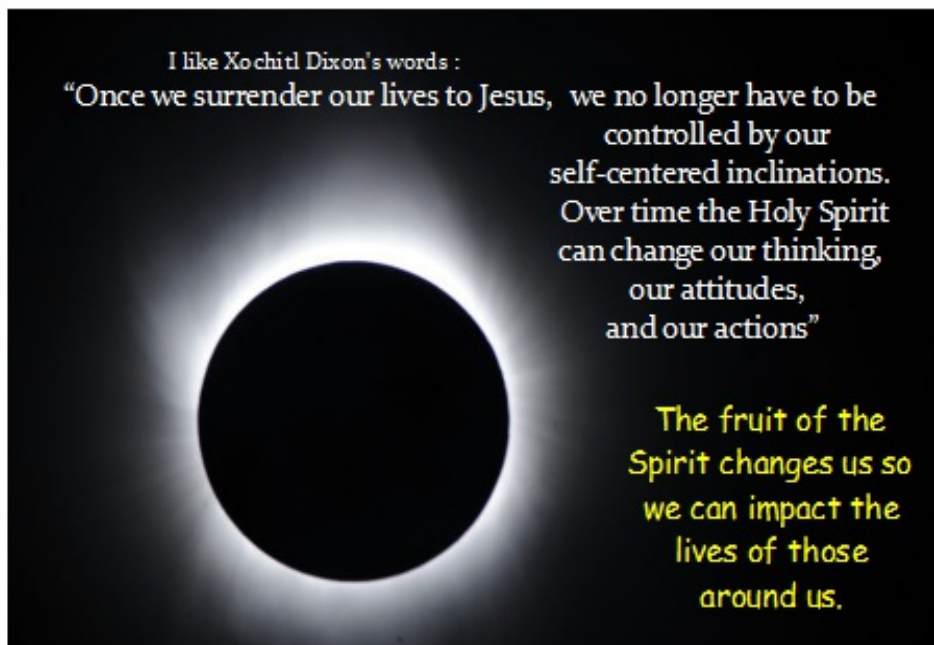
It should be no surprise if we are preoccupied with the day to day issues or challenges, we don't have in mind what God intends for us.

Second, if we want to address our attitude and to make it (as best we can) more positive - then we have to decide upon those things that will guide us, remind us, and encourage us to keep a positive attitude.

Now what all these are can vary greatly. To help, I share via the following, some examples as a starting consideration. For me, having a better or a good attitude, ties to being thankful for 'what I have'.

I know I try to thank God each day in my prayers and by my attitude that I am so appreciative for my wife, our kids, their spouses, their kids (aka our grand-kids), our health and home, the ability to travel to see them, to help others when we can, etc. etc. But is this enough ?

The third point builds upon this challenge from the above.



Ask yourself:
If I am a Christian, how do I see the actions of my awareness, belief, compassion, determination, empathy and attitude being seen by others ?

Also, are they in ways that are positive, helpful and encouraging ?

If we don't look at and check our actions, we may not be pursuing our Christian faith as we wish. We also need to remember, to some people, we may be the only example of a Christian they see. That then is a big challenge, but is it a **good one** ? (if you think yes, are you sure ?)

Think on this, and - are there any notes, ideas or actions that you would jot down at this time as you consider **attitude** further ?

"Don't be wise in your own eyes, fear the Lord and shun evil."

Proverbs 3: 7

[Starting to appreciate . . .]

Behavior

Now if you are like me, after asking yourself that last question (from page 22), you probably have some examples where you've done or said good things but you also are aware that you've come up short from time to time. That is okay because we all are human. If we are growing as Christians, we will see times that our thoughts, words and deeds are good and we'll also see those times where they are not.



Whether you are a Christian or not, you could be wondering - how can my **Behavior** be better ?

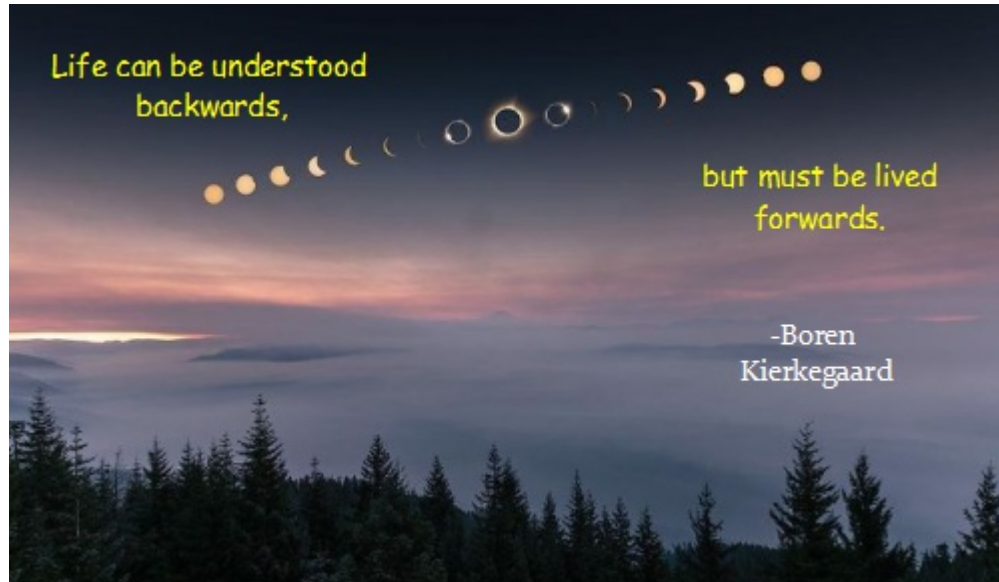
You may want to consider these words from the Bible (1 Peter 3: 8-12):

“Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. For, whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech. They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are attentive to their prayer.”

We are reminded that we must never underestimate how critical it is that our behavior must be changed if we are Christians. If others (family, friends, co-workers) can not see a good change in us, then we have not embraced our Christian faith. If we try to 'put on an act' . . . we may fool some but for Christians, we know we will not fool God.

So as you ponder behavior further, remember that the words shared from [1 Peter 3: 8-12](#) are a great guide for us but don't stop there.

Make sure you are seeing the changes in you - for example: setting aside time to read the Bible, attending church, you are not



swearing, you've stopped whatever negatives your 'old self' was doing. We each must decide what we need to do. Work so you and others are convinced of the changes in your life. Remember, **there is never an easy change** (because the good things in life don't come cheap).

I now raise the question - if you are trying to pursue your Christian faith, are there actions (as you think on this) that you should work on stopping or actions you should work on starting? And don't forget, a wise man once said "**What we do in life, echoes in eternity**".

Now as we close on this - are there any notes, ideas or actions that you would jot down as you consider your **behavior** further?

“Learn to do right, seek justice, defend the oppressed, take up the cause of the fatherless and plead for the widow.” Isaiah 1: 17

[Starting to appreciate . . .]

Character

Okay, we've covered a lot and now we look at **Character**. We all have seen many good quotes on this, like: **"You express the truth of your character with the choice of your actions."** (Steve Maraboli).

When we pursue our faith (or not), we are impacting our character. Now I am not stating that you have to be a person of faith to be a good person (and you don't need to know good quotes on 'character'). There could be many people who do not pursue a faith and those that know them could say they are good people. So consider the following:



There is the challenge upon the Christian, that our actions and words said, reflect the character that we are known by (our '*reputation*'). Although it could be said that is true for everyone, I think nothing does more harm - to turn off a potential Christian, is when they see some horrible or questionable actions taken by '*so called Christians.*'

Now '*good intentions*' are always a great start but they may not get you too far. So what should you do? One action that may help is to embrace '*principles*' for your life (have them be good expectations upon yourself that help to remind you of your desired actions).

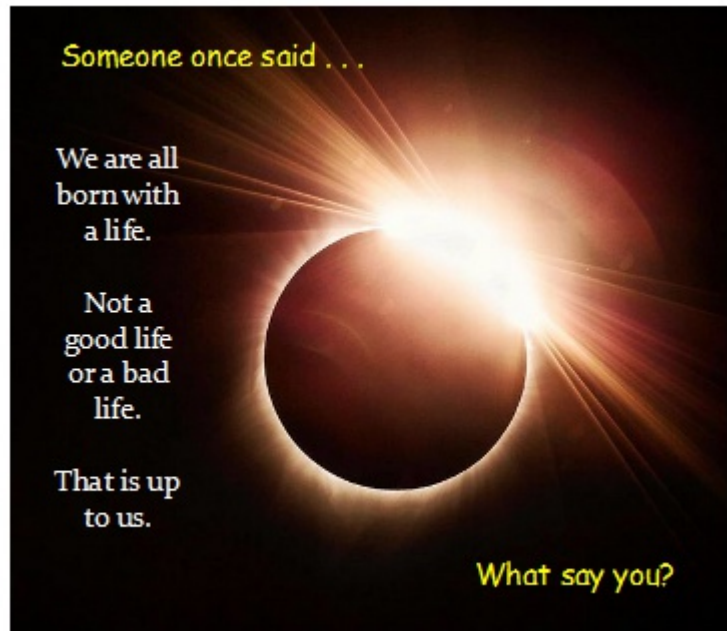
My Principles To Live By:

I am a man of honor, forged by my experiences.
I am responsible for all my choices.
I will make sure my wife and children know that I love them.
I do what is hard, what is needed, and with no regrets.
I am dedicated to continuous learning.
I know that the true me will get me through all trials.
I know that the world can affect me but I will impact the world.
I will stand for what is right even if I stand alone.
*I will apologize when I am wrong,
do what is needed to learn and make it right.*
I am a man of faith and will grow that faith until the day I die.
I will live by my principles, values and beliefs.

These principles as shown to the left are ones I had written for myself and I try to pursue each day.

And, if I work to pursue them, I know my character is strengthened.

So think of and pursue your character and remember these words from Anne Frank
“The final forming of a person's character lies in their own hands”
For if she could impact our world in her few short years, what about us ?



And then, to close on this, are there any notes, ideas or actions that you would jot down at this time as you consider your **character** further ?

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” Galatians 5: 22-23

[Starting to appreciate . . .]

Discipleship

I now ask you to consider the 'step up' action of **Discipleship**. That means you will need to take your behaviors and to push them further in linking to our Christian faith. Jesus once said . . .

"Whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Me."

For those of us who want to grow as a Christian, we must make a commitment to change, to grow in faith and to search out the purpose that God has created us for [do you know yours?]. That means we need to move from a passive role in our faith, to one of action.

If you do not know your purpose or even 'what cross you have' that is okay; start with prayer and ask for God's help to know this.

The good news is your acceptance of Christ as your Savior is your starting point.



The challenge is your action next. Is it trying to pursue your prayers, or reading the Bible when you can? You need to see that you are now progressing on a new path - your faith journey should be growing.

And yes there are Bible studies, Men's group, Women's group, etc. type meetings that can help to guide you and to help encourage you on your faith journey. For example, the words below are from a program developed by **Dr. Robert Lewis and his Men's Fraternity** that I like.

These words do a great job to inspire our discipleship actions.

Don't Forget...
Pursue life via the **REAL Man** definition; one
who **R**ejects passivity,
who **E**xpects God's greater reward,
who **A**ccepts responsibility, and
who **L**eads courageously. As a man
who **M**akes no excuses,
who **A**cknowledges Christ as his Savior
and who **N**ever stops growing in faith.

I'll wrap up on this topic with
these words you may have heard
before; "Your life is God's gift to
you, what you do with it is your
gift to God." And if we value
**God, our gift for Him must be
of value from us.**

And now there is one of our biggest challenges; how best to move our
faith actions into a more visible light ? [we will be judged by others]

What helps ? Consider the
guidance that the Holy Spirit
provides us as Christians.

When we pursue our faith,
we are 'tuned in' to what the
Holy Spirit shares with us.
Hearing and heeding takes
us down the right path.



And yes, this challenge is one of the most difficult. God does not
force Himself upon us - we must decide to pursue our faith or not.
So as you ponder this further, jot down any notes, ideas or actions
that you should do as you consider your **discipleship** further ?

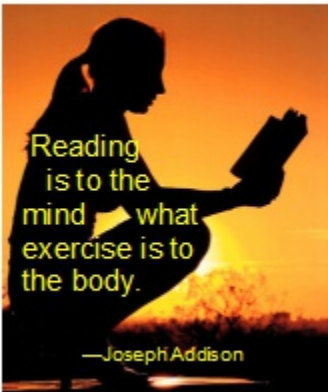
**“Behold I am coming soon!
Blessed is the one who keeps the prophesy of this book.”**

Revelation 22: 7

[Starting to appreciate . . .]

Education

Which leads us to **Education**. As we work to understand what discipleship is, we find the more that we learn from the Bible, helps us.

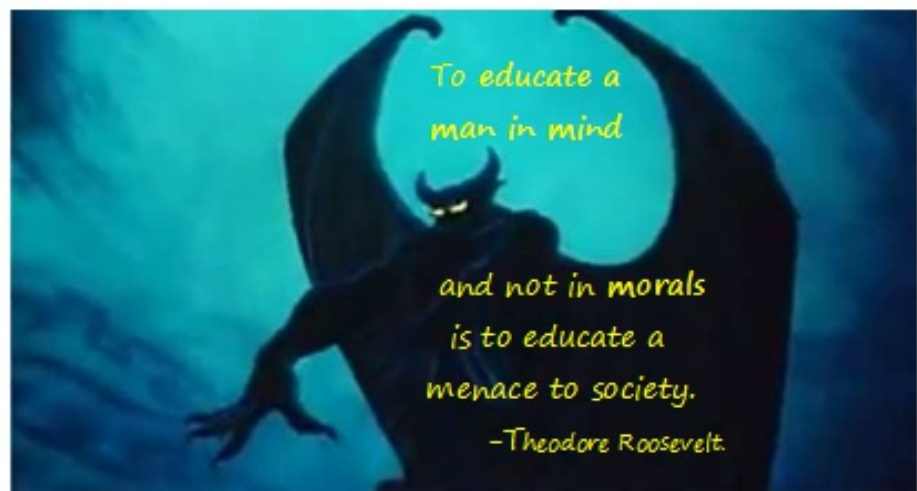


Remember, we all learn via different methods (reading, listening, experiencing, etc.) and the resources we can leverage most likely are varied as well. Our Christian's Bible is full of examples that we can learn from and be motivated by.

For example, read and reflect upon the aspects of conduct and character that the Apostle Paul shares in the letter, Colossians, chapter three.

Those 25 verses alone are great examples of the Christian's Code (although it was written 2,000 years ago, it gives great insights to how we should think and act today).

But please note: we must also remember to not take what is written in the Bible, out of context. For example, slavery was a part of life then, not now.



And as we ponder this, it makes me wonder what this world would be like if every teen, adult and parent read just those words (Colossians 3) annually and tried to pursue them continually?

What is even of greater awareness is that those words are just the 'tip of the iceberg' (as they say) in regards to all the insights shared throughout the Bible. Seeing, embracing and pursuing is required.



It all boils down to this.
Yes someone once said
that the Bible is:
Basic **I**nstruction **B**efore
Leaving **E**arth.

For many, this is a key
way to look at the Bible
(so, are you reading it ?).

When you do, know that the Bible covers the struggles of mankind, of our rebellions against God, of the wisdom He wants us to know, of the good news (the Gospels of Christ), and the lessons for us all.

And yes I know that some struggle with reading the Bible, there's so much to learn, and how best to put it all in the right context? I would recommend this as a plan. The Old Testament (the first 2/3s of the Bible), view that as 'history' (what leads up to the time of Jesus). Work on reading that after you have read the New Testament which describes Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection, the Christian faith starting and all that we should learn and pursue as we live. You will then see how the Old Testament points us all to Christ or Savior.

To close on this, are there any notes, ideas or actions that you would jot down at this time as you consider your faith **education** further ?

“Ask and it shall be given, seek and you shall find, knock and the door shall be opened.” Matthew 7: 7

[Our third look has us starting to pursue . . .]

Acceptance

We are now at a point where we should pause. So far we've covered ten characteristics that tie into a Christian's code. Valid, probably but you may be thinking . . . 'Is all of this really acceptable to me?'

That is what leads into **Acceptance**, our next consideration and it is the action that moves us deeper in our faith. It also means a lot of things - for example: accepting the fact that being a Christian doesn't mean you 'get out of painful situations' (you will have trials, heartache, and for some, it could even lead to a martyrdom in some parts of the world, just because you say you are a Christian).

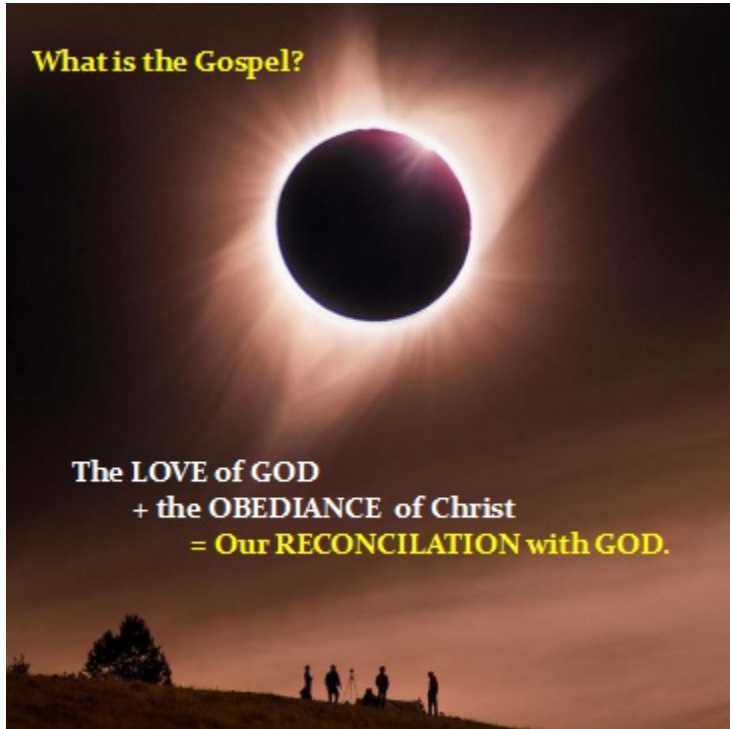
But it also means you can accept God's blessings that unfold in your life (and as Garth tells us, it could also be for unanswered prayers).



Just remember this - God knows we struggle, we make mistakes, we hurt those we love and even those we don't know but if we repent, we find the healing that His [God's] forgiveness provides is amazing.

So what does all of this mean?

It means that even if you become a Christian, your life (in some ways) may not be any better than a non-Christian (in regards to the hard times that can unfold for anyone). The reason we become a Christian and work to grow our faith, is because of God's promise (go and read **John 3: 16**), and the comfort we get from receiving His blessings.



Once on our faith journey, in pursuit of our purpose and allowing the Lord to use us as He wishes (we will most likely be helping others), we can handle the tough times, we enjoy the fun times and we are excited for our future in Heaven. **It all becomes the long view of time, of eternity with Christ and fellow believers.**

And before I close on this, remember my earlier words about '*we all are diamonds in the rough*' ? Many fall away from faith when things get tough or don't improve as they wish. Sometimes we must accept things we wish were different and to trust God for the things ahead.

So, are there any notes, ideas or actions that you would jot down at this time as you consider **acceptance** further ?

“If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well; sin is crouching at your door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.” Genesis 4: 7

[Starting to pursue . . .]

Brotherhood

To understand our Christian faith and what it means to embrace it, will surface what some refuse to accept, and that is the **hard truths**.

On the previous page, we learn that acceptance is a key part of being a Christian and in that, we also understand that not all of those who we know or love, may join us some day in Heaven. Why? It is because they either choose to deny Christ or they assume that everyone gets to go to Heaven (a type of "God accepts everyone, right?").

Years back there was a song that included the words "Everybody wants to go to Heaven but no one wants to die". The point, some that believe that - they want to enjoy an earthly life, do what they want and then they just trust that God will accept them, as in 'all is good'.



What many don't understand is that God is Holy, He is love but He also has a requirement that has to be met. Sin is horrible (just look at all the evil things done over the last three thousand years).

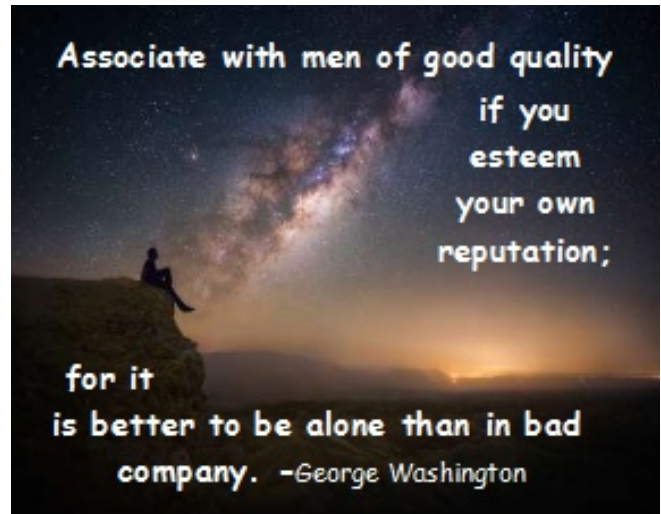
Our Christian faith teaches us that a price has to be paid to overcome the stain of sin - and that requires a sacrifice. Hence we understand why His Son, Jesus was born upon this earth.

When we believe in Jesus, that He is the Christ, the Son of God, our Lord and Savior - then we are followers of Christ.

This group belief, we call our **Brotherhood** or Sisterhood in faith. It means we are joining with others in a shared belief and that we, as we pursue our faith, can see a growth in ourselves. For the more we grow in faith, we see our wisdom growing as well. In one way you could say we have a greater discernment - we are recognizing things that are wrong, that we want to stop doing, and we see that we enjoy more and more those things that we see as '*growing in faith*'.

But what if we are not on track as we think we should be ? That is where friends and family can be of such great help with their insight.

So pick your friends carefully, for time will tell if they will stand by you or not. Our brothers and sisters in faith, have eternity with us in mind. Because when we believe, we are joined together and that means we **put away our old selves and are now working, pursuing and growing (together) in our faith.**



In closing on this - are there any notes, ideas or actions that you would jot down at this time as you consider **brotherhood** further ?

**“Be devoted to one another in brotherly love,
give preference to one another in honor.”**

Romans 12: 10

[Starting to pursue . . .]

Courage

We move next to review the aspect of **Courage**. The challenge for us - what is it and how do we embrace it? As I pondered how best to address this, I thought these words in my 'saved file' were worth sharing and commenting on. They are from last chapter from the book of Hebrews. Someone shared the added words shown and I thought they are good to help us all to consider the broadness of courage that we need to embrace in our lives. From it we ponder and learn . . .

Let Brotherly Love Continue and Entertain Strangers.

Hospitality and service to others that we know is fairly easy. However, offering love and hospitality to strangers is more difficult.



Remember those in prison.

Compassion for those who suffer for their religious beliefs. Many believers were mistreated, tortured, thrown in jail for their belief in Jesus. And from that compassion, we can look at others that are in need and we can determine - how best do I help ?

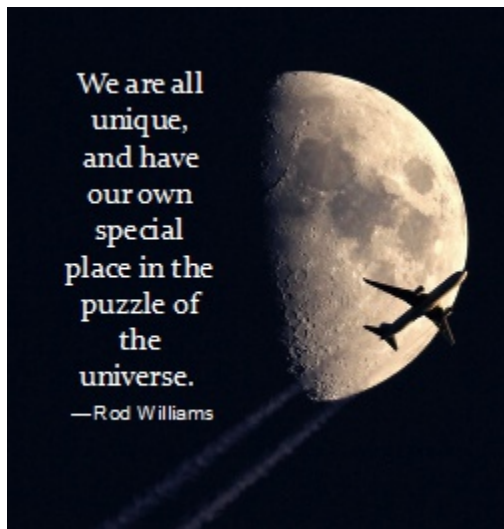
Next are the words, **Uphold the sanctity of marriage**. Sadly, our culture has turned from this. People view divorce as a viable option. Christians need to do all that we can to honor our marriage vows.

Do not make money your idol. *Loving money can lead to placing more importance on riches or 'things' than on God. It then becomes an idol and a sin, causing people to always want, never feeling content.*

And **Remember our leaders.** *The writer (of Hebrews) is speaking about the leaders and teachers of the Good News (the Gospel) but we can remember them as well as our local, state and national leaders, as well as all others who lead in business, for they all need our prayers.*

Do not get carried away with "strange teachings." *There is so much that leads us away from our faith - test them against scripture. Pray for insight on all things and be very careful not to let the world's views infiltrate in on Jesus' teachings and His example that guide us.*

Now with all the above, you may wonder - how do these tie to courage or when to be courageous? It is shared to open your perspective. For it is not just to be brave in a frightful time, but to be courageous in all actions where you may not do what you need to do.



Therefore, know that **courage must be pursued in all aspects of life.**

For when we do so, we show respect of the challenges of life that we are engaged with, we show that our faith is critical to us, and that in all things, we trust God for His will to unfold in our actions.

Ponder - are there any notes, ideas or actions that you would jot down at this time as you consider **courage** further?

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” Isaiah 41: 10

[Starting to pursue . . .]

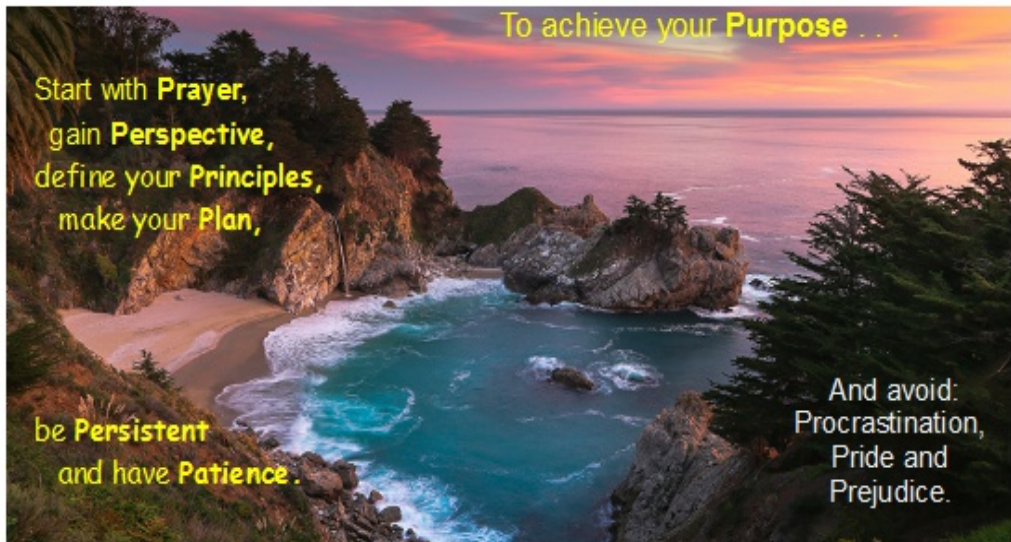
Destiny

It is time to begin wrapping up this section. Know that our **Destiny** is in 'where we will end up.' For everyone, it boils down to this. For non-Christians, their destiny is a life on earth with unknowns in length and quality of life. Since they are limited in what they control, they can just wish for the best and do their best (what will be will be). For Christians - those of us who believe and who have committed to Jesus Christ, who believe in Him as their Savior; we know our destiny is an eternal life (one that goes beyond our physical death).

So, does that mean we Christians put our feet up, relax and await for death? No, **there is work to be done while we live on this earth.** At a minimum, as we pursue our faith, we need to look at the purpose God has enabled us for. We then have to ask . . . are we pursuing it, and do we see our efforts as honestly embracing and achieving it?

[because]

Everything ties back to our faith. God knows if we are committed to Christ or if we are just doing 'lip service'.

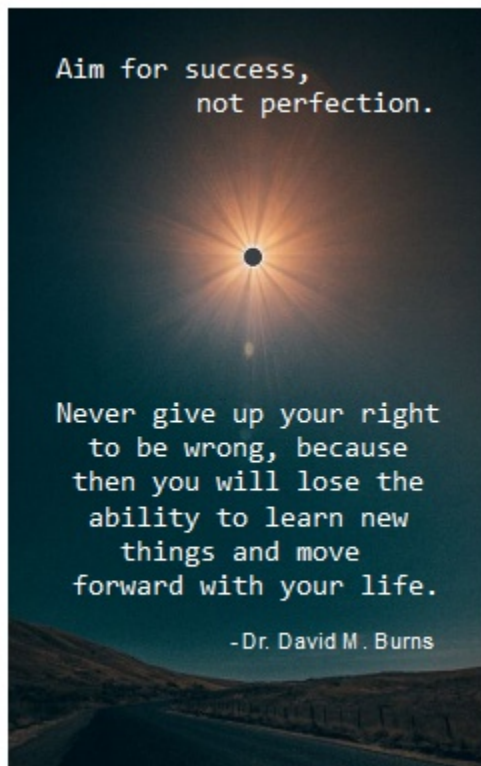


Sadly there are those who may think they have accepted Jesus and they believe they are doing the required '*christian actions*' but they are not truly living a growing faith life.

Be warned - remember the teachings of Jesus from Luke 13: 27
**“But He will reply, I don't know you or where you come from.
Away from me, all you evildoers!”**

Again, the lesson: **we may fool some but we can not fool God.**

If we wish to achieve our desired destiny, than we must embrace the faith, hope and love that God has called us to. By believing that Jesus is our Savior, the Son of God and by listening to the Holy Spirit within us; that we will pursue those actions that show we live a life in pursuit of faith, of integrity, of humbleness and of compassion, as Jesus did.



In doing so - remember:
God wants us to grow in faith and to
pursue the purpose that He has
placed within us.

**Our purpose leverages our abilities
(God's gift to us), which shows our
actions in faith (our gift to God).**

These then all together, lead us to
our goals and our destiny.

To close - are there any notes, ideas
or actions that you would jot
down at this time as you consider
destiny further ?

**“For I know the plans that I have for you” declares the LORD.
“Plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.”**
Jeremiah 29: 11

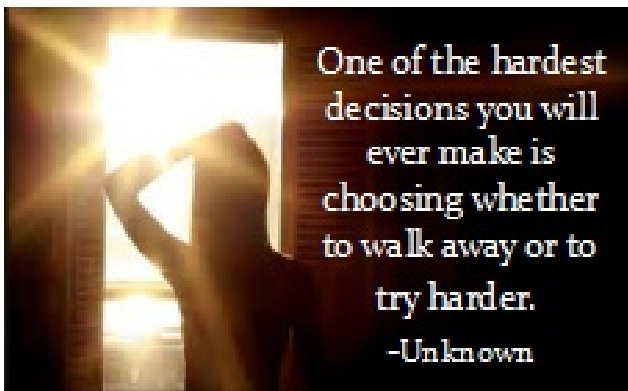
[Starting to pursue . . .]

Endurance

For Christians, we believe in life after death and with that heavenly home awaiting us, we know that **we will be challenged often and that we know we can endure**. On that long view of life, you may wonder what heaven will be like and what we will do for the rest of eternity ?

The Bible teaches us that it will not be a place where we are handed a white robe and a harp and we sit and sing songs all the time. We need to know, it will not be boring, it will be a time of action and adventure.

Endurance is the fuel that will get us through all challenges; it will position us for our destiny. But you may wonder 'can I really do it ?'



Let me answer that as follows. Remember the matrix that I shared back on page 13 ? Then consider this . . .

As in life, we all have glimpses of what is there - what we see but we have to figure out and see what is all there.

For example, consider just your own experiences of joy, of adventure, and of your appreciation of the beauty that this world has.

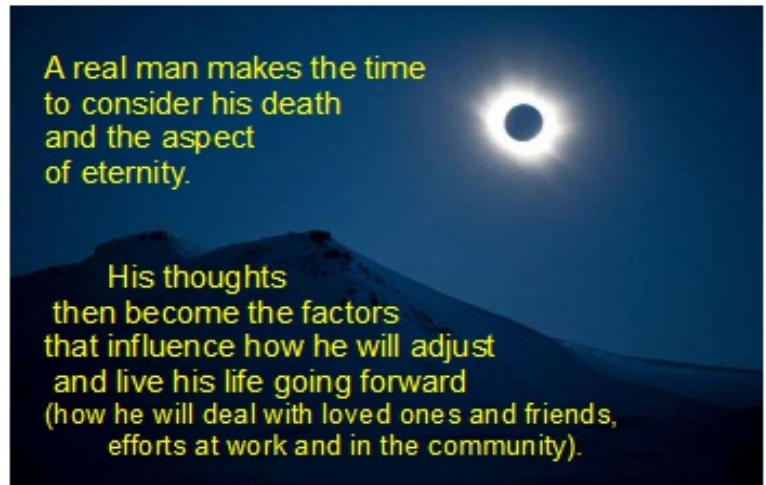
For those of us who believe in *God*, we know that He created it all and every aspect that amazes us is from His character. Also, what we see represents just the beginning of what He has in store for us when we enter our eternal life in heaven (you can think of it as the old saying goes . . . 'You ain't see nothing yet').

Therefore, consider this. If you are familiar with the beatings, the flogging and the humiliation that Jesus endured as a part of His path to His crucifixion (for us); think then of the challenges in life that you may have to endure. As difficult [as His], probably not.

Just don't forget who our Creator is and the strength, the abilities that He has enabled within us.

[remember]

We have the blood of our Savior within us, we can endure.



It all comes down to this. **Know it, believe it, achieve it.** The good things in life are never easy - God has enabled each of us to endure. In fact, when you look at all of these topics shared, they're not trials that we all do - for the Christian they become tasks to appreciate (because we've gained a broader look at life and a longer look at time).

So, just remember that everyone can tap into aspects of endurance, but what you will find when you are pursuing your Christian faith, you will feel that '*extra gas in your tank*' for all things in your life.

Plenty to consider on this. Are there any notes, ideas or actions that you would jot down at this time as you consider **endurance** further ?

**“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course,
I have kept the faith.”**

2 Timothy 4: 7

[Now, before we wrap up . . .]

Decisions to be made

As we approach the end of Part One for this book, I assume you have wondered. *'Okay, but what do I do with all of this; the words and quotes shared?'* You are not much different than the man we know from 2,000 years ago - his name, Pilate and he asked . . .
“What shall I do, then, with this Jesus who is called Christ?”



You have to make the decision, whether it be today or someday soon.

Yes there could be various distraction that you are dealing with; just like the day in and day out aspects of our busy lives.

Know this . . . *'stuff'* happens in life but decisions have to be made. Can you sort out the noise versus the niceties? If you are struggling, that is okay - we live, we learn, we adjust, we act. Just remember that you can always do more (you can handle more) than you think. It is good to remember, we are impressive beings - God doesn't make junk.

My hope is that you saw in all of the above, we all have events unfold, we all learn things and we all can even have many similar things happen. It comes down to what you are thinking and learning - is it prompting you or not, to go further in pursuit of the Christian faith?

At a minimum, I hope you have a lot of things to consider.

As well as some decisions to make.

The challenge, **how do you take all of this and put in place a way to move forward - as you work to pursue your next steps ?**

There are various ways.

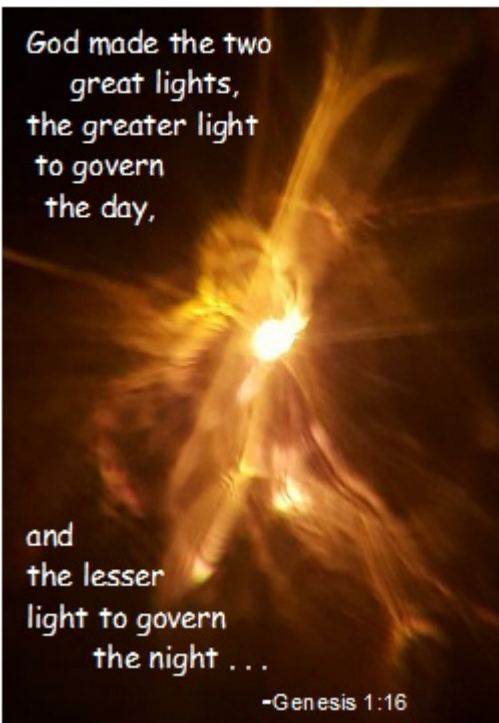
I would offer the following. I assume you have jotted down the key words I've shared so far and possibly some comments as well.

How about you look at those and compare what you have written, to the summary point

examples I now will share with you below ? Would you agree with the following or do you have a different take on them ? Here goes.



Awareness is our starting point for a Christian faith. If we do believe God exists, that His Son (Jesus) came to earth; lived and died for us as our Savior - we have the foundation of our faith.



Belief is the action that our faith leads us on; for example saying prayers, learning from the Bible, and working to do those things that please God.

Compassion is something anyone can have but for Christians we learn of Jesus' compassion and we try to follow His example.

Determination is what everyone has, but is it for the right things? For those of us pursuing our faith, it is in repenting from our sins, and for doing what we can to grow in faith.

Empathy helps us to move our acts of compassion from few to many.

Attitude is our belief plus determination multiplied by our compassion which equals what we show others.

Behavior is our attitude in action form, which builds our reputation.

Character is our internal foundation. It is improving or decaying.

Discipleship is moving beyond being a follower, it's a commitment that others can see (not to boast but know you are a growing Christian).

Education is learning and applying knowledge in life.

Acceptance
moves us
beyond the
understanding
and into the
embracing of
what we have
learned.



Brotherhood

is of being of like mind with others in the pursuit of common goals.

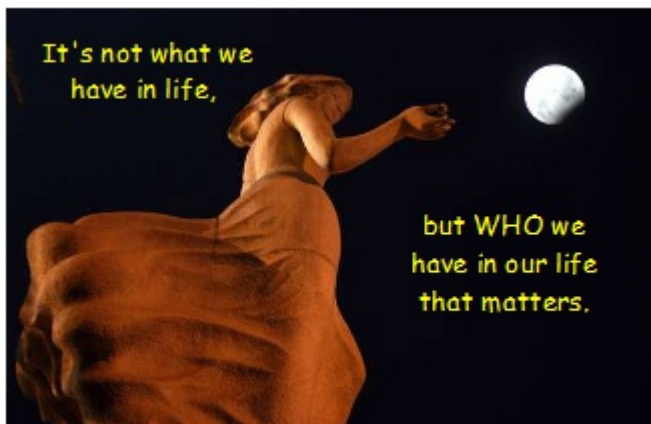
Courage is being able to do all that we should (what we need to do).

Destiny is our endgame obtained (either good or bad).

Endurance is hanging on longer than you ever thought you could.

But these above now have you wondering - aren't there more . . . where is **Faith, Hope, Love** and all the other things that are missing?

Yes there is so much more if we keep looking. Everyone has a depth, breadth and length in their lives - but for the Christian, when we embrace a growing faith, we gain a longer sense of time (eternity stretches the length out). We realize we need to change and grow.



While doing this, remember that some things are harder and you need **faith**.

What's that ? It starts with believing in our heavenly Father, His Son our Savior and the Holy Spirit our Counselor.

We build on that faith by the actions we take. Our faith transforms us (eyes to see, ears to hear and hands to help). With those we learn in our life: from sadness - we **embrace sympathy**, and from anger, we **embrace appreciation**; and from conflict - we **embrace compassion**.

In pursuing our faith, we grow to understand that the **Christian Code** is not a just a set of do this and that actions, it is embracing faith, of learning, of turning away from the wrong actions and pursuing the good actions that please God. We also realize that we may not know why bad things happen and what we should do from time to time, but we know that we control the how and the when of our actions.

As for me, over all my years, I have stumbled at times and I missed some opportunities but I wanted to grow in my faith (I trust God).

I found that with God's patience and guidance, I began to see changes and to make changes in my life. From those, I saw more blessings unfold for my family and me. Was everything perfect? No, but things were getting better and I see the things God is at work on within me.

So, with the above covered, look again at this matrix shown.

Do you see anything else? If you look at it carefully (like our faith),

there is so much more. Yes I have shared just some initial aspects of the **Christian's Code**. Your pursuits can be similar or even much more than

C	D	E	W	F	R	B	I	N	P	T	Z	C	N	S	I	S	F	O	W	A	V	Q	O
C	D	Y	A	W	H	A	T	I	L	S	Q	O	A	F	E	H	U	M	I	L	I	T	Y
M	E	B	T	X	U	D	J	Z	X	X	O	M	T	U	W	Z	?	L	Y	P	H	U	R
Z	E	C	I	S	R	T	H	E	G	N	J	P	L	I	L	B	M	Q	X	T	S	A	E
C	E	F	B	H	Y	L	Q	Z	E	A	W	A	R	E	N	E	S	S	U	R	O	X	P
O	C	H	R	I	S	T	I	A	N	O	V	S	W	A	Q	L	S	R	I	?	D	O	E
V	I	F	O	R	G	I	V	E	N	E	S	S	U	K	R	I	T	E	I	W	C	K	N
E	B	N	C	O	D	E	?	M	D	A	F	I	G	H	J	E	M	P	A	T	H	Y	T
N	D	E	T	E	R	M	I	N	A	T	I	O	N	P	?	F	K	L	Q	W	A	R	A
A	I	Z	X	C	V	B	N	M	O	T	D	N	F	G	E	P	R	A	Y	E	N	X	N
N	S	S	Q	W	B	E	H	A	V	I	O	R	Q	B	Z	R	Y	U	I	O	G	S	C
T	C	A	E	Z	W	S	X	E	D	T	C	A	F	R	B	V	S	T	G	B	E	Y	E
Q	I	E	Y	R	?	O	S	G	H	U	K	C	X	O	B	W	E	I	Y	P	D	F	K
C	P	M	T	P	V	G	Z	N	E	D	U	C	A	T	I	O	N	T	S	A	J	V	E
P	L	J	B	F	A	I	T	H	T	E	S	E	L	H	M	E	D	E	S	T	I	N	Y
G	E	M	O	C	Q	D	C	B	?	K	U	P	A	E	H	K	U	P	R	E	A	D	X
H	S	U	O	B	E	D	I	E	N	C	E	T	A	R	E	K	R	X	T	H	E	U	P
C	H	A	R	A	C	T	E	R	R	J	N	A	?	H	L	S	A	B	I	B	L	E	Z
R	I	F	S	A	C	R	I	F	I	C	E	N	O	S	L	N	A	I	T	O	I	S	
R	P	F	N	Q	I	P	X	H	U	A	M	C	B	O	X	Q	C	A	B	O	U	T	W
L	S	?	Y	N	W	C	O	U	R	A	G	E	G	D	O	D	E	P	L	O	V	E	Q

what you know so far (**pursue it and you will have no regrets**).

To close then, the **Christian's Code** is not a mystery to be solved but rather a unique combination to be discovered. For when you do; you look deeper, you listen carefully and you learn more so you can unlock God's plan for you. Which means we have to decide if we want to make some changes in our life (and in our faith pursuits). And know this - a better life awaits - it all depends on the **decisions we make**.

Now – before I close out this **Part One: A Christian's Code**, remember back up on page 9 I wanted you to think about:
Why should I embrace this?

Well, [in my opinion] it comes down to this. I didn't realize how much I needed and appreciated my pursuit of a growing Christian faith until my youngest brother attacked and ended up killing his ex-girlfriend. His crime was a real gut-punch that I did not know how best to handle because it impacted me, my family and my extended family (more on that another day).

But then, that tragedy caused me to take a real hard look at my faith and to decide – is this [faith] for me or not? And long story short – I thank God for being there for me because I made my commitment – that I needed my faith and I was so thankful for it (and yes I've been blessed ever since).

which means for me . . . I wanted to dig deeper, to really work at living my faith daily and for embracing values as best I could. For when I did, I could see the blessings in my life unfold – not that I didn't have some trials and struggles at times – but as those did, I just stayed in faith, pursued my prayers and trusted God. And that commitment has helped me avoid worry, to just do the best I can in all that I do and know that things will work out.

And this then brings us back to you. **Is a deeper view of values, something that you should consider** (which faith, compassion, integrity, sacrifice and so much more are within)?

I hope so.

Are there then - next steps ?

That is a good question for wrapping up. At a minimum, wouldn't it be great if all of us would ponder and pursue the right next steps ?

In the above I have kept in mind the idea: pursue a deeper view of values. That is to open my eyes, to look carefully because when we do, there is more than what we initially see. And if we all pursue this deeper view, we begin to see the things that we want to pursue in life.

So ponder what you've jotted down, then ponder and decide - and if you are still not sure, maybe you want to join me on the following . . .

[remember]

We have three things to do:

To love God, to love our families and to love others.

We have three challenges:

To grow in our faith, to nurture our families and to help others.

We have three understandings:

To know that challenges will distract us, to know that temptations will lure us, and to know that we can do more than we think.

Which then leads us to **three decisions that we need to make:**

What do I need to do ? What do I need to stop doing ?

When do I take these actions ?

Would you agree ? For me, I was tired of just having good intentions.

I'm working on stepping up because my mind now keeps coming back to, '*nothing is important until we make it important.*'

So what is important to you ? Reflect and remember that none of us know the number of days that we have yet ahead. Decide what you need to do, how you will act and when (everything boils down to that). For what you decide will impact your loved ones as much as yourself.

There you go - the above shared insights from one Christian as to what he has found as to the types of characteristics you consider as you look at your embrace of faith and the actions you pursue.

Next up is a turn down a different path that you may not have thought much on - the negatives that can arise. Here goes . . .

Part Two

A **C**HRISTIAN'S



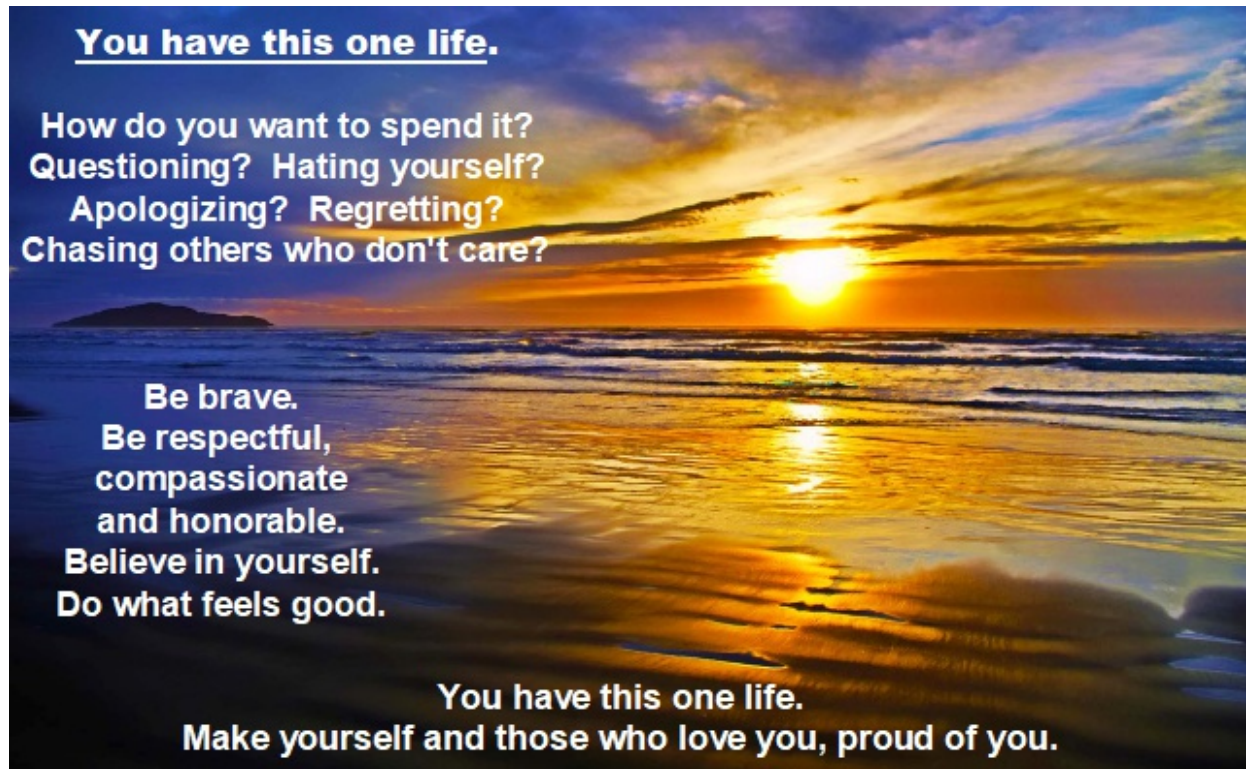
C **H** **L** **L** **E** **N** **G** **E**

**Taking a look at what we worry about
as we take a wider view of life.**

Note 2:

For this part two, my goal was to look at some examples of wrongs, negatives, sadness's etc that can unfold in anyone's life.

But as you do so, remember that what I share is just some examples. My challenge is for you to use the following to help you to think on the wider aspects of life and of all the negatives that can unfold. Not that we all experience the same things, but to be aware and to then think on the how best to deal with those?



And don't forget.
When we take a **wider view** of things, we are sometimes scared, sometimes saddened, and sometimes surprised.
But most often, we're smarter because of it
(and sometime we get a smile or two along the way as well).

Part Two Contents

You will find via the pages to follow, a simple 26 word list of the types of challenges that may arise in anyone's life. Yes, some are typical and yes, some are what may not be typical – but in today's world – possible.

They are based on each letter of our alphabet and are shared for your consideration as you look at the challenges that may arise in your life – or you may wonder about and want insight on. For example:

Anger, Bitterness, Covet, Discouragement, Evil, etc.

And as to why this book? Because the challenges in our life require us to think further, to walk around our challenge in thought and to then do what is needed. The pages to follow give you some starting 'food for thought' . . . not as 'this is what you must embrace' – but a think, consider & decide.

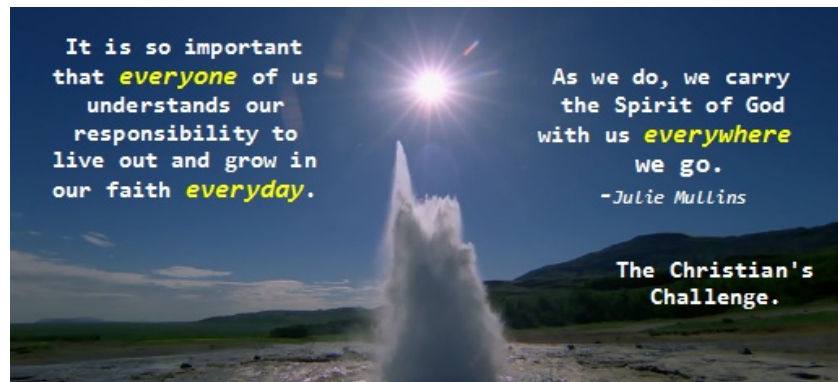
So what then is this ?

This is part two of three (where **Part 1** was '**A Christian's Code**') and all I can tell you at this point – is that I hope you find this worth your challenge. **Why ?** Because after completing the first part, I was surprised how fast the framework for this part 2 came together.

And yes I'll admit that my mindset prior to writing this, was pretty much focused on the various positives that I thought we all should try to keep visible in our lives (honor, integrity, compassion, etc.). What was new was the challenge that I saw racing through my mind – the how as Christians do we talk about and best deal with the negatives that can happen to us all ?

What then are the **abc**'s of the various negatives that happen to most of us ? I just started jotting down the first negative that came to my mind for each letter in our alphabet. The first bunch that I jotted down, came to mind pretty easy (anger, evil, guilt, pride, etc.).

I then started looking through my collection of pictures, quotes and Bible verses that I had and then started to fill in the blank spots that I had left.



Like this picture and quote above. What you'll see in the pages to follow are what you could call, 'a starting point' consideration for you. They are simple reads that I hope you would agree with or at least, begin to get you to thinking further on these types of challenges.

Yes, I thank you for pondering all of this and remember that there is always more to life as we take on the ups and downs of it - that means; enjoy the good times and work through the challenging times.

My prayers and best wishes for you going forward because we all have challenges or frustrations or even some horrible events that will happen to us or to those we like or love. For example, consider this:

Their teenage daughter storms into the house and her mother, sensing something is up, asks her to come into the kitchen. Her Mom listens as her daughter explains how everything is going wrong. While this is unfolding, her Mom brings out the ingredients for making a cake.

When they get to the point where her daughter has stopped talking and appears ready to walk away, her Mom tells her . . . *'Honey, do me a favor and have a taste of this flour, then taste some of the raw eggs and then some of the baking soda.'* Her daughter responds . . .

'Mom, no - that stuff is all yucky.'

Her Mom smiled and then responds to her daughter . . . *'You are right, by themselves these may be yucky but they each have a purpose. When we bring them together and with the right heat and time, they all come together and they become a delicious cake. God does that with us. He uses all the yucky stuff and mixes it with the right stuff to over time get us to a place of peace and enjoyment. It is never easy to see the good in things when bad things are happening but over time, we learn, we change and we see that the bad and the good experiences in our life have made us smarter, braver and even more compassionate.'*



They then talked some more, they discussed actions that could be pursued next - what to ignore and what to pause on and to let some time unfold. Now, were her daughter's problems immediately solved? No but her daughter calmed down and had some better insights as to how she could take on the frustrations that she was dealing with. And that is what all of the following provides . . . some insights that may help you as you take on the challenges that can unfold.

A is for Anger

Now I am not going to describe to you what anger is, I'm pretty sure you have seen it in others or have at least had a bout or two of it as you have gone through your years.

In pondering anger I know that is not an easy emotion to just wrap up and to control correctly. Sometimes we can be surprised what will cause our anger to surface. **Which then raises the challenge, once anger is exposed . . .**

then what do we do ? All too often loved ones or friends or those we don't know can be caught up in our anger. Then on the other hand, instead of us 'blowing our top', we may be caught on the receiving end of someone's anger. So it doesn't matter which way it unfolds.

For us Christians, we have to be able to recognize it and if we can not, we need our loved ones and or friends to help us see it - when we are causing it or getting caught up in it. Once we see it unfolding, we need to pursue actions to defuse it. Easy ? No, but it is the right thing to do (aka get help, leverage prayer, and pursue the long range benefits).



I don't know who said the quote shown with Charlie Brown (above) but its message is right.

[always remember]
We have a life, we need to keep the big picture in mind (our faith requires it).

What then should we Christians do ? Think of the emotion and the energy we use up when we are angry. For all of that, what do we really gain ? Possibly we may vent but most often that doesn't accomplish anything. If we let it linger, it will most likely fester and grow into a hurtful poison that could hurt many. What if we worked to better recognize when we ourselves are getting angry - or we see someone who is getting angry with us ? If we can **recognize** it, we can better **recover** from it, then we can more appropriately **react** as we should and not as we may regret. And if needed, get help to deal with this.

So think about anger and choose a Bible verse to leverage as you work to handle those times better. For me, these words from **Isaiah 1:17** help me to have a better mindset to keep anger in check . . .

"Learn to do good, seek justice, rebuke the oppressor, defend the fatherless and plead the case for the widow."

B is for Bitterness

This is possibly even more dangerous to us than anger. Bitterness can start out small and then (if not addressed) can grow and grow.

Basically, it boils down to this. If you don't recognize bitterness as it creeps into your life, you or others will soon see yourself as cranky at a minimum or nasty at the worst.

It is a poison that spreads within us and it can even spread to those who we are close to.



Is that what you want ? I would hope not so consider the following.
As Christians we need to make sure we don't put on our 'good suit'



(our Christian behavior) on Sundays.
We need to make the commitment to try and live as Christians, day in and day out. Because if we don't, we're just

'putting on a show for others' and we're not really living as we should.
Easy ? No, but know this - life was not meant to be easy.

Now the above Bible verses are just some of the many that you could pursue as you work to understand and to grow your Christian faith. So, can we get bitter (mad, frustrated, etc) ? Yes - but if we are taking our troubles to God in prayer, listening to the Holy Spirit guide us; we will see things change. Patience and trust in God will solve many issues.

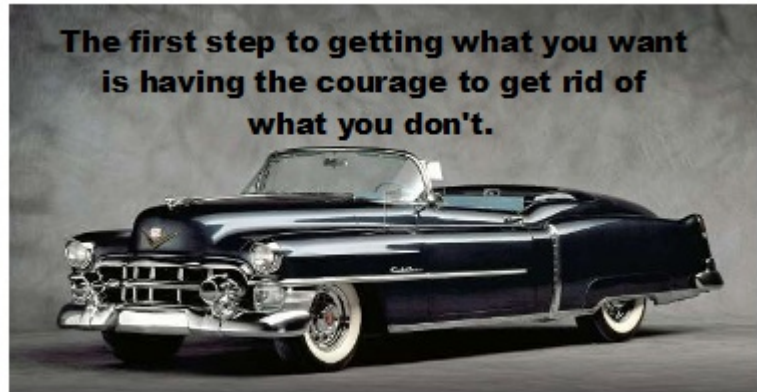
So take a few minutes and think about the bitterness that you have seen in others or in your own actions. What was the outcomes ? In some situations actions are taken and things get resolved. That would be great if that was the majority outcome but in most cases, things get worse before things ever get better. Therefore ponder what you believe our faith challenges us to do and pursue actions that resolve your bitterness. For example from **Proverbs 15:1** (some good words):

***"A soft answer turns away wrath
but grievous words stir up anger."***

C is for Covet

Yep, this is one of those we don't hear of too often and most likely, we don't even see ourselves as having this type of a problem. So first ask yourself these questions.

Are there things that I want? For the things I want, what will I do to get them? Now those could be viewed as open questions. I just wanted you to think and to realize - we all want things, and we all think of what do we need to do in order to get them.



A nice car, a newer home, a boat or whatever are all things that we could view as the normal things that we all want to pursue.



But what if it is drugs, or a relationship outside of marriage, or that desire to go

gambling but you know you shouldn't. It is that desire for those other things that 'down inside', we have that feeling . . . we probably shouldn't, that normally gets us in trouble or creates those later regrets. We just have to know the good wants vs the bad.

So what should we do ? Why not make the time to really ponder the 'wants of your heart', and then remember what Jesus taught and what the Apostle Paul wrote in **Romans 13:9** as a reminder.

"You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandments, are summed up in this word: You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Then, have the courage to get rid of those thoughts of covetousness (those things that distract you and if left unchecked, you will later regret), so that you can pursue what you know is good. And if you are not quite sure, it will be those things that bring you honor, respect and the love of your family.

D is for Discouragement

We all get discouraged from time to time, right ? How about . . .

"Why can't you be more like your older brother ? Look at what he has done."

It doesn't matter if it was 2,000 years ago and you were the younger brother of Jesus or if it was 2 years ago. Sometimes we are compared to others, and or sometimes we are just discouraged because things do go wrong.



Yes it probably was pretty tough being the young brother of Jesus. But that example is just to get you thinking.

Everyone of us have had failure in some form, some doubt from time to time and we have felt the anger of others directed at us, whether it is deserved or not. Yes, there are so many examples of this.



So what can be done and what should you do ?

First, it happens. Learn from it, don't be defeated by it. Second, if you feel stuck in the muck of discouragement, go to prayer, be patient and know you will persevere. Third, change your ways.

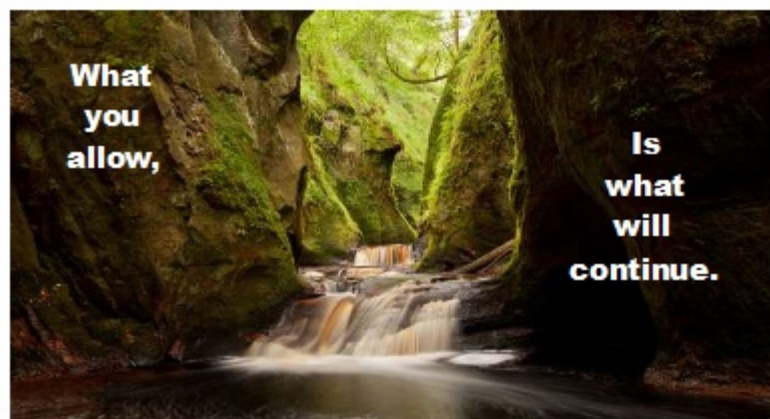
And remember, discouragement can be replaced by determination. We can overcome, have faith and ponder this . . . **James 1:2-3**

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials or many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance."

E is for Evil

Start with this →

Would you agree ?



I don't know who said those words but they remind me of this . . .

"All it takes for evil to prevail is for good men to do nothing"
(inspired by words from Edmund Burke). Which now prompts us to ask, what is evil, and would we be in agreement on all forms of this ?

For example, torture and murder come to mind as actions of evil but anything that harms others is of the seeds of evil. So then, what should we (you and I) do ?

First, be careful; some would argue that 'some wrong' is okay because it may be needed to prompt a reaction or to right a previous wrong.

I'm sorry to say - no . . .
two wrongs never make a right.
And second, each of us needs to ponder what we think 'evil' is.



Because, once we have a good framework of understanding on evil,



we can then be vigilant for it and to be better prepared as to how we will deal with it. And yes, we can we be caught up in it - a part of the collateral damage but if so, leverage prayer and we need to do what we can to address it. Easy ? No but necessary.

Therefore, remember . . .

Romans 12:21

"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

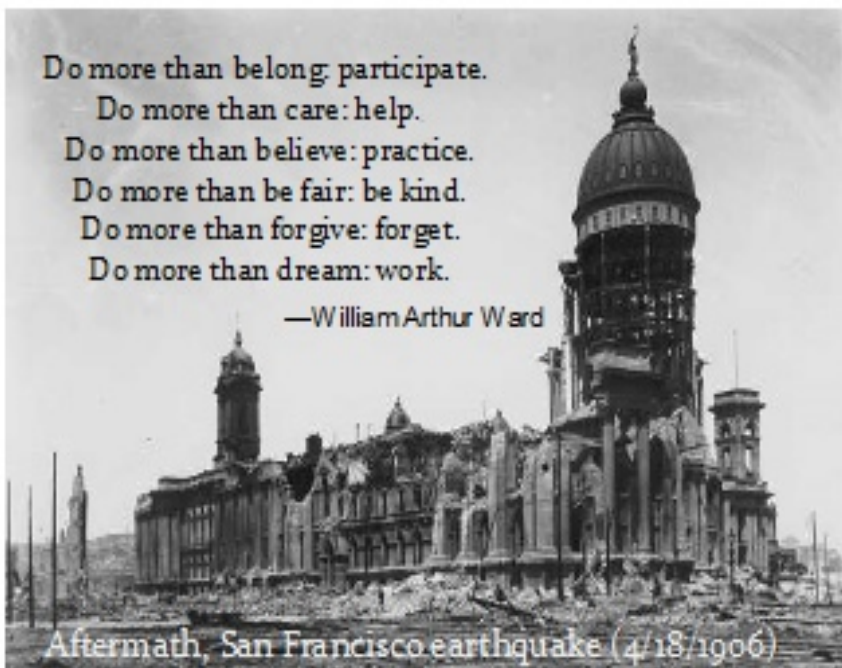
F is for Frustration

If I am wrong,
educate me.
Don't belittle me.

Been there - done that (as to being frustrated) . . . but what then should we do ? One of the best things to do is to work on understanding what is the cause of it. Consider the following before you take any action . . .

First, ask yourself; 'Are my words or actions causing frustrations for others or myself ?' If yes, that recognition is the first step, but you then have to work to understand why those things are happening and then you have to work at changing away from those actions.

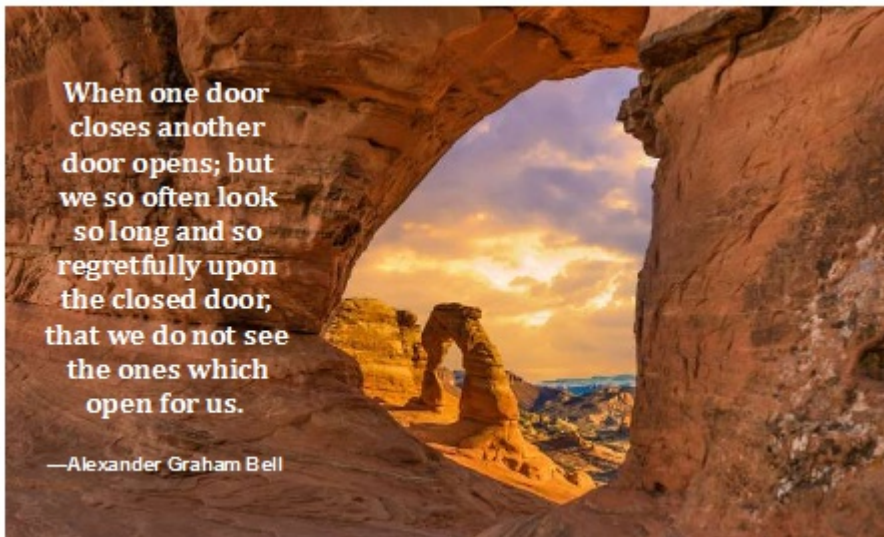
Second, if you find that you are not the cause but surely on the receiving end, then you have to decide what can you do to resolve that. Determine if you need to step away from the person or issue causing your frustration or if you need to confront it.



The worst thing you can do is to ignore it. For if you do that, you and or others will most likely see it fester into anger or depression.

Third, you also need to know and to accept that some time may be needed to help you to either gain perspective or to allow the action causing the problem, to settle down or to lessen. Too often we can let frustration run wild, causing us to lash out. Just think of the road rage or other violent actions taken by some . . . if they could only find the way to catch themselves, to get help if needed, to 'let it go'.

It all boils down to this. Everyone gets frustrated from time to time but not everyone knows how best to deal with frustrations. We need to develop the skills to recognize it when it is happening and then be



able to leverage the right responses for the situations unfolding. It may be just walking away from an irritant or pursuing prayer or in getting some counseling (from

a spouse, friend or professional). One thing that is common for all the resolution actions, is that we need to recognize the issue before we react. Which benefits us most when we ponder before we pursue the action that we need to take. And as you ponder on this further, keep in mind the following words from **1 Peter 5:6-7** . . .

"Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you."

Which also can be understood as . . . let go and let God [take it on].

G is for Guilt



Remember my earlier words shared on 'C is for Covet' ? Well guilt can sometimes happen to us when we covet and get something, then we realize . . . 'maybe I shouldn't of . . .' whether that be in saying something or in getting something. So then, what should we do ?

First off, we all need to accept the fact that at one point or another, or more often than we would like, we will feel guilty about one thing or another. Like the picture above of the Corvette that is shown.



I purposely added that picture in this section on guilt because I know looking at and wanting a real nice car like that . . . is one of the things that makes me feel guilty. I catch myself wonder, why do I do that ? I know as I want to grow in faith, 'want of earthly pleasures' is not a good characteristic of a Christian. It is one of our challenges.

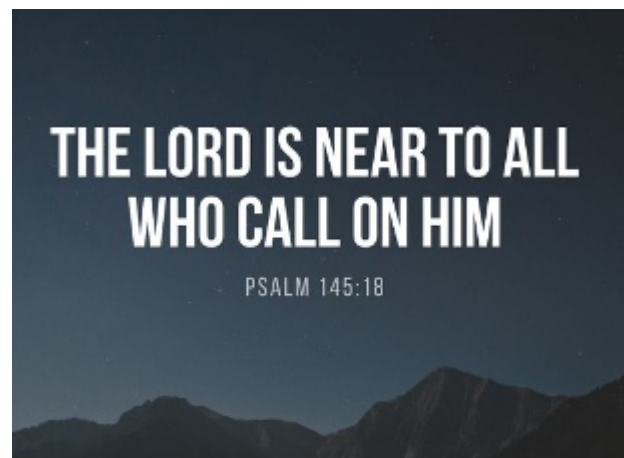
So, it is a pretty safe assumption to have, that we all feel guilt from time to time. The big question is what do we do with that feeling ? For example; do we spend money on things that we shouldn't, do we say things that we shouldn't, do we do what we know we shouldn't ?

If we are having those feelings of guilt (after the fact) or of doubt (before the fact), then realize that the Holy Spirit is talking to you and wanting to get your attention. At a minimum those are the times to go to prayer, to ask God for help, for insight, for guidance on those things to either do or to not do. It is not easy being a Christian in today's world because we are bombarded with 'it is okay, treat yourself, do what you want to do, you deserve it', etc. etc.

As Christians, we need to realize we are in a fight against conformity within this world. We are working to understand and to embrace what we believe God wants us to pursue. Now he does want us to have a good life, to enjoy His blessings - we just need to also work at understanding and in embracing His blessings as He desires.

I know I struggle with this, my wandering eye as it sees the nice things in this world and my thoughts . . . that would be nice to have. But when I look at what I already have, the blessings that God has given me. I realize I don't need those other things and that I am truly excited by the things that I see that God has provided and is working on for me. As for you, what then would I recommend ? Pray when you want help with what you want or you want taken away.

And remember . . . ->



H is for Hurt

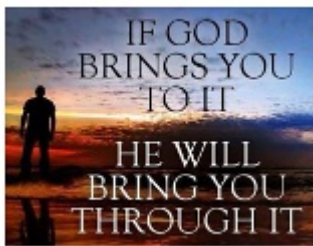
It was a Spring, snowing again day (and yes, hard to believe it was the mid April time frame), and although the snow lightly falling gave a nice feeling of beauty, it surprisingly prompted me of these thoughts on the subject and challenge of hurt - and what to do about it.

**So, let us first ask the question,
have you ever been hurt ?**

I know you may think that is a stupid question because we all have been hurt in one way or another and most likely we will be hurt in various ways as our remaining years unfold. Therefore, since we all get hurt, what can we do about it ?



Let me first start with the picture and words above and to the right. Yes we tumble, we fall off and we bang our heads more then once as we grow up. The outcome - we either learn what to avoid or how to be more careful or we keep on hurting ourselves until we do.



Second, we know that sometimes you just have to learn as you go, you take your lumps as they say and you try to avoid them going forward. But what if you could help others to avoid the possible hurts that could come their way - would you ?

The third and closing point on this challenge looks at our role as a parent. It is a wake up call that we need all parents to embrace.

Our children are exposed to so much in this broken world, we may not realize how great the challenge and risks are for them. For some, they are so sadly close to running away, physical / sexual / drug abuse, or the anger of others. Just look at the school shootings that have gone on across our country. Add to that, more and more also eat, drink or snort such horrible things and about all we can do is wonder . . . why ?

Many point to broken homes as the problem. Yes that is a factor but you know what is not said ? What about the distracted homes ? Yes, those homes where the Moms and Dads are juggling so much just to pay the bills, the families that are on the go so much and the families that are more focused on what is on their smartphone and not focused like they should with the loved one(s) sitting near them.

As you ponder this, consider these three questions - because how you answer them, will determine your next steps. 1st) We learn that we can depend on God's help for our hurts, but do we pray ? 2nd) The Bible can teach us so much on how to live and what we must learn, but do we read it ? 3rd) We have to decide are we going to invest our time, our love and our teaching to our kids . . . or we will cry and wonder how and where did things go so wrong ?

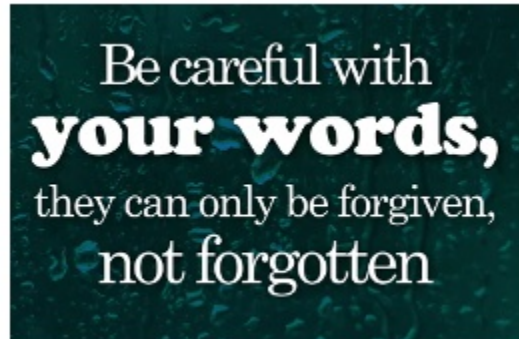
So then, what next ? Choose to be proactive in helping your kids, in comforting your kids and in encouraging your kids. Because if you do, the hurts will be fewer and remember **2 Corinthians 1:3-4**

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation. That we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God."

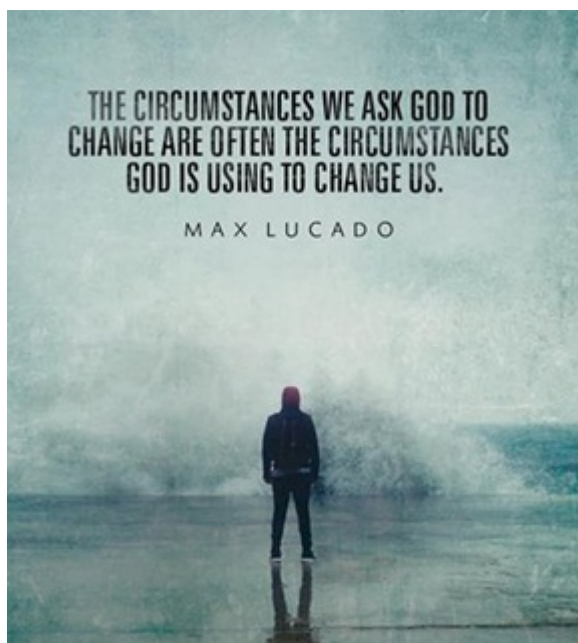
I is for Insult

To figure out how best to address this topic, first answer these two questions. Have you ever insulted someone and after doing so, how did you feel? Have you ever been insulted and afterwards, how did you feel?

Those are actually two very important questions so really ponder them.



And as you now ponder these, let me add the following. First, for the 'have you ever insulted someone?' If you are like most, you have the feeling... 'I now feel better' but some in thinking afterwards, begin to wonder if that really helped or did it make a bad situation worse? Next, for the 'have you ever been insulted?' I'm pretty sure that most of us had at least in one way or another, felt like they were insulted. That one is pretty universal, we are hurt, some are also mad and others are just shocked. They do not know what to do next.



There then is the challenge and the opportunity for each of us. As I thought about, what have I learned over the years and if confronted with the 'insult' situation now, what would I do?

What if each of us, each day thought about this, and especially before we opened our mouths?

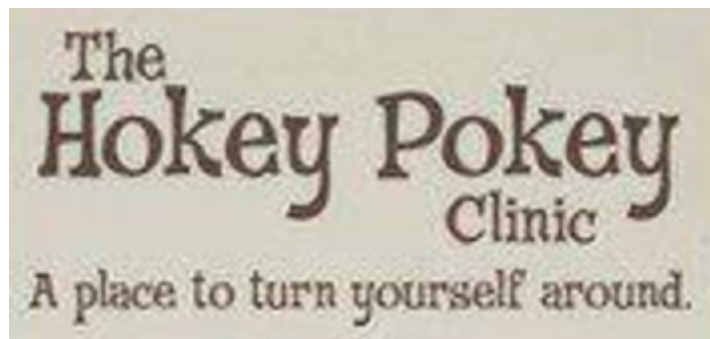
That being this. Ask yourselves '**who will God bless through His use of me today ?**' I have seen so many times of God using people to help other people and I realized, that is the key. If each day, all of us embraced the thought - we are here to bless others and others are here to bless us. When we look for God and pray for God to be at work in our lives, we will see us taking action for Him for others.

So, remember when it comes to insults, let us do right and do those things that inspire others. Why? Consider this, from **1 John 3:18**

**"Dear children, let us not love with words or speech
but with actions and in truth."**

J is for Jealous

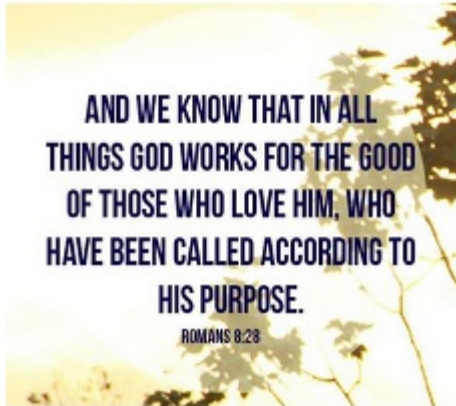
Yes I know, you are already looking at these words to the right and you are jealous because you want to go there as well :) It is okay to be jealous, we all have have been there and have done that a time or two. The key is to recognize it and to not get stuck there. For when we do, we most often end up doing things that we later regret.



So how best to deal with the challenge of being jealous? Some try the path of 'just relax, you have nothing to be jealous of' but for many of us, that doesn't seem to work.

If that is you, please pursue prayer.

Why prayer ? Because jealousy is often best handed with some time and perspective gained. Going to prayer is a great way to gain those.



For example, like these words to the left from the Apostle Paul in his letter to the early Roman church. We may see something that others have and we want it because we think we deserve it as well. But when we go in prayer and it may take us more than one prayer - we ask God for His help in our wants; we begin to see we are blessed and look more at His plan.

And what is that plan ? That is His purpose for us and this ties in well with the words shared on the recommendation on how best to deal with insults. As Christians, we are not unlike others who have troubles or desires - but we do work our way, better and better over time to get past our troubles and our desires for our self and more and more aligned with the pursuit of God's purpose for us. So as you ponder this further, also consider these words from **Proverbs 14:30**

**“A heart at peace gives life to the body,
but envy rots the bones.”**

K is for Kill

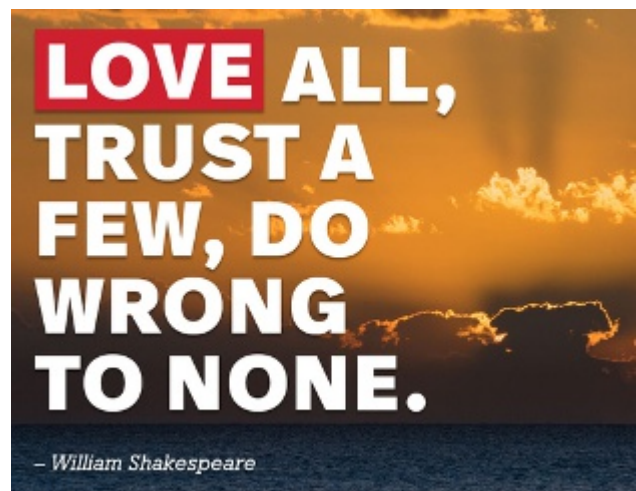


Okay, this topic is not one that comes up in your normal every day discussion but sadly, we see various actions of people killing others too often across this world. Gun violence, anger out of control or anything that takes a life is a horror that should be avoided.

So how do we look at this subject ? What makes someone take a weapon and shoot many, what causes someone to drive into a crowd ? Unfortunately the seeds of anger break forth into action and all the reasons why cover a range of issues. Yes getting help would be great for those with thoughts of hurting others but they most likely don't see that as a concern but most likely see that as a release from pain.

To help get our minds wrapped around what we can possibly do, consider these steps.

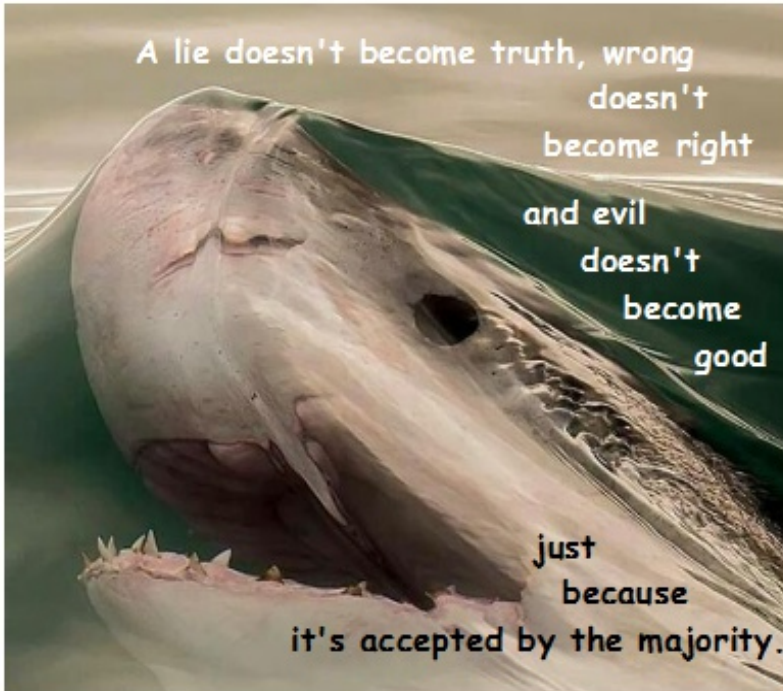
First, why not pursue an attitude of respect for all? If we did so, we would realize that we may not agree with others and it is okay for others to disagree with us.



Second, like this picture and words above that **PassItOn.com** had shared. Shakespeare's quote is a fantastic 'life framework' that we can embrace. It can be done but we have to believe it and pursue it.

Therefore the challenge is upon each of us. It is a broken world that we live in but we are here to do what we can to make it better. Do so, remember these words from **Matthew 6:14** and do what you can . . .

**"If you forgive others,
your heavenly Father will also forgive you."**



L is for Lies

These words shared to the left are a great starting point for us on this subject of lies. It is unfortunate when we are on the receiving end of lies said . . . but to me, it is worse if we are on the front end, that being the one saying the lie. Which brings us

to this reality (and I don't know who said this but I like the words) . . .

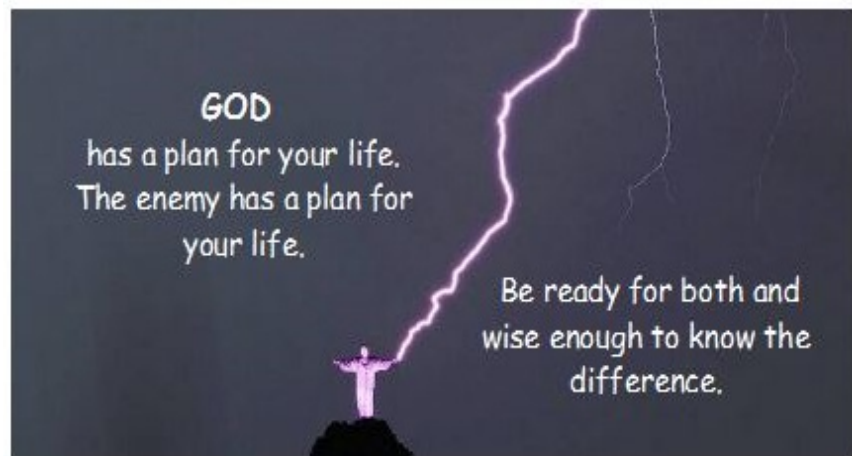
"Remember, when your feet slip, you can recover your balance but when your tongue slips, you can not retrieve your words."

We each have to understand that lies, insults or even foul language used, is hurtful. And until we make this important, we will not gain any progress against this.

So then, what do we need to do for the lies that come our way or that we may be tempted to send out? Don't and remember these words from

Proverbs 12:22 . . .

"The LORD detests lying lips but He delights in the trustworthy."



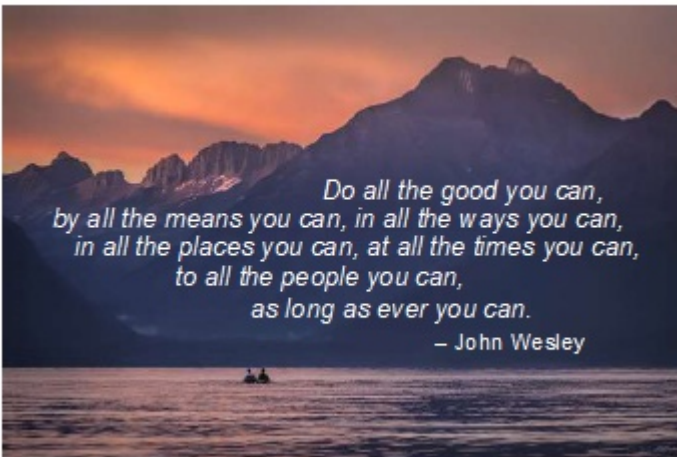
M is for Murmuring

Here's another, do I really have a problem with this? Well the truth is, you may not but there are too many that struggle with this. I know I got a chuckle from these words to right on 'priceless'. But that then leads us to the challenge - can you keep your mouth shut?

The ability to speak several languages is an asset, but the ability to keep your mouth shut in any language is priceless.

It is not an easy task, especially when you are frustrated or angry over something. For those that can not keep their mouth shut, the quiet words said, the murmuring they do may make them feel a bit better - but does it really help?

Let us look at this from this perspective. Do you like whining? Well it really is not much different from murmuring, except in volume. So what then should we do on this? First, make sure we are not the one



who is doing this and if you are not sure how best to stop from doing this, consider these words to the left from John Wesley. **Because if we are focused on doing the best that we can, no matter what, we won't have the time or the care for murmuring.**

Second, commit to the challenge that we Christians should embrace on this and best summarized by these words from **Philippians 2:14 . . .**

"Do all things without grumbling or disputing."

N is for Negativity

Well, now you know that when you have **lies** and **murmuring**, you get **negativity** and so let us talk about that now.

The words to the right are great to ponder as we take on the challenges that unfold but we also know we have a counselor available to us 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. That is God's Holy Spirit, living within us as Christians. When that negativity springs up around us, we need to remember our faith. God is listening and we need to make sure we are listening to Him. For He comforts us, He counsels us, and He guides us.



Know this - probably the hardest thing to understand is when we believe God is silent and not listening or helping. It is like the lesson learned from 'The Footprints' story that we all have seen here or there. For when we see only one set of footprints (in looking back at our life), it is when He carries us. So, when all that negativity unfolds, deal with it as best you can and know that as steel is forged in the fire, we are strengthened by our challenges.



Easy ? No but you can overcome the negativity. Do good and remember these words from **Romans 8:28 . . .**

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

And if you are still not sure about the above, let me close with these bonus words to ponder (I don't know who said them, but they're good).

The greatest blessings of God are spiritual in nature. The person that stays in constant communication with God will hear from Him. The guidance of God on our lives is one of the greatest gifts we could possibly receive. God hears the prayers of repentance from the unbeliever and guides them into His marvelous grace. We who are saved by the glorious redemptive power of Christ are for sure the most blessed people in the world. A life of prayer will draw us closer to God. If we pray more, we will hear from God and if we hear from God more, we will better recognize His voice when He speaks.

O is for Oppression

Now this - oppression - is a challenging topic because most of us may not see this directly unfold in our lives. But whether it does or does not, requires us to think on this and to determine if we have thoughts and or actions that we should make decisions on. And, to help you - consider the following.



Do not pray for easy lives. Pray to be stronger men and women. Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers, pray for powers equal to your task.
-Phillip Brook

If we are parents, how are we treating our kids; are they under our actions of intimidation ?

What if we are one of the decision makers at our place of work ?

Are we fair in all of our dealings ? As you can see by just these three simple questions, the topic of fairness is just another way of looking at how we deal with oppression. If we don't think about it, we could be guilty of doing it to some degree. Ponder this further, take positive action if needed and remember these words from **Isaiah 1:17** . . .

“Learn to do good, seek justice, rebuke the oppressor, defend the cause of the fatherless and plead the case for the widow.”

P is for Pride

And this topic is one we all can easily fall into. As to how best to look at this, let me start the following.

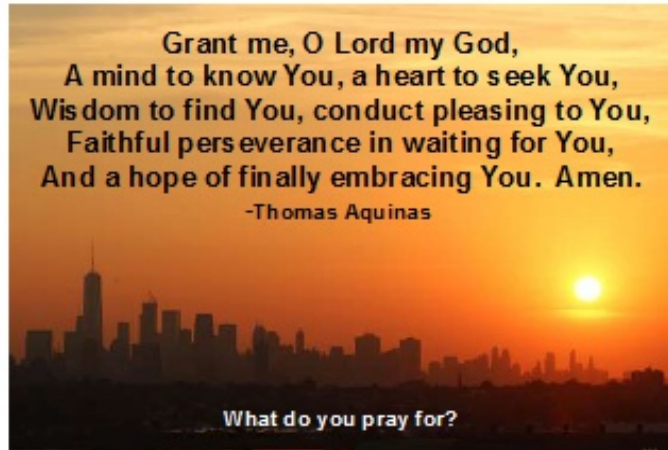
First, I love this picture that a friend of mine had posted (thank you Gene Jurrens) and



when I had first saw it, I knew I needed to find a good quote to go with it. As to those words on Success, I can not remember who said them but they are a very good tie in on this topic of pride. Why ? We can become very prideful of our efforts when we begin to succeed more and more. With success, we often see people buying themselves nicer and nicer things. If the world was perfect, this would lead to happy people but remember the old saying, money can't buy happiness.

Here then is our challenge, how do we pursue success and not pride ?

First, consider these insightful words from David McCasland . . .
'Pride has a way of distorting how we see ourselves while humility offers a realistic perspective.' So, **embrace humility.**



Second, consider this prayer as shown to the left (that is attributed to Thomas Aquinas).

So, **embrace our faith.**

And third, remember that pride is not easily defeated by a one term focus. So, **beware.**

Then to close, remember these words from **Proverbs 16:18** . . .

"Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall."

Q is for Quarrels

Now this is a topic that I and maybe others . . . struggle with . . . because this saying to the right . . . seems to be at the base of my thoughts.

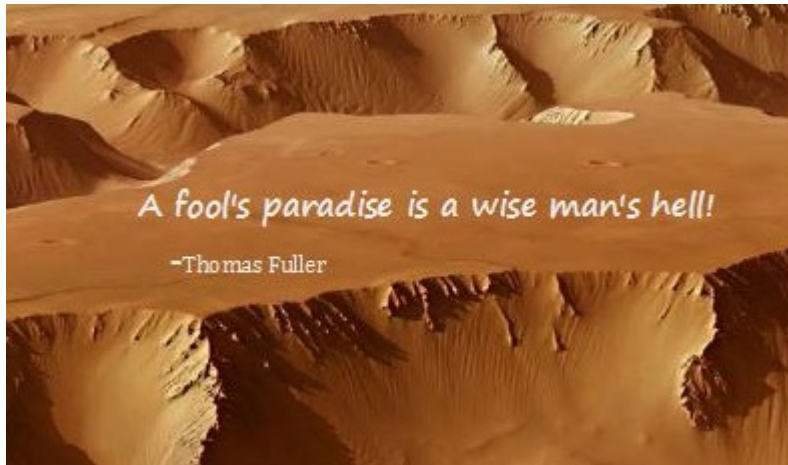
I know when I feel someone is saying something that I feel is stupid, I then wonder - are they that ignorant ?

**Run for your life!
there are stupid people
everywhere!**



Which then makes it easy to speak up - or so we think - and then when we are speaking up, it is surprising as to how easy to then argue.

Our arguing most often then leads us to frustration or anger and then before we know it, we are in the midst of an quarrel. And we all know that a quarrel is when two perceived 'rights' - make a big wrong.



So, what then can we do when we believe we are caught up in a quarrel? We need to step back and figure out - how did this happen and what do I want to really achieve? And consider these actions.

First, there is a chance that you were wrong or you at least feel that things got out of hand. Yes, sometimes it is very hard but apologizing when we should is always the right thing to do. Second, what if you don't think you are in the wrong, that it is the other persons fault or actions that are causing the problem? That is another good time for prayer. Go to God, share what has happened, your struggle with what to do next and then ask for His guidance.

Will you get the answer or the resolution you desire right away? Maybe and maybe not. If you do get a sense of insight and a path forward, great - pursue as you deem best. But if you don't get a sense of what to do next, that maybe the the time to really step back and to ponder what you have done so far, what you believe you may need to do next and as you work through those thoughts, continue to leverage prayer and ask for God's insight as to how best to move forward.

It may take a bit but stay in faith and in prayer and remember Proverbs 20:3 . . . ***"It is to one's honor to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel."***

R is for Revenge

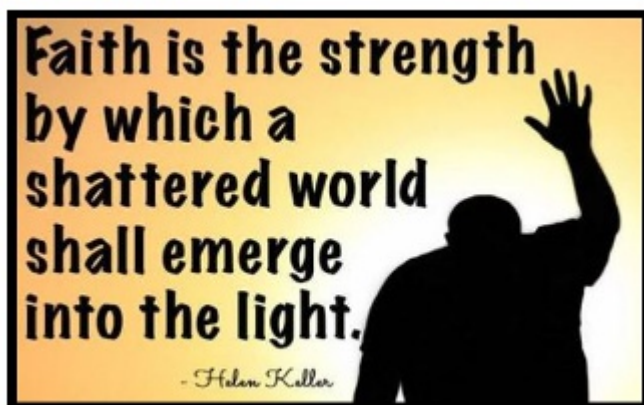
It is good that the topic of revenge, follows the words that we had just covered in regards to quarrels. That being, too often what can start as a misunderstanding, can then lead to a quarrel, which can then stew and become anger which sadly fuels the desire for revenge.

What is our take away on this ?

If we have the feelings of wanting revenge, we have now put ourselves on a path away from God.

Self-discipline begins with the mastery of your thoughts. If you don't control what you think, you can't control what you do.

Revenge achieved may make us feel good for the day, but it is a bitter pill of resolution. As Christians, we may make the mistake of wanting and pursuing revenge via our own actions. This can lead us into sin or sins that may ultimately consume us versus bringing us relief.



From **Romans 12:19** we learn a different approach to take . . .

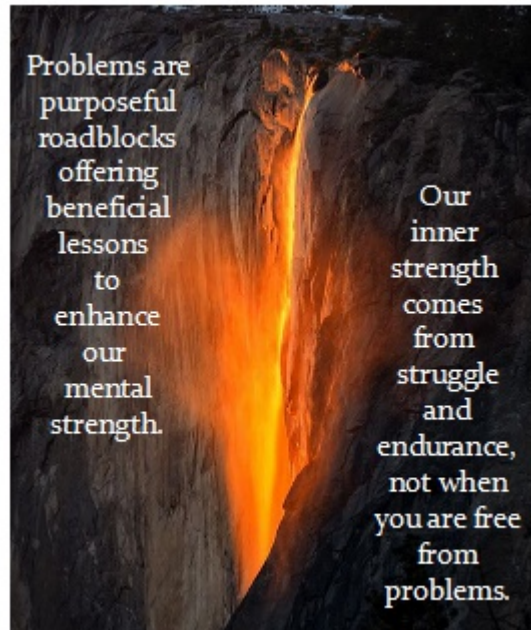
"Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay" says the LORD."

Is this easy ? No, but Apostle Paul teaches us to not be overcome by evil, but to overcome evil with good. As a growing Christian, we must try to pursue this as best we can and prayer will help us to get there.

S is for Sadness

Okay, this topic - what makes us sad, is one that we all could provide a lot of good examples on. For example . . . a friend, co-worker, our spouse or even our child could do something that saddens us. Or a tragic event could unfold that brings tears to our eyes.

So yes, numerous things can cause us to feel sad but it is what's next like the words shared in this picture above, about beneficial lessons and our inner strength that help us to put this into a faith consideration. We learn from the Bible that even Jesus wept in sadness when He went and saw how heartbroken His friends Martha and Mary were, who were grief stricken over the death of their brother Lazarus.



From this we learn that the action of sadness is one we all have from time to time. Even God is sad about our sin nature.

I believe that in us having times of sadness, it helps us to realize the sadness that God has for us. Our faith comforts us, as others can come and comfort us, and as we can comfort others.

And to close on this - remember, sadness is an emotion we all have.

How we deal with it, and how we put it into perspective is key to where we are in our faith journey. As we grow in faith, we may not see less times of sadness but when they happen, we are comforted in knowing that God hears our prayers. He understands our requests and He will bring us to times of peace. We trust in Him and we remember . . .

"The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside quiet waters, He refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths for His name's sake."

Psalm 23:1-3

T is for Temptation

Okay . . . here we go on a tough topic because we all look at the challenge of temptation in various ways.

For example - is this just a don't look at that dessert because we'll want it even more . . . or 'I need to call in sick

and take an R&R day' . . . or that that cute gal [or handsome guy]



[Remember] *Temptation will please you to abuse you, seduce you to undo you, distract you to destroy you.*

- Marshall Segal



gave you a second look and you're thinking that could become something that could go further ??? So, consider then the following:

Temptation is a nasty challenge because it too often hides within the innocent, aka 'that would be nice, I should have it.'



Each of us have to be vigilant in the fight against temptation. Know that it often shows up in the times of our troubles or frustrations - where our mind and our eyes begin to look for something to put a smile on our face. So be careful.

How best is the challenge that we need to take on. We can do it, and in doing so - remember Jesus' words in **John 16:33** . . .

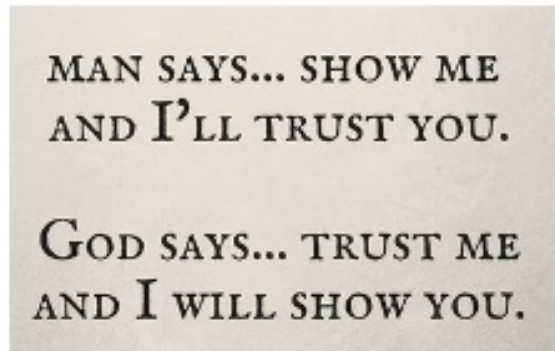
"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

U is for Unbelief

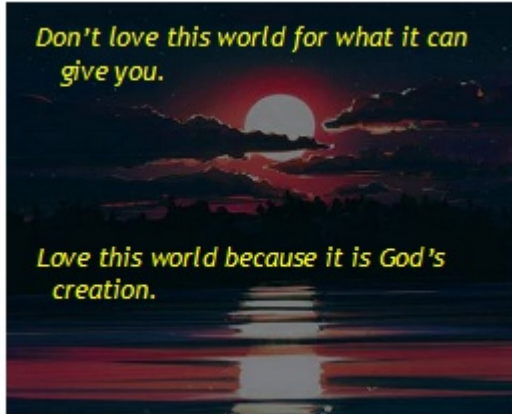
Now we will talk about what others may have - that being unbelief.

I am making the assumption that if

you are reading all of this so far, you have at least a foundation of faith, but there may be areas of our Christian faith that you may wonder . . . 'did this really happen?'



For example, some point to the story of Noah and the flood, and they just shake their head in doubt. That points to the challenge of belief, do we accept it all or do we cherry-pick what we believe and what we don't or at least think is some stretch of reality?



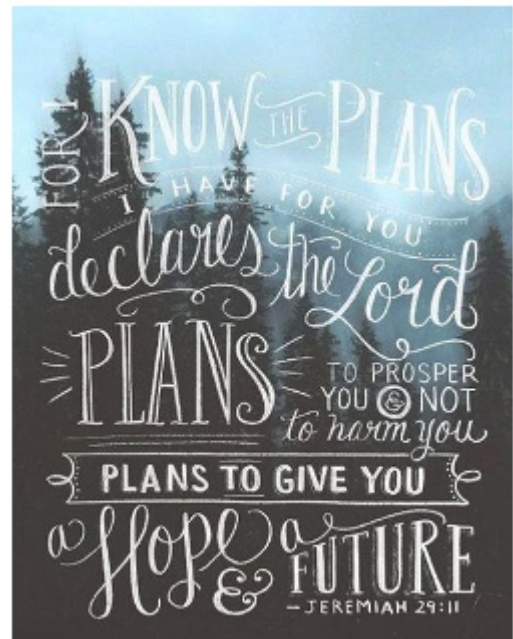
All I can say is this . . .

I believe God has created all things and the complexity and or the duration does not make me wonder or doubt. I have faith that God's will for me, my loved ones and for all believers will unfold as He deems best. For when we put our entire life in God's hands, we relax.

Now with that belief, our faith, our ability to relax . . . some may wonder . . . 'How can you do that?' I would answer, 'It is because I trust God in all things; the good, the bad and everything in between.'

As for you and that possible 'you may not be in that mindset quite yet' . . . it brings you to the decision that you have to make. Are you going to embrace God, trust Him, grow in your faith and work to understand and to pursue the purpose He has for you? Or are you to have your doubts and therefore drift from faith?

We all have to decide.



I know when I made the decision, I can see the peace I am thankful for and I see His blessings on me and my family (and I would be glad to discuss with you those if you are ever interested). And last of all, please remember that embracing the Christian faith or any faith is up to everyone to decide or to reject. Just know that if you ever have questions on faith, know I will answer those to help if I can.

Thanks.

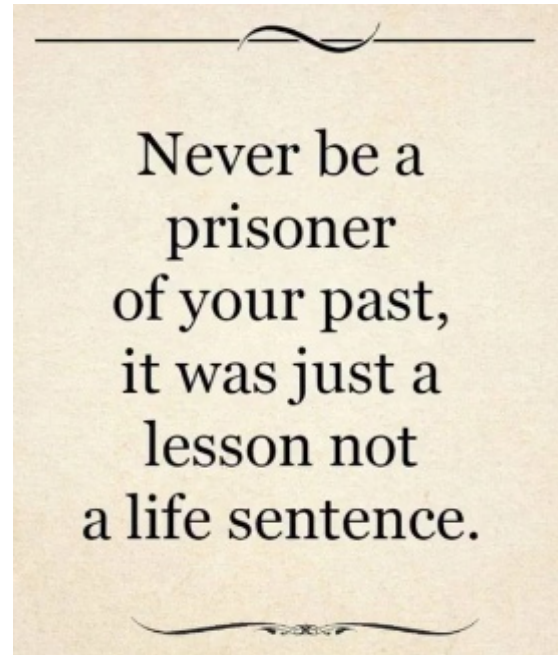
V is for Vindictive

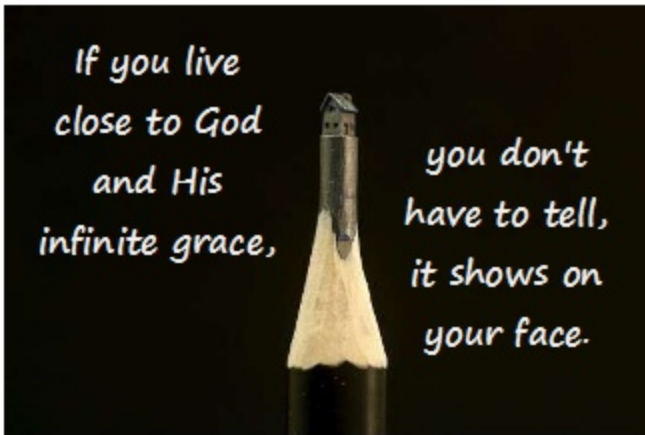
Well this topic of vindictive, allows us to build upon the words shared earlier in regards to revenge. They both are just the two sides of the same poisoned coin. Maybe this is a critical topic that God wants me to share further on. I hope this helps.

So what is vindictive ? This is when we enable one wrong to become two. It is when we hang onto a wrong, we let it fester within us and we look for and sometimes even plan those actions to hurt the ones that hurt us. But that is where and when we need to see those thoughts brewing within us and to shut them down. How ? Consider the young boy who saw his uncle Esau who forgave his father Jacob for the wrongs that he, Jacob had done (to see more on this, go and read **Genesis 33**).

This boy - Joseph - would grow up to be a man, but knew his brothers had wronged him. He had seen the kindness, the forgiveness of his uncle and he did the same with his brothers those many years later when they too were afraid for their lives and needed his forgiveness.

I share this because when we bring this all back to our lives of today, we all have been or will be wronged or hurt by others at various times in our life. It is in doing the right thing - and not the wrong - that is so challenging to do. For when we do (as Christians), it shows that we trust and love God . . . and we want to work to please God as best we can by our thoughts, our words and our deeds (you can read more on this in **Genesis 45** if you are interested).





So, with those words, where are you on this? Is there a hurt or an anger brewing in you? Are you planning to get even or are you wanting to be at peace?
[please . . .]

Don't be like those who 'put on a good face' but stew inside.
Anger is a poison.

And remember, we all get to make the decisions to say or do something as well as to let it go. Hard, hurtful or tragic events are difficult to deal with and even more difficult to put behind us. But when we let go and let God help us, we see our faith at work and His blessings unfold.

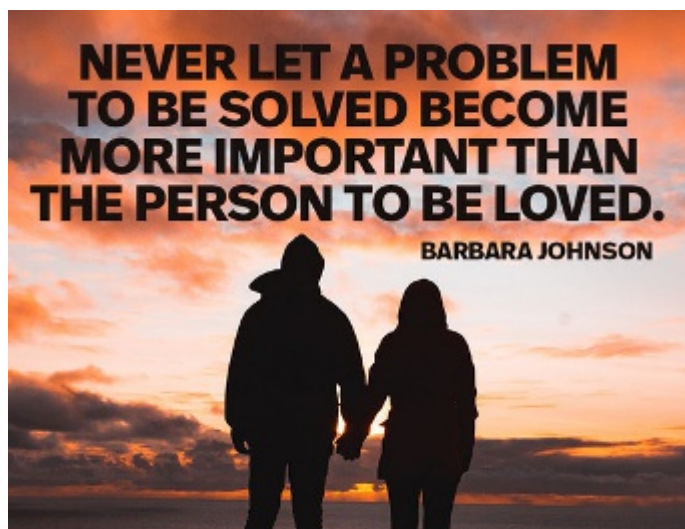
The decision is ours and this one helps me, **1 Peter 2:1** . . .

"Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind."

W is for Worry

As we near the end of our list of troubles, this one - worry, has caused more sleepless nights than any of us can count.

We also know that saying 'Don't worry' may seem like the right thing to say but often does not seem to help.



So what then should we do ? Well, for sure . . . prayer always helps but let me first set that to the side and share these other points first (because we need to understand the broader picture). When we find ourselves worrying about loved ones, friends or various challenges, we need to determine - is there something I can do ? If there is, are we sure it will help ? If not, then prayer, prayer and prayer is your path.



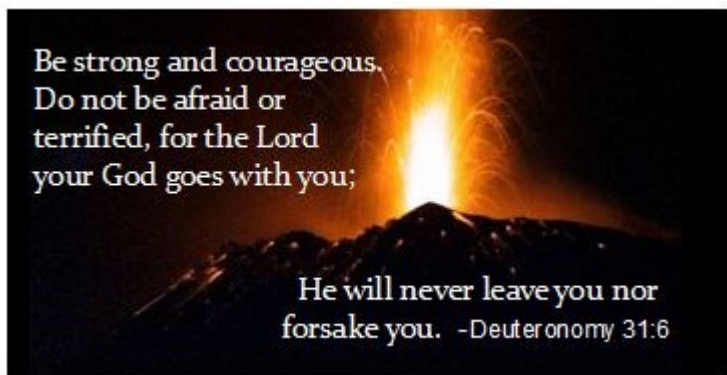
Why ? Because it is good when we think through the worries that arise and if we can address them, that is great. God created us and gave us abilities to solve problems, to do good as best we can.

But, sometimes we can't solve every worry that comes into our lives.

We need to accept the fact that we or those we care about can get caught up in very tough situations. We want things to be better but it may seem that no matter what we try or want, it does not get better.

That is when you have to make a decision. Do you want to worry and worry - most likely upsetting yourself or having sleepless nights ? Or do you want to give the worry to God, to trust Him to see that what needs to be done, is resolved or whatever happens as it does ?

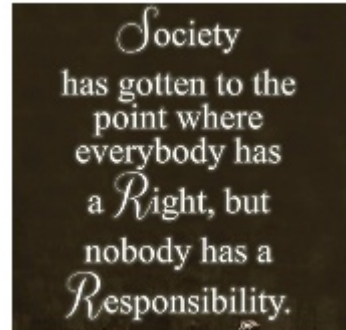
Is it easy to hand it over to God ? No but that also does mean that we shouldn't. When we are pursuing our faith, we do what we can, when we can but we also know when we have gone as



far as we can, we have to go in prayer and give it to God.

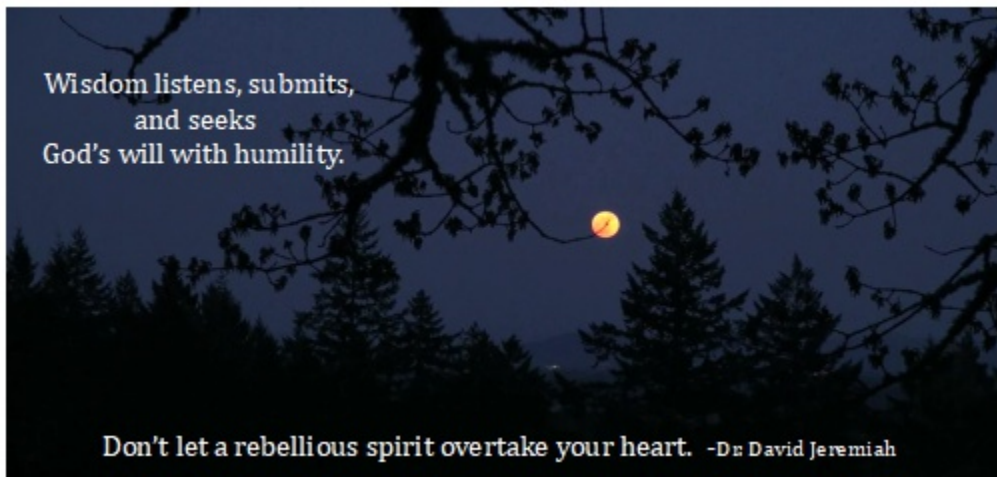
X, Y & Z is for . . . (Xercise, Yuk & Zoink)

It is time to now wrap up this abc review of just some of the troubles that can come our way. Yes there are so many other things that we could have covered but that could be a never ending action.



In wrapping this Part Two up, I wrote this with the understanding that none of us are perfect - that we all have trials and worries of various sizes. That reality puts us in with everyone else but . . . as I have shared in all of the above brief topics covered, we as Christians have additional factors that come into play as we work our way through these. I'll summarize these for your parting pondering.

First - everyone has to decide if they are going to embrace the Christian faith or not. I would encourage all to do so but I also know that some may think it is not for them. Just make the decision.



Second - if you decide not to pursue the Christian faith, know that my prayers and best wishes are for you.

And, if you would like to circle back to this some day, please know that we would be excited for you and that journey ahead for you. None of us ever liked to be forced into anything but know that you are invited.

Third - if you decide to pursue the Christian faith - or - you want to move further and deeper in faith, then know that the words shared in Part One (A Christian's Code), and in this Part Two (A Christian's Challenge) and Part Three (A Christian's Conduct) are all intended to give you some insights, some actions to consider and a friendship to help you on your next steps.

By this I mean you can reach out to me via our Men's group website. There is a contact form available. Fill it out and I will respond as soon as I can. The website is . . .

Decide2Be.weebly.com

My prayers are for all who are wanting to grow in faith,

learning as best you can and if possible, wanting to help others along the way. And yes, I know our journey is unique to each of us but there are so many that want to help, who will cheer you on.

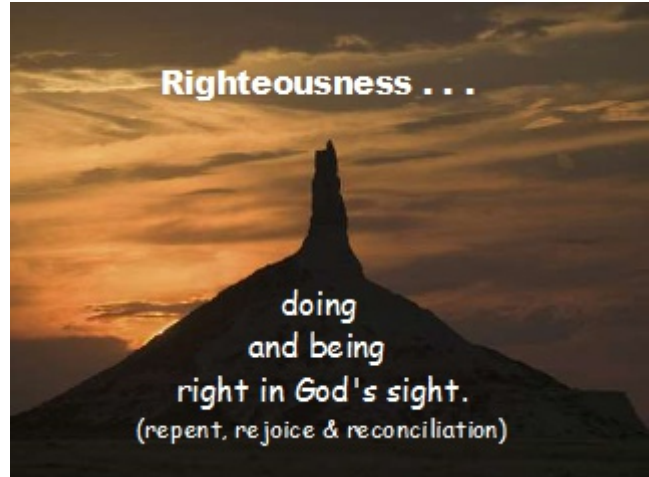


"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." -Proverbs 3:5-6

So then ?

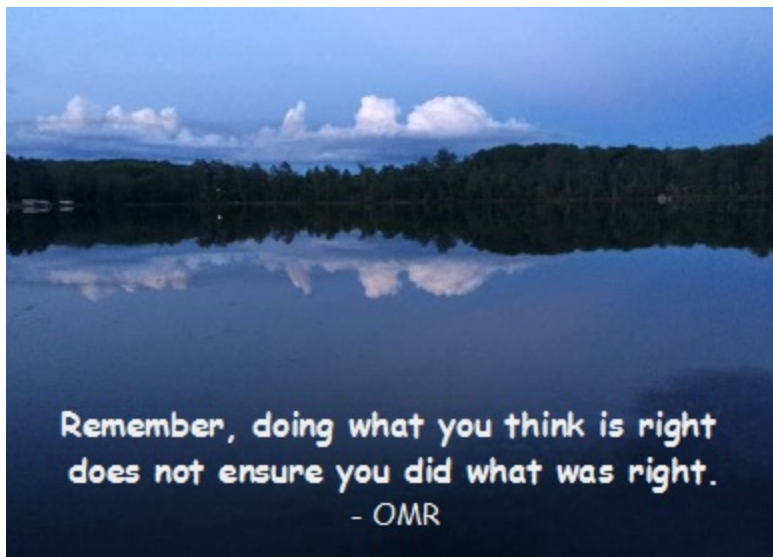
Know this - having a good attitude, and wanting to grow in faith is a great foundation to build from but remember, just because you want to grow in faith, doesn't mean you get a 'no pain or sadness card'.

What it does mean is that you will never be alone, you will never have to doubt your place in heaven, but there could be challenges along the way. For me and other growing Christians, we understand that this is a broken and sinful world. We will try to do the best we can but we will stumble from



time to time and that is okay. Our God cares for us and wants everyone to pursue His blessings. His Son, our Savior Jesus Christ was born, lived, taught, died and then rose from the grave to reconcile us with God, our heavenly father. His Holy Spirit guides us as we live our life here on earth. So the question is, wouldn't you want all of this ?

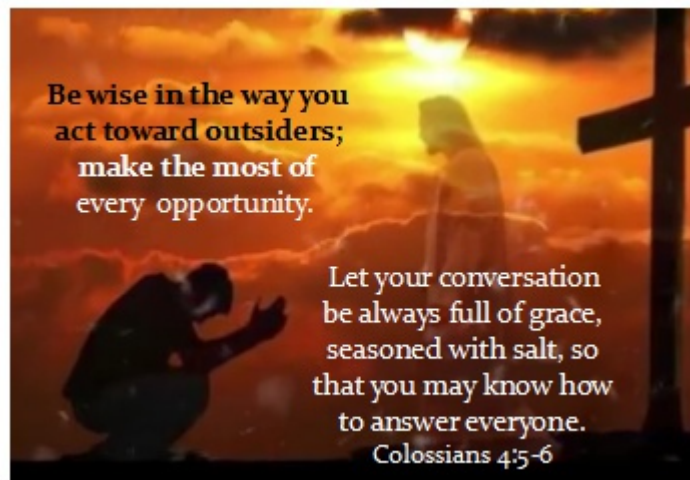
And yes, I know that despite all that I've shared so far . . . there are some still thinking . . . 'But I'm a good person, I don't know if I really need this religion stuff. I believe all good people go to heaven. Your God is not a loving God if we all don't go to heaven - right ?'



The answer to that is this. The Christian faith is based on the life and death of Jesus. We must believe that He is our Savior, and that our belief in Him is what gives us the path to an eternal life. And if you make that faith decision, we also know the following.

God, our heavenly Father is **Omnipotence** (all-powerful), **Omniscience** (all-knowing), and **Omnipresence** (all-present). That means there is no fooling God. He knows our thoughts, our actions and our sins. He knows when we are sincere and when we are not. I do not share this to scare you but to remind you - we have an awesome God. And as I've said before, our life is His gift to us and our actions are our gift to Him.

Also, like these words to the right from **Colossians 4:5-6** reminds us . . . all of our thoughts, words and actions are important. One of the things that turns others away from Christianity are the hypocrite actions that happen.



Some Christian's are trying to pursue their faith but they fail when they swear and abuse others throughout the week, and then go to church on Sunday; they confess their sins and repeat the bad actions again and again and again. If we do not become born again, changed because of our faith and for our pursuit of it . . . we are not really Christians. We are just trying to play the part, trying to fool others but we do not fool God. It is sad that we have some doing this, and all Christians need to fight against this type of a hypocrite.

And now to close out this Part Two - I've shared various topics to ponder, some great quotes and a many great Bible verses. Yes, all of this is just a start. Reading and learning from the Bible is critical to growing in faith. Also know that various other Christian books and resources will give you insights as well. For example, Tim LaHaye's book, **Revelation Unveiled** shares insights we should be aware of like the following insights . . .

He (Tim) looks at the first and last books of the Bible. He tells us that the Book of *Genesis* shows humanity's beginning in a beautiful paradise and the Book of *Revelation* shows the wonderful paradise to come. He then shares the following as some great insights as to the challenges that we struggle with and the resolutions that will come:

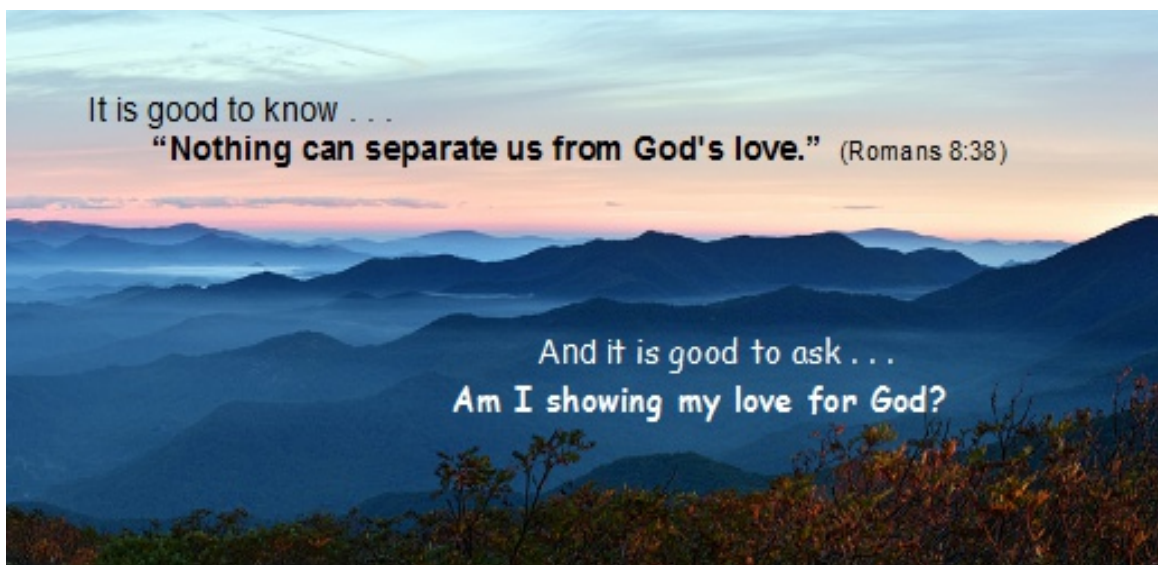
Genesis introduces the devil for the first time as the tempter of the human race (*Gen. 3:1-18*). *Revelation* shows the final doom of Satan (*Rev. 20:10*). *Genesis* shows the beginnings of the curse (*Gen. 3:15-18*). *Revelation* shows the curse lifted (*Rev. 22:3*). *Genesis* shows how human beings lost a chance to eat of the tree of life (*Gen. 3:22-24*).

Revelation shows humankind will yet eat of that tree (*Rev. 22:2*).

Genesis tells of humanity's first rebellion against God (*Gen. 3-4*). *Revelation* promises an end to humanity's rebellion against God. *Genesis* reveals the tragic sorrow that resulted from sin (*Gen. 3-4*). *Revelation* promises "[that God] will wipe every tear from their eyes" (*Rev. 21:4*).

Genesis records the first death (*Gen 4:8*) and *Revelation* promises that there will be "no more death" (*Rev. 21:4*).

So as you can see - there is so much to our Christian faith. And as I sit and ponder this further, as to where does this lead me next - in sharing with all of you; I came up with these closing words.



Now then - what is next?

First, I believe I alluded earlier that after I wrote **A Christian's Code**, the ideas for this book two, quickly began to fall in place. At first I wondered, can I find some type of a negative or a trouble that we can all identify with, that lines up for each letter of the alphabet ?

Now I know all of the ones I have now shared are not the perfect examples that everyone would agree to but they are a start. My wish is that everyone would take a few minutes, to jot down the troubles (negatives or worries) that they are nervous of - and to reflect on them, e.g. have I dealt with these well or am I'm avoiding them, and should I take action to get my life heading into a better direction ?

Second, now after looking at the various troubles, I thought, what would be the alphabet list of the good things that I like or want to pursue ? I was surprised that jotting down this list was much harder.

This is my first pass . . . A = ? B = ? C = Courage, D = Dedication, E = ? F = Forgiveness, G = God, H = Holy Spirit, I = Integrity, J = Jesus, K = Kindness, L = Love, M = ? N = ? O = Optimism, P = Purpose, Q = ? R = Respect, S = Service, T = ? U = ? V = Valor, W = ? and X,Y,Z = ??? Not easy - right ?

And third, since I am open ended on the above list, I thought I will go down this type of an open ended path for Part Three . . .

A Christian's Conduct.

That being, how do we look at the every day things that unfold and try to work in some sort of a daily faith pursuit ?



So yes I began to line up a bunch of various faith considerations, reminders and actions that I thought - yep, these should be pondered and then decisions made on how best to pursue them. Why? Because we as Christians have many of the same types of challenges and or opportunities that non-Christians face.

How we deal with them all depends on our faith journey being pursued (is it growing, decaying or is it dead?).

So, if you are interested in looking into that aspect of our conduct, please join us on Part Three. Thank you all and just remember this action by God two thousand years ago. This event, the birth of our Savior, put everything into motion the start of our Christian faith. Because of those years then (Jesus being born, living, teaching and then dying for us), we have the gift of eternity available to us all.



There you go - parts one & two are now completed and we have the last one to go. And yes, thank you for considering the following.

Part Three

A C
H
R
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S
C O N D U C T



**Taking a look at what we should do
in pursuit of a longer view of time.**

FYI

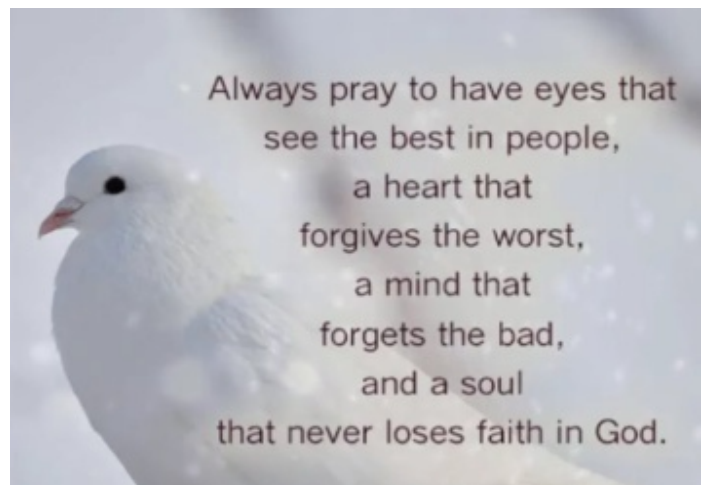
Well, here we are with the final third of this book and with these remaining pages, I wanted to try something different [yet again] and in the spirit of taking **a longer view of time**, I imagine a future summer.

By that I mean the following. My wife and I have been blessed to see the young personalities that our grand-kids have and we are excited for their years ahead to unfold. And since I have no idea if I will be alive for many of those years ahead, I find it fun to imagine many summer fun experiences with them. So then for this part three, I imagine the summer after our second youngest grandchild (Jude) has graduated from high school and he joins us for the month of July. It is a mix of earn some fun money and have some 'R & R' time up with Grams & Gramps before Jude wraps up his last month back home before the start of college.

Therefore, you will get the chance to see us have a bit of fun and some talking and some thinking with one of our grand-kids. And yes I know what I use in the following, will be different. I just ask that you use the different

approach as a way of sitting back, thinking and then deciding upon any notions that you would like to embrace or to pursue in some fashion.

And yes, thank you for reading and considering the following.



Note 3 (you probably knew I'd have this):

With 2/3s of this book now completed – this last 3rd was the biggest challenge because I wanted to see if I could actually write something that was a good 15 years or so into the future.

[yep, I wanted to try something really different]

For this, I selected grandson Jude because at the time, I began to write the outline for the following, he was our youngest grandchild. But as I worked on it, little Atom came along and I wondered if I should change it to be with him as the 'out into the future' one to interact with or to leave it with Jude?

I decided to leave it focused on Jude because I already had a lot written and because I was already seeing how his personality was unfolding – even as a young boy – it made it easier for me think through interaction scenarios for what he as an 18 year could be like (at least in my goofy imagination).

As I continued writing about that June & July down the road, it did have me thinking about each of our Grandkids as they will grow through their years ahead. So, to Addy, Luke, Noah, Geoffrey, Atlas, Jude and Atom – I thank each of you for who you are. It is so much fun for Grams and I to get our opportunities to interact with you all and to see who you are becoming – to unfold.

And that is the challenge of having a 'longer view of time.' We can have good intentions that – yep, the years ahead will be fun. But I would challenge everyone to move beyond that and to really take some time now and then to think about your next 5, 10, or whatever years; what about your family members – what they are going through, how they will be, etc. etc.

Why? I feel that when we take a good look at the possible future we want, we then realize that we also have to look at the now that we are living. Because if the now is not beneficial to making the what we want down the road to happen – we better start making some tough decisions as to what our now and near term needs to become.

So then – all those thoughts were churning away within me. I wondered, how could I best write about a time many years down the road, and to mix in thoughts of then – but also thoughts of a narrator kind of walking along the side as well?

And since I had no idea if I could pull off this type of a mix, I just started writing. And that became the pages that follow.

Except for this picture. It's from my History file. A good pic.



Week one considerations

Okay - we need to start with a level set. Last year, Atlas (Jude's older cousin - by 5 months) was up for his final Summer break at the Cabin and we had a blast (just like his 4 older cousins had in their last Summer breaks over the years before). Now me (Gramps), being one for trying different things - wanted to do something very different this time around as a 'it is good to keep the grand-kids guessing' type of action. Yes, Jude like all his other cousins is familiar with being up at the Cabin (we've had years of get-togethers as often as we can).

Jude has now arrived and he is ready for some fun and for the job we lined up for him (part-time) at our near by Outing International Golf Course (yep, like all our other grand-kids, earning a little extra spending money is always a good thing). And Jude is now 'you'.

"Hey Gramps, got a few minutes?" you asked. I responded "*Sure, what's up ?*" You have that look on your face as to how do I ask Gramps this carefully and hopefully I don't get a one hour or so response ? So you then ask . . . "I was wondering what you think we grand-kids should try to do as we go out on our own and eventually have families of our own. What would you say?"

Now this was a smart move by Jude. He knew from talking with his older cousins - that Gramps always likes to find a way to share what he calls 'thinking stuff'. So, the family friendly interaction challenge was on and you played your first card well.

I with my well intentions, responded . . . "*Good question, how about this? I would say; first-be good, second-learn what you can, third-persevere in the hard times, fourth-cry when you need to and laugh when you can, fifth-pursue a life of love, sixth-enjoy life as it unfolds and seventh-grow in faith.*"



You with the look of . . .
'Wow, that wasn't too bad'
and you say . . . "But how
best to do those?" And I
followed *"You are only here
for seven weeks and then
you have to head back home.
What if we do this each
Sunday night? I share some
food-for-thought words that*

you just listen to, that you can jot down any aspects that you think are worth noting and then you take on your week ahead and take note of any things that you think are of value - whether it be to ponder more or to embrace. Then at the end of your seven weeks up here, you get to ask me any questions that you may have. Would that be okay?" You thought and responded . . . "Okay, that is a bit different but lets give it a try."

I get up, walk over to our door that looks over the back deck and out over the lake . . . and I said . . . *"Good, thanks and remember this. Everything that I will share over the weeks to come, will have a tie back to our Christian faith. Not that I am trying to ram it down your throat but because I thank you in advance for letting me share some insights that I came to appreciate, that I at least hope you will now consider as to what fits or does not fit into your life going forward. And the reason I will share what I will share is because of the big challenges that will unfold in your life yet ahead. There will be good times, and sad times, which means times that you wish would never end and also times when you can't wait for them to be over. Now my words that I'll share on faith are just to give you a perspective on things that you may not have thought about before or they may touch on some aspects that you thought of or done in the past, but they give you a little different view on. All and all, thinking stuff for you."*

Now, what I have just shared is a fictitious interaction that could unfold some years down the road. And since I am not sure if I'll be able to share these words to come then, I am sharing them now with the hope those that hear or read them, can have some takeaways that they may appreciate.

That then is the challenge. *How does one generation best pass down wisdom – whether they be insights or warnings?* There is a good chance that some day down the road, you will be a parent some day and then, if you are doubly blessed, you'll get to be a grandparent after that. Believe me, you will have wisdom to pass on as well and history shows us that stories and or writings are the best ways to do so. This is a mix of those.

I then looked at you and in wanting to close out on what I call this 'week one consideration' I asked . . . *"Just take a few minutes each day to jot down the things that you want to ponder or take on and then when we talk, if anything you've jotted down during the week, that you want to talk about – just let Grams and or me know."*

So as that sunk in, we wrapped up with some light conversation. We then said our 'good-nights' and you walked over and up into the loft bedroom. There you saw the notepad and pen that Grams & I had left there for you - so you took a minute and wrote . . .

Sunday, June 20th: Be good, learn, persevere, cry/laugh, love, faith and enjoy life. This should be interesting.

And after getting ready and into bed, you laid there thinking . . . 'What would this part-time job at the golf course be like over the month to come and whether this last break up at the Cabin was going to be one you were glad that you did or sorry that you did?'

[Yes, that week does end up going pretty well - except for that jerk at the golf course - but that is a story for another day. You use the notepad we gave you as the week unfolded and you jotted down your thoughts that tied back to your initial words on Sunday the 20th]

Week Two Considerations . . .

We'll now build upon last week's start and look at the tie in of this part three to the first and second parts of this overall book, as well as in talking to three examples that look at God and at us. As to how we can do things that are good, as well as doing the not good.

The last full week in June went by quickly, the weather was not too bad and work at the golf course was interesting to say at the least. Getting a chance to lay out in the sun and to do some water-skiing this weekend was great but now it was Sunday night, June 27th and it was time to relax and have our next conversation. I walked up the stairs to the loft and we sat in the recliners. It started out like this.

I asked *"Wow, that week went by fast. So what do you think . . . so far so good, any questions?"*

You responded that everything was going good, that you were enjoying the weather, the fun up here but you wanted to first understand . . . why am I going to share some words each week on faith? I thought that was a good question and I then responded with these words . . .

"Well, as you know over all the years since you were born, I have been writing and sharing words on faith, on encouragement, and yes those have included comics or whatever . . . just ask your parents or you can ask Grams. As to the why? I think it is because of how my life has unfolded and what I believe God has wanted me to do. I guess it is me trying to pursue the purpose that I believe God has placed within me. Let me give you some examples.



*First, as my years have unfolded, I have collected quotes, pictures, and Bible verses - all with the belief that I would find a way to use them down the road. Some come from the website **PassItOn.Com**, like this one that I have here as I share these words. I remember when first I saw it, that picture reminded me of Luke & Noah years back, sitting in **Big Red** and us getting ready to go out for a boat ride.*

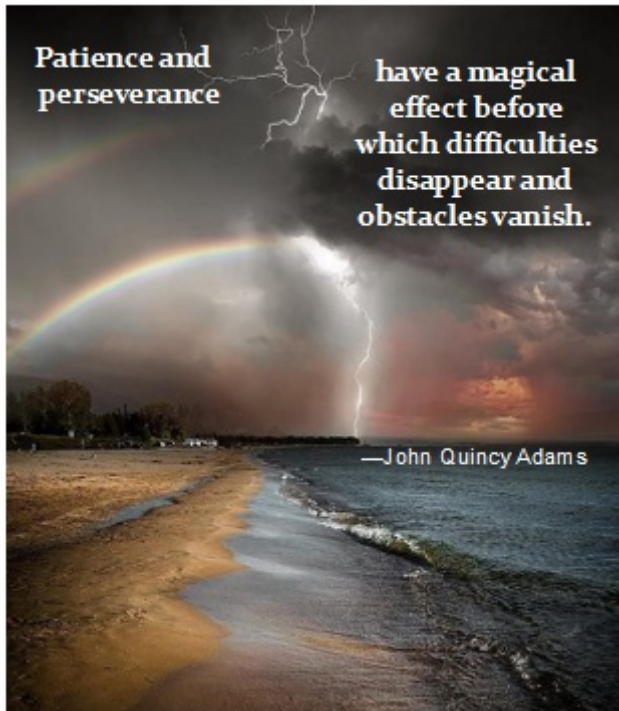
Second, it was all of this stuff that I had been saving, that finally started to pour out into the writings I wrote, all starting in 2017. They unfolded in my various mini-books that I wrote as all you kids were growing up - remember the different Bud & Slug Adventures? They also were used in my blogs that I wrote over the years which all for me was just this . . . thinking, thinking, thinking that I like to do and if anything that I share helps others to think - that is great.

Third, as our years continued to roll on by - from what I believe is my faith perspective - I wrote the words on what I believe Christians should consider. A kind of . . . their DNA type code within, their challenges that they'll have to deal with and their conduct which unfolds over time. And for me, I believe we all have challenges and it is like our character being developed, they reveal who we are and what we will become. A person of faith or not, of good or not, etc. etc."

I paused because I could see on your face, this look as a grand-kid that was wondering 'Oh my gosh, how deep is he going to go?' So I tried to simplify what are the things we'll talk about and touch on - and that is in taking the approach, what would be some examples of day to day type considerations; for thinking on nuances of faith, for trying to be aware of thoughts, words and actions that would be a positive reflection on any of us - whether we're a Christian or not.

It was at this time that I knew I had already dumped out a lot of stuff for you to put into some type of a 'I'm going to have to sort through this a bit' so as to hopefully not go too far overboard, I then wrapped up with the following.

"Okay, let's now wrap up for the night and I'd like you to do me a favor on the following. First, use these last few days of June to ponder what I have already shared. Some may make sense, others may be a wait and see and that is okay. But for July, I have some daily thoughts I'd like you to challenge yourself to think a bit on those as each of your day unfolds. And by that, I mean for . . ."



I then took a few minutes and laid out the next 3 days.

Friday the 1st - He is Calling . . .

That morning will be here before you know it and for that day, just think about - **am I listening to God?** And as that day unfolds, see if you are hearing that small voice inside, challenging you, warning you, encouraging you?

And then if you can, if you feel that you hear that small voice within, jot down what you think you heard. You decide what to make note of.



As for me, that small voice I hear within is God's Holy Spirit. For those who don't embrace the Christian faith, they would say that is their conscious within them. I just want you that day to listen and ask yourself - Am I listening and if I am, how am I living?

I was surprised when you said 'time-out' and you went and grabbed your note pad. I was glad that you did because in it you wrote . . .
Fri. 7/1: God's calling; listen, love, laugh, learn.
What am I hearing?

I then continued with . . . For . . .

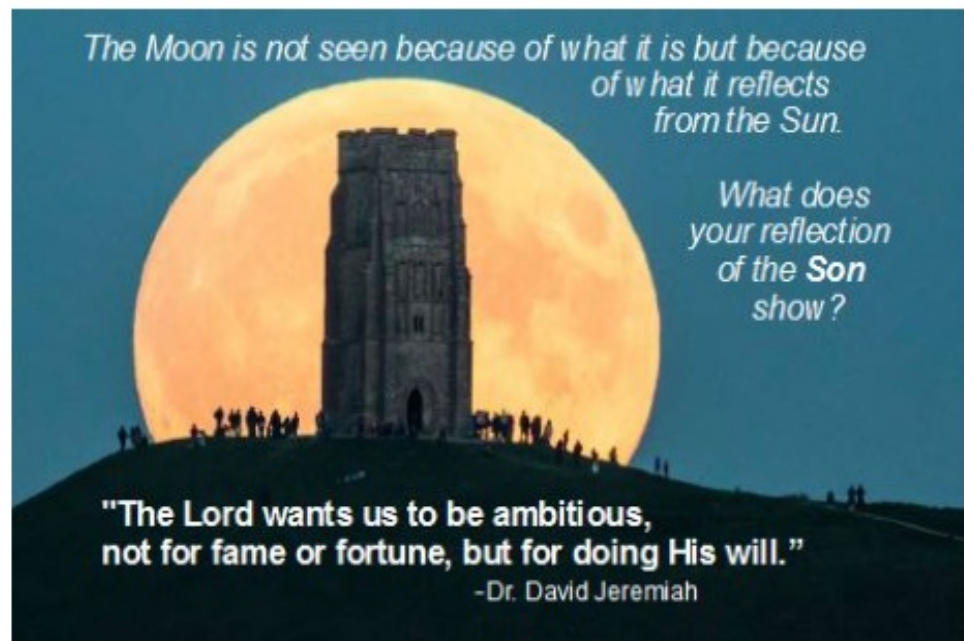
Saturday the 2nd - Reflection is good!

For that day, that Saturday, first think about the following words and image that I saved from years ago .

Our thoughts are the foundation for all that what we say and do.

This year is a great opportunity for us to show others the good things that we share and the good things that we enable.

It all starts with our thoughts - what we do is our action.
We get to choose.



Second, for that day - please take on the challenge to really look at how you act and the words you say. We may have real good intentions but what others see or hear from us, may show we are not doing as well as we would like.

Third, remember, **the world sees and hears us, and we may not be perfect but we can try to be the best that we can be.**

Now I did not share the following because it is what I was thinking and I didn't want to push a Christian only mindset.

This all reminded me of the words from 1 John 2:16 . . .

'All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not from the Father but is of the world.'

I then smiled when you held up your index finger for me to pause and I saw you write down . . .

Sat. 7/2: My words, my actions reflect who I am, good/bad?

And when you had stopped writing, I continued . . . And for . . .

Sunday the 3rd - Who was Judas?

I first told you that the few words for this challenge were from discussions my men's group had that I thought was good to ponder. It is from the series "**Hanging out with Jesus**" by Patrick Morley's **Man in the Mirror** ministry. So for that that Sunday, we first did a level set on Judas - who betrayed Jesus and I challenged you to just think if any of your actions on that day - are ones that someone could view as a betrayal on them or of yourself. And I explained that what Judas had done was horrible but it points to a lesson for us all. That we all in one way or another by our actions either betray friends and family or even God. But . . . **Once we have belief in Christ,**

we can never fall so far that God will not restore us.

We talked a bit on this and it was good. Yes it is horrible if we ever do something that betrays others but it is goof to know there is a way back if we do stumble in this way. So I said . . .

Just remember this.

Non-Christians can betray others as well and they can possibly find a way to recover. For Christians, we need to leverage our faith.



How? **Just believe in and to trust Jesus. He died for all our sins and He has reconciled us to God.**

And we remember . . .

"For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."

Romans 3:23

You had some good follow up comments and I closed with . . .

We need to step up, to live each day as best we can. For me, I don't want people to see me go to Church on Sundays but then see me sin throughout the week. I try to ask myself - am I a hypocrite or am I a growing Christian ?

You quickly started writing down in your note pad . . .

Sun. 7/3: Judas watch - am I guilty as well or doing well?

And yes, we ended that with some follow up chit chat and I just told you to not overthink this stuff or to worry over it. Just think on what I have shared, try to pursue those days as you think best and see how everything goes. Basically I just wanted you to think a bit differently then you may normally do and to see where it leads you.

Week Three Considerations . . .

FYI - Church was good this morning; we had a good lunch, thanks to Grams. We enjoyed some lake time and then after a light dinner, we sat down in the Bear Den for our Sunday night talk

You started out with "Gramps, this last week was good. I thought about what you asked me and I was surprised how I thought more, watched more, listened more and really tried to be better in all that I was doing. I did jot down some questions for you as the week unfolded but now I want to hold them till our last talk and to cover them all then. The reason, what unfolds over the next few weeks may end up changing some of my thoughts or questions. That okay?" I replied, *"That's no problem so let me give you your game plan for this week to come. Ready?"* You were, so - and for tomorrow . . .

Monday the 4th - What Talents Do You Have?

For this day, here's another insight from 'Hanging Out With Jesus.'

Consider Jesus' Parable of the Talents (from **Matthew 25:14-30**).

From it, there is a question for each of us to ponder. That is . . .

Do we want to be faithful or successful?

We talked a bit on this and then I wrapped it up with . . .

Sadly, too many get so focused on becoming successful, they miss and often regret the one thing that Jesus wants from us all - **to be faithful?** When I pondered this, I wonder . . . wouldn't we like to hear Him say to us some day; "Well done my good and faithful Servant" (and to see His smile) ?



So, for that Monday - think on the idea and how you interpret when you hear the words . . . **God calls us to be faithful, not successful.**

You then asked if I could explain this a bit more and I said . . .
"It comes down to this. If we as Christians are not using our abilities, the talents God gave us . . . we are not being faithful to God. And BTW . . . as to what type of talents you have, the where and how you best use them - those are up to you to decide. Just remember that every man and woman has various struggles from time to time but we also have various talents. We are not alike to all do the same thing; we are unique so that we all of us can do things as we are gifted.
That is what our talents or abilities are for."

You wrote down a few words and I then continued. For . . .

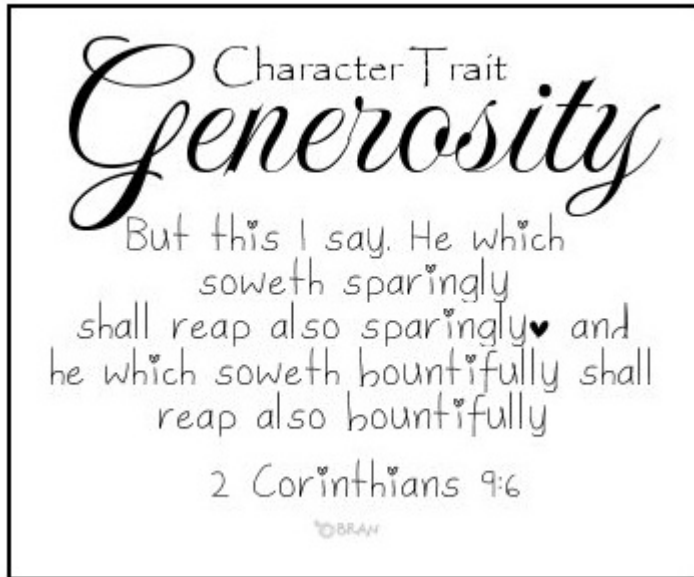
Tuesday the 5th - **What is Generosity?**

Now for this day, I closed on this "**Hanging Out With Jesus**" series with what we learned as to how 'Jesus looks at Generosity'. It is a topic we should all make sure we understand and if you ever want an example, take a look at [Luke 21:1-4](#).

I explained that our Men's group learned people give from their wealth and others from their poverty. So I challenged you for that day - just to think about what generosity means to you and I added to that - also consider Moliere's words . . . "*It is not only for what we do that we are held responsible, but also for what we do not do.*"

I then paused as you jotted down some words and as you did so, in my mind these final thoughts popped up in my head.

*If our actions are good, we are stepping up.
If after reflection we believe there are somethings that
we can do better, we then must decide . . .
and yes, we must then take action.*



I then looked at this image I had saved in my notes - the words from **2 Corinthians 9:6** and I thought, well said but so hard for us all to embrace. When you were done writing, you looked up and I then continued with, for ...

Wednesday the 6th - **You Can't Go Back, Can You ?**

Now for this day, I threw you a curve ball. It ties well to the challenge "on faithful" (that I referenced for Monday, the 4th).

As I thought how best on how to summarize this,
I thought I would go down this path.

First, for that day - consider ...

How do you help others to climb out of their rut ?

**Which then raises - is there someone you know who is in a rut ?
(or who is just seeming to struggle at this time?)**

We talked about this a bit and agreed that is a good question we should remember - because anyone can need some help from time to time.

Second, for you to keep in mind when you or others you see are in a rut or as some would say ...
'spinning their wheels.'



To ask yourself - if you see others who are struggling - who could use some help but don't know what to do - what can you do? You asked what I would do and I said I didn't want to sway your thoughts on this but to consider - as a Christian, if God puts someone in my path who is stuck, I try to find out if I can help them solve their problem.

Third, I then reminded you to just think about this that day and if something arises where you can help another - then good, just don't compromise your values and try to help where you can.

It was then you started writing again and as you did so, the words from **Isaiah 1:17** came to my mind - another memory verse of mine.

***'Learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor,
defend the fatherless, and plead the widow's cause.'***

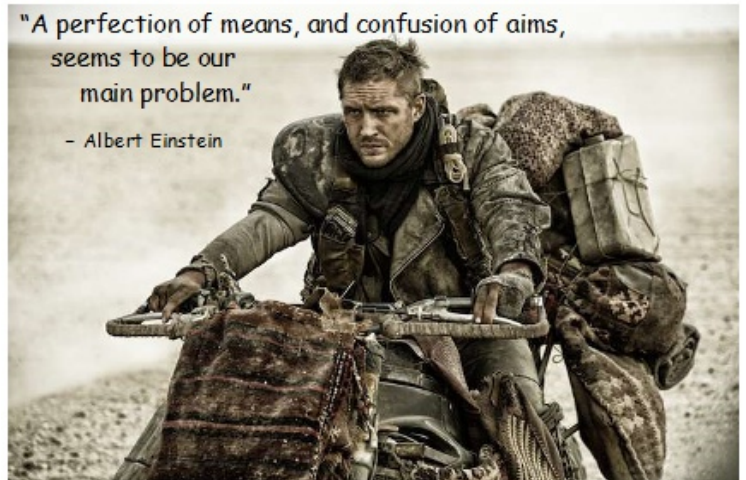
When you were done writing, I then continued with . . . For . . .

Thursday the 7th - Do We Do What We Should?

Now for this day - I want you to think about these words that Dr. Jane Goodall said many years ago . . . ***"You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make."***

We talked a bit on this and how it related well to Wednesday's challenge. You asked me how this tied to being a Christian and I said from the Bible we learn . . . ***we are not saved by our 'works' but we know we are most definitely saved 'for works'.*** I then told you that from my perspective, we need to remember that having good thoughts are just that, good thoughts, a start yes but more is always needed.

So, that day, do a gut check on your attitude and actions. The world does not know what we think but it does see what we do and hears what we say. We also have to remember that sometimes, doing what is needed may not be at the most convenient time but that is okay.



Now I'll admit that as our talk on this was wrapping up, my mind was wandering back to Jesus' **Parable of the Sheep and the Goats** (Matthew 25:31-46). It is one that teaches us that our actions (or the lack of) in life do matter. I believe we both ended up agreeing that seeing needs and trying to help when we can is not as easy as we would think. We also agreed, trying to see and to do more is the challenge we all need to pursue.

I then paused as you were writing down in your note pad . . .

Thurs. 7/7: Do I do what I should?

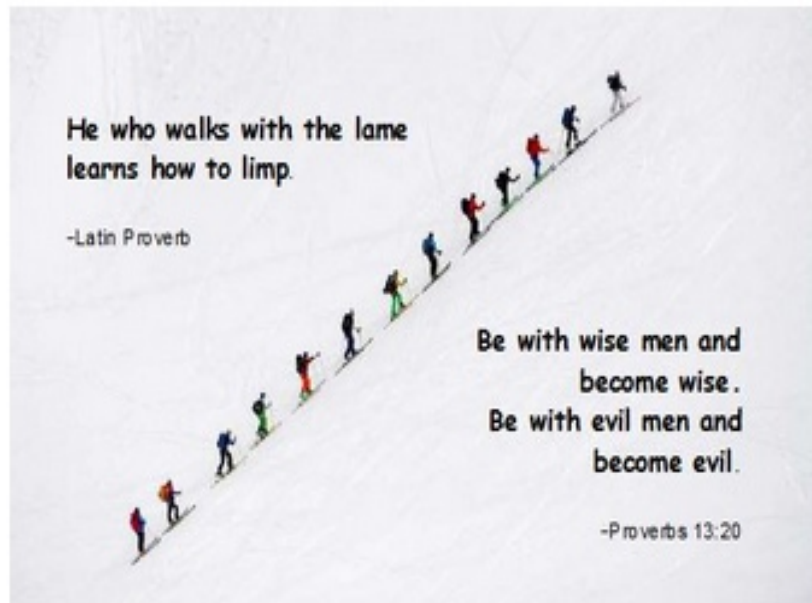
and then you looked up so I continued . . . Then for . . .

Friday the 8th - Our 'Walk' Matters

I told you I had read from the book 'Gods Little Book of Proverbs' and in it, I liked these words that I thought it would be great if we all thought about them and remembered:

"Sometimes we fall into relationships with people without much thought about how their company affects us. But the fact is, our friends often have more influence over our actions than our families. If you desire more wisdom and perspective, make friends with someone who will challenge you to step up."

And as to the why?
I just asked you to not underestimate the lesson or a benefit of others. That being connected with the right people, presents opportunities. And for me, it also reminds me to stay connected with my faith.



It was at that time - you started to write in your note pad so I took a look again at this image that I had. Those two proverbs and these words from **Jeremiah 29:13** rolled through my mind . . .

'You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.' That was good so I then next said . . . For . . .

Saturday the 9th - The Decision is Ours

That Saturday will probably be hectic but remember that . . . every day brings about new opportunities for us to make a decision and the choice is ours." The challenge, do we make the right decisions? Now in my head, this reminded me of what Joshua had said some 3,200 ago: ***'As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.'***

But by now, I wondered if I was pushing the Christian faith nuances a bit more than I should so we just talked a bit on all the types of decisions that we have to make each day. Some pretty simple and yes some have us squirming a bit because we know the ramifications are big and we don't want to make the wrong decision.

You asked me as to what helps me in trying to make the right

We all have choices, making the right ones is our challenge. Consider:

Choose to Love . . . rather than hate.
Choose to Smile . . . rather than frown.
Choose to Build . . . rather than destroy.
Choose to Persevere . . . rather than quit.
Choose to Praise . . . rather than gossip.
Choose to Heal . . . rather than wound.
Choose to Give . . . rather than grasp.
Choose to Act . . . rather than delay.
Choose to Forgive . . . rather than curse.
Choose to Pray . . . rather than despair.
Choose to Trust . . . rather than worry.

And remember:

"One's philosophy is not best expressed in words; it is expressed in the choices one makes."

— Eleanor Roosevelt



decisions all the time. I replied . . .
"For me, reading and trying to learn from the Bible is a great way to learn and to then go after the bigger challenges that will unfold in our lives and yes there are so many other resources as well. It all boils down to

the choices we make. So on this day - think and ask yourself . . .
are my choices good ones and do I need to make better ones?"

It was then after sharing all the above, you said . . . 'Hold it a bit Gramps' and when you finished writing, I continued, and then for . . .

Sunday the 10th - God Is At Work

This is a good follow up to the above so as you wrap up next week, on that day I ask you to remember the big picture - so think on what this means. And to help on this, consider these sets of words that I had shared some time back with my Men's group . . .

Too often events can unfold and our lives seem to be in ruins. Tim Gustafson reminds us . . .

"Troubles of our own making and conflicts we can't avoid may leave us devastated. But we have a Father who understands. Gently, patiently, He clears away the rubble, repurposes it, and builds something better. It takes time but we can always trust Him"



We talked about this and you asked if there was another way to look at this so I shared these words from **Dr. David Jeremiah** and I told you that these words help me as a Christian but that I was not sure how non-Christians would take them . . . *'Life is often harder than any of us expected. It tries to beat us up and tear us down. The devil looks for places to get a foothold in our hearts — especially if we become discouraged. We must keep our hearts with all diligence, and that means putting Jesus Christ first, trusting every word He speaks, and leaning on Him with every care. Make knowing Christ your highest priority, the object of your praise, and the pursuit of your life. He will never fail you, and His strength will bear you through the anxious moments in life. His priority is to watch over you.'*

It was at this time that you were jotting down some notes and as you did so, I looked at these words by Xochitl Dixon that I liked: *'Christ saves and empowers us to honor Him with our lives, not because we have special qualifications but because we are each valuable members of His family. We can persevere with confidence when we know our role is to simply love God and others. Christ's role is to save us and give us a purpose that extends beyond our small vision of the world. As we follow Jesus daily, He transforms us while using us to encourage others as we share His love and truth wherever He sends us.'*

That is when you said . . . "Now how am I suppose to remember all of that? I need to get a copy of everything that you

are telling me." I responded . . . "First finish writing your notes, then show me what you have noted and yes, at the end of all of this, I will get you a copy of everything that I have shared. Second, remember what I said before. This is not a test, it is just to share some words, to have you think on the aspects you like and we'll see then where you want this to go when you leave and head back home. Agreed ?" You nodded in the positive, finished writing your brief notes and then handed me your note pad. I liked it."

Week Three

Mon. 7/4: What are my talents? Faithful/Successful/other?
Tues. 7/5: What is generosity and am I generous?
Wed. 7/6: Am I or someone I know in a rut, if yes, do what?
Thurs. 7/7: Do I do what I should or what I want?
Fri. 7/8: My walk matters - who am I associating with?
Sat. 7/9: My decisions - are they good ones?
(get the 'choose to' last from Gramps, that is pretty good).
Sun. 7/10: God is at work - do I see it - any thoughts?

Yep, that was a lot covered and you teased me pretty good that what I had shared is a lot to absorb if you're just listening. You agreed, getting a copy of my notes I was referencing was stuff you would consider further as best and when you could.

Week Four Considerations . . .

Let me just say that yes there were fun interaction for Sunday night, July the 10th. There were some good questions and comments. I'll circle back to those at our closing time when we wrap this all up.

So then, time to jump back on the topics and here is how it went.

First, you threw me a curve ball. You said for this week ahead . . . for us to try a different approach. You just wanted the questions.

So I shared the next 7 questions and you wrote down ...

Week Four

Mon. 7/11: What do I believe?

Tues. 7/12: Why do I pray?

Wed. 7/13: What does God's discipline prove?

Thurs. 7/14: Is God's Word truth?

Fri. 7/15: What do I think heaven is?

Sat. 7/16: Someday what?

Sun. 7/17: What 20 words would I describe myself with?

Yep, that was a shorter talk for that Sunday night but you wanted to see where your mind would take you as the days ahead unfolded. We then thought it would be good to watch an old movie and we picked out **Avengers: End Game** (and yes it prompted some good discussion).

The week then unfolded - we had great weather, you did great at work and Grams even had a great dinner and birthday cake for us to enjoy Wednesday night. When we got to Sunday night the 17th, you said you had fun trying to figure out what points I wanted you to be aware of as you pursued each question. You said it didn't go as well as you thought it might because you kept wondering if you were off track on what went with those questions.

So that Sunday night, we agreed to the following. You would share what you jotted down and any questions and I would then tie back the original words I had planned to share. It went like this.

Gramps, for **Monday the 11th**, I wrote down: What do I believe? I believe I'm a good person, I know I am blessed but I think I am probably missing a lot of things that I should know.

What did you have to go with this question?

I responded that I liked what you had noted and the words I had to

go on this were for ... **the 11th - What Do You Believe ?**

I was going to ask you for that day - as best you could - to think about the aspect that Jesus accepted our punishment and paid the price for our sins and through our belief in Him, offered us the new life that He paid the price for us. So, I just wondered if you had any thoughts on Jesus being our Savior? I then showed you this image I had and liked. You then asked... But why is this critical?



I told you that believing Jesus is our Savior and through Him, His death and resurrection, we are reconciled with God, our heavenly father; it is a great start that we as Christians can build from as our years ahead unfold.

You then replied with... I understand that but how do we deal with the ups and downs that unfold in our lives? I then told you that yes we all have those and one thing that I learned a good few years back are these **11 'Cs' of our Christian faith**. I told you that I think these are a good framework to live by.

Stay Calm in Your Heart, **stay Compassionate** Toward Others, **stay Constructive** in Your Relationships, **stay Challenged** to Grow, **stay Connected** to the Church, **stay Centered** in Christ, **stay Confident** in the Word, **stay Consistent** in Your Walk, **stay Committed** to the Faith, and **stay Convinced** of His Coming.

For when we do, we **stay Christ-like** in what we think, say and do.

After saying that, I saw you writing in your note book and when you stopped, you wanted to continue with the Tuesday question. You said:

Okay Gramps, good stuff. For **Tuesday the 12th** I wrote down: 'Why do we pray?' And that day in thinking on that, I wrote I try to say a prayer each morning to connect with God and to ask him to protect my family, you & Grams and to help me to learn and do what I should. So, should I do more?

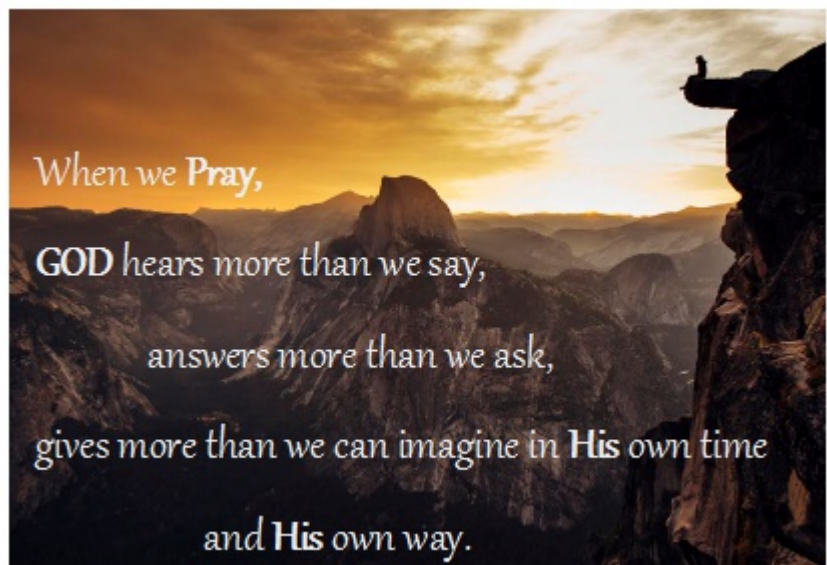
I then told you for the 12th **Why Do We Pray ?**

That this was a double challenge for you. First, that Jesus taught us that prayer is one of the most important Christian activities we can pursue. Because through prayer and **Bible** readings as often as we can, we grow in our walk with our Savior and lay the foundation for success in the struggle against Satan. **That through His Word and our prayer actions, we can understand His will and plan for our lives.**

I then shared and showed you the following that I had saved . . .

'Stand against the wiles of the devil. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.'

[these are from Hebrews 4:16]



I told you that I believed these are the reasons why we pray. That we can have good and bad things unfold in our lives and we may pray for help, for wisdom, for guidance, for healing, or for a variety of

other requests. That our prayers are good, because they help bring us to a closer relationship with God but we need to know - sometimes God's answer is no or later or there maybe no answer for a long time. We need to remember that we want God's will to unfold and our prayers help connect us to that.

And the second point I talked about was that He [God] hears our prayers and when we pray, He will find a unique way for us to know that He is at work in our life. We talked on this a bit more and you asked me if your prayers should be more specific. I said to trust your heart, to **get into the habit of praying each day** and if you want a framework for your prayers - to consider this . . .

Praise God for all He has done for us,

Repent because we know we can ask God for forgiveness,

Ask for what we want of God, it is always okay to ask, and to

Yield to God, to trust Him and to embrace His will.

And last of all I told you that we all need to have patience as we pursue our prayers. If we stick with them, we gain a growing trust of God and our worries become less and less. You then jotted down a few things and then said . . .

Alright, got it. For **Wednesday the 13th** I wrote: 'What does God's discipline prove?' And then that night I added . . . This is interesting - I thought about God's discipline as today unfolded but I couldn't come up with anything.

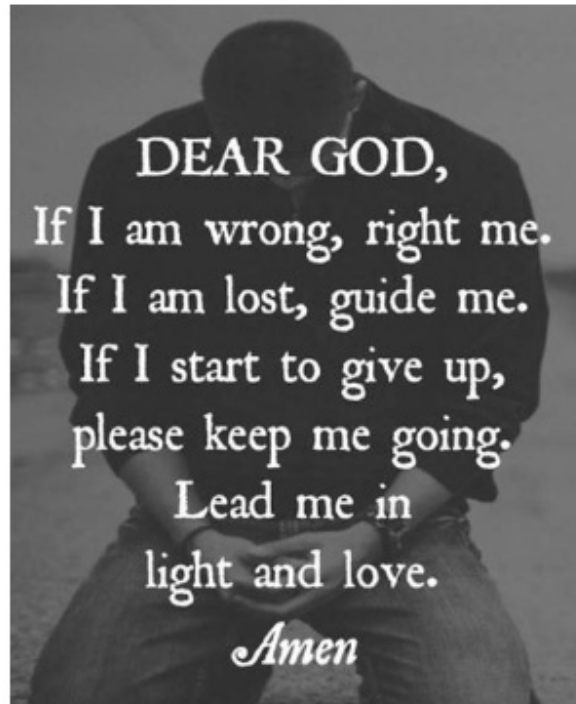
I replied that I wasn't surprised because for that day, I wanted you to think about **God's discipline proves His Love.** My hope was that by the time you started to pursue this challenge, you would have joined me in knowing **that prayer is good** but we also learn that sometimes we pray and things either still go wrong or what we pray

for, does not work out as we wanted. I wanted you to think on the aspects of hard work, tough times, and tragic events are difficult but they do also help to make us wiser. I then showed you this . . .

The Christian life involves hard work, it requires us to give up whatever endangers our relationship with God, to run with endurance, and to struggle against sin with the power of the Holy Spirit. To live effectively we must keep our eyes on Jesus. We will stumble if we look away from Him to stare at ourselves or at the circumstances surrounding us. We should be running for Christ not ourselves, and we must always keep Him in sight. When we face hardship and discouragement, it is easy to lose sight of the big picture. But we're not alone, there is help.

"Thought for the Day"

Suffering is the training ground for Christian maturity. It develops our patience and makes our final victory sweet. We must pursue peace as we become more Christlike.



I explained that as our days unfolds, I believe that God uses the challenges in our lives to compliment the blessings. It all fits into His plans for us to grow in pursuit of our purpose. That means, know that challenges may arise and don't forget **2 Corinthians 4:8-10** . . .

'We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.'

You then jotted down a few words and then looked up and said . . .

Well I'll tell you Gramps, this approach we took this week sure has taken me on a path I did not anticipate. For example, on **Thursday the 14th** I wrote 'Is God's Word truth?' And I then added . . . Yep, I believe so but what does that really mean - especially in today's world?

I replied that was a good question and for **God's Word is Truth**, I wanted to share the aspect not often addressed, that being to think about the relationship you, me, we have with God. For example, **ask yourself, 'Do I have a relationship with God, do I accept Jesus as my Savior and am I now working to grow in my faith?'**

I was hoping as your Thursday unfolded, you would jot down any thoughts that you may come up with that you either would want to start or to stop doing in regards to our Christian faith. For example, for me, I would ask myself some questions like: Am I trying to grow in faith or am I just coasting along? . . . or . . . If someone asked me, is God's word truth - how would I respond? I also thought this one may throw you for a loop a bit so I planned on sharing with you these words I had saved about relationship with God. Words I like . . .

Jesus says it is futile to try to teach holy concepts to people who don't want to listen and will only tear apart what we say.



We should not stop giving God's Word to people, but we should be wise and discerning in our witnessing, so that we will not be wasting our time. Fact is they may believe in Jesus but have never heard of having a relationship with him, due to wrong teaching in lots of churches.

GOD IS LOVE!

Does all of this make sense? You jotted down a few words . . .

and when you were done, you said: Good, thanks Gramps. Now for **Friday the 15th** I wrote . . . 'What do I think heaven is?' and then from that day I added - It was a great day and as I worked at the golf course, I kept looking around. I saw the trees, animals running around, the lakes and all the people were happy. I think heaven will be even better than that but how it will be different - I'm nervous a bit, what if it is a little boring?

I chuckled and said - For **Thinking about Heaven . . .** let me first share some words our Men's Group covered back in 2017 when we did Dr. David Jeremiah's Bible study on Heaven. That last lesson we focused on being "**Tough-Minded about Heaven.**" And I know most people don't focus on that very often.

To start, do you remember ever hearing the old saying . . .

'Out of sight, out of mind' ? You nodded so I continued.

My hope for that Friday for you, was that you would try to stop periodically when you could and you'd think as to what Heaven means to you.

Why? If we don't think of and work toward getting to Heaven some day, we are at risk of being distracted or dis-swayed from our faith here on earth.

Second, to help on you on your focus for that day, I was going to tell you that Dr. David Jeremiah recommends that we review the words found in **2 Peter 3:10-18** and for us to look at

our actions on the following: **Of our purity, of His promises, and of our purpose.** Basically, I just wanted you to have one day to think.



That being . . . do I want to go to Heaven some day and if yes, are my actions helping to ensure I get there? Which now allows me to work back to what you wrote down for that day. I think what you jotted down is great. I believe Heaven will just be so much more than what we could ever think - the colors, the sights, the smells will all be so impressive. Now, will we be bored? Just think of all the people you will get to talk with and all the sights you'll get to see - then, don't forget that God created everything so I have no doubt He will make sure we have things to do that challenge us, excite us and teach us.

You then added to your notes and when you were done you said . . .

I'll tell you what Gramps, this has got me thinking about doing things different for next week but I'll hold on that for now. For **Saturday the 16th** I wrote: 'Someday what???'

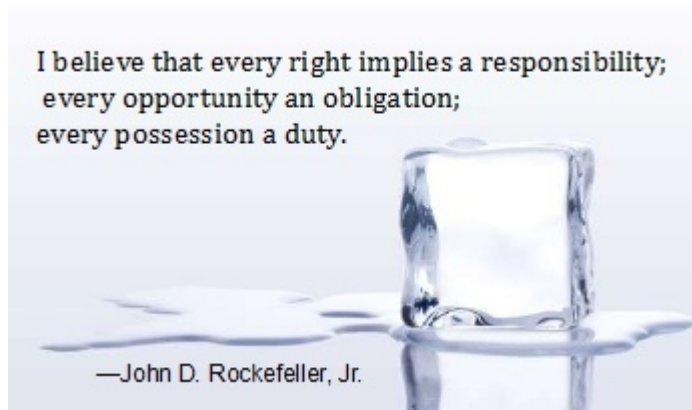
And I just added 3 questions marks and the words. . . I will be taller, smarter, married and happy - but I don't think this is where Gramps was heading on this.

You then smiled at me, shrugged your shoulders and said . . . So what were you thinking on this one? We both laughed and then I said . . . For that day, '**Someday what?**' was going to start with these two examples for you to ponder. The first: "We all have said "Someday I will _____". That can be to 'start reading the Bible', to 'travel the world' or whatever. Those are nice but none of us know how many days we yet have ahead. So the second example I wanted you to think on that day was 'why not' just think about what you will do that day. Like . . .

"Today I will _____"

Now what I said are just the thought joggers I wanted you to ponder as your Saturday unfolded. I also thought it would be nice if by the end of that Saturday, you jotted down in your note pad any comments that come to your mind on this day's challenge. It didn't matter what you jotted down, I just wanted you to try doing it.

So from there, we just talked a bit on this and I closed it out by saying . . . The big question we each have to ask ourselves is if there are things we need to start doing and if there are things we need to stop doing? I then showed you this image and the quote it contains. I then said for me - **it is never**



too late to do what you need to do. I like to ponder these words from (Galatians 2:20)

"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

And yes I saw you were jotting down a few things as I wrapped up those words and then you said. Got it, that helps. As for **Sunday the 17th**, I had 'What 20 words would I describe myself with?' And I wrote down a bunch of words and ended changing them a few times - would you like to hear them?

I told you no, to hold them for now and to just hear my added thoughts on this and then at the end of your stay here - to then share what 20 words you closed on. You agreed so I continued on with . . . for the 17th - **What 20 Words?** I planned on telling you that way back in the Summer of 2016 and I had the privilege of leading our Sunday worship service at our church (while our Pastor and his wife were on a vacation trip). As I pondered what I would share in the message, I remembered once seeing and appreciating these 8 words: **"No God, No Peace. Know God, Know Peace"**.

I thought of those words again when I then saw these words . . .

"Know God, No Fear". It made me then think of the follow up words, and those being: **"No God, Know Fear."**

From those phrases, I was able to create the words I then asked our congregation to write down: "No God, No Peace." and then to write "Know God, No Fear". Yes you are guessing correctly - since I spoke the words, they would have to determine which 'no' or 'know' to write down. We had some fun with that as everyone quickly realized the different ways we could write and think on those simple terms. I then closed with the challenge for them of these 4 words: **"Do you no God ?"** The point I was going to make with you for that day was the same for them. . . wouldn't it be great if we really know who God is and the word play via the spelling was just to bring out a challenge to what we hear and what we think. I then showed you these words and image that I had saved . . .

and remember:

***"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love."
(1 John 4:18)***



I then closed with . . . **"Remember words can be tricky and that we should always think twice on the things that are critical to us. As in, Am I really getting this? So from there, I was going to tell you to think about the 20 words that really describe who you are. And then tonight in our talk on what you came up with, I was going to challenge you to think further on those words. Are they powerful enough, or challenging of you as you see yourself - not just as a typical teen who is getting ready for college, but as person who is taking on life."**

Yes after all of that covered, I was nervous that I was running on way too much but you smiled as you wrapped up jotting down your notes and then we wrapped up with some talk about the challenges for you at the golf course – which was a little frustrating this last week. On the added positive side, we all did have fun on the lake with some great sunny days, some kayaking, swimming and fishing.

But then you wanted to change things up. Here's what you said . . .
“Grams, instead of you giving me challenges for next week, I want to give you a challenge each morning. You think, do or whatever on those that day and then we talk about them that evening. Kind of a me seeing how you think. Is that okay?” I told you I thought that was a great idea so we agreed to relax the rest of that Sunday evening, chatting with Grams as well and then at 6:30am Monday morning (the 18th), we would start with your first challenge and then you'd head off to the golf course to start work. And yes, it was a fun evening.

Week Five Considerations . . .

You got us started by saying . . . “Grams, thanks for breakfast. Grams, here is your **Monday the 18th** challenge and it is on **Taking Action**. You get to determine what that means and I am looking forward to your response on that tonight after our 8pm game of Horseshoes.” You then smiled, gave Grams and I a high five as you then walked out for work. You jumped on the ATV and took off with a wave. And I was thinking . . . bring it on.

It was a fun day. Grams made Rhubarb cake for us all and this afternoon at 4:30pm, I sat down in the Bear Den and jotted . . .

Monday the 18th – Taking Action

There is always a lot to do - but what should we do ?

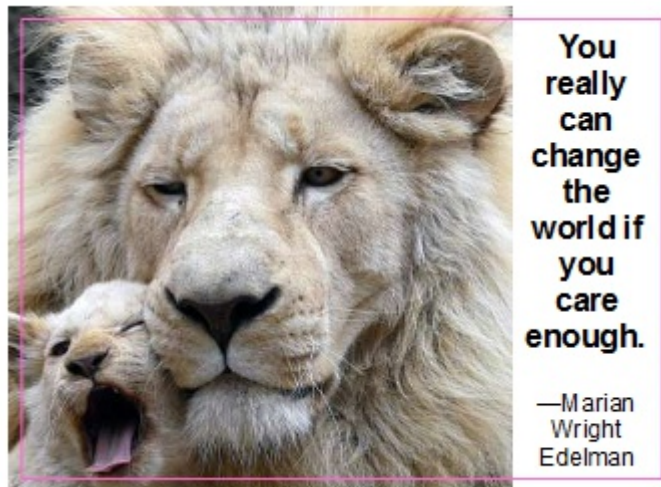
The first via the 'must do' view. Those are, how am I doing my job ? [as a spouse, as a parent, and as a grandparent] Why ? Because we need to do these to the best of our abilities. Remember, that some procrastinate or cut corners; but as for us who try to live a life that is of impact - we should take action - but do we ?

The second is via the 'strive to do' view. This may be a part of our spare time actions or those things that we may think we just need to have creative approaches. For example, why not grow in wisdom ? I would then think on how to do this - like, starting to read more and finding other ways to gain greater insights to issues, to life, etc.

I then grabbed this image ->

So then, that is our challenge for today (Monday) to think if there are any 'must do' or 'strive to do' action items that I should note.

I then, jotted down a couple of things with time-lines to do so (just to share as examples).



*I also like these words from **Psalm 118:24** . . .*

“This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.”

You got back here by 5:30pm. You changed quick and jumped in the lake for a cool down as I was doing burgers on the grill and Grams getting the rest of dinner pulled together. We three sat at the high top table overlooking the lake, enjoying dinner and hearing how your day went at the golf course. We chuckled when you summarized it as “Another day, another dollar, and fun as well.” We then got to our game of horseshoes - and yes - you won again.

We then sat up to the kitchen island and I showed you what I had jotted down. You chuckled and said . . . "Well Gramps, I have to admit that being retired allows you to jot down a bit more on these challenges than I get to. I like it, thanks, but the picture you shared has a bit more hair than a picture of you and me. I'm going to show that to Dad and say it looks like him and me way back in my little days."

Tuesday morning arrived and before you took off, you said . . . "Grams and Gramps, I'm going to jog over to work today so thank you for breakfast and Gramps, your **Tuesday the 19th** challenge is **Do I . . .** So, have fun, love you both!" And out the door you went. You missed it but after you were gone, we sat and finished our breakfast and coffee and had fun talking about you and your cousins - so many fun times and great memories.

That day was a hot & humid one and I was a bit nervous how you were going to last. You jogged to work in the morning and you'd do the same or walk back so I sent you a text at 4:30pm and asked if you wanted to be picked up. You replied: Great thanks 5:30 if you would please" and that lead me to my writing down time.

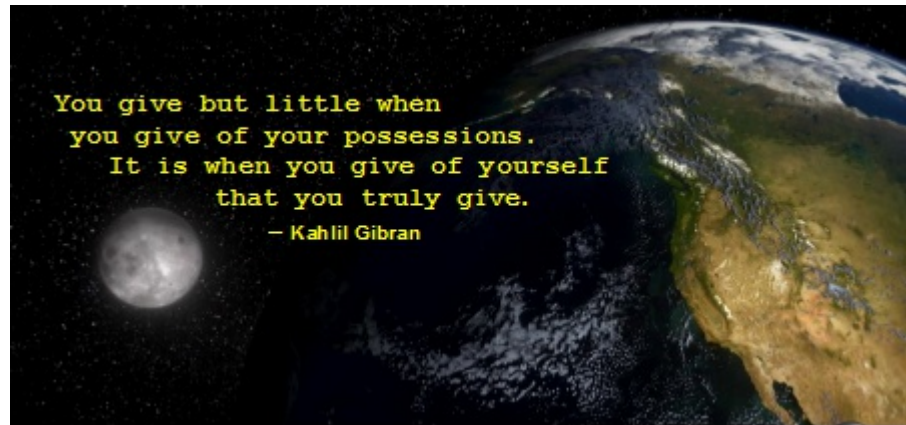
Tuesday the 19th - Do I . . .

I'll admit I was wondering . . . 'What is that kid thinking for this?' Well, I didn't want you to think I wasn't thinking so I wrote down: Sometimes we need to ask ourselves these three questions . . .

- 1) **Do I intimidate others or inspire ?**
- 2) **Do I compete with or compliment others ?**
- 3) **Do I hurt or help others ?**

Why ? Because our answers to these questions may lead us to things that we need to do and or to stop doing. I then wondered if there were any other 'Do I . . . ' statements I could come up with but then I decided these three would be good to discuss with Jude.

I also found this image and words in my collection. I'll share this with him as well and it will be good to see what else we can



discuss based on these few words (and less is more - right?).

At 5:30, I picked you up. You looked dead tired and in need of a shower. When we got back to the Cabin, you walked down to the lake and jumped in - clothes and all - and yes, it was a hot one today so we waited for you to cool down. When you came up, we had a towel ready and dinner as well but Grams wanted to tease you a bit. When you walked up the hill she told you . . . *"Just because you got to jump in the pool with your clothes on when you were 2 years old, doesn't mean you get to do that here."* You smiled and gave her a kiss on the cheek. Your reply to to her as you dried off gave each of us a smile 'Sorry about that Grams but you know Gramps - if I didn't learn how to do the safety float back then, who knows when he may have wanted to pick me up and to throw me in the lake. A boy has to learn how to swim in his clothes.'

So, once you were dried off, we sat up on the big lake side deck and enjoyed dinner - ham sandwiches, potato salad, and you drank down two Gatorades before we had some rhubarb cake for dessert. It was a beautiful evening so we just relaxed and listened as you told us of your day. Yes, there always are a few jerks that pop up in our days from time to time - and we're glad you handled them well today.

It was then around 8pm when we got to talking about my challenge that you gave me so I shared with you what I had. You liked it, we talked on a couple of points you asked questions on and I noticed that you jotted down a couple of things on your note pad as well.

Wednesday morning arrived and yes we remembered that you said you got to sleep in so we woke you up as you asked - at 7:30am. We enjoyed chatting with you at breakfast and you told us . . . “Okay, got to go and don't forget, since I am going to caddy today, I don't know what time I will get back tonight and I had told Mom & Dad I'd give them a call as well. So, we won't have time to talk tonight but we will double up on our Thursday night chat. Gramps, your **Wednesday the 20th** challenge is **Failure & Success** . . . Have fun with that, love you both, I'll see you both tonight!” And out the door you went, and I thought . . . interesting challenge.

Luckily, that day the clouds were rolling over and it had a slight breeze to the day so I thought I would go ahead and mow the yard first, jump in the lake afterwards for a cool down and then jot down my words for Jude. It all went well and around 5pm I wrote . . .

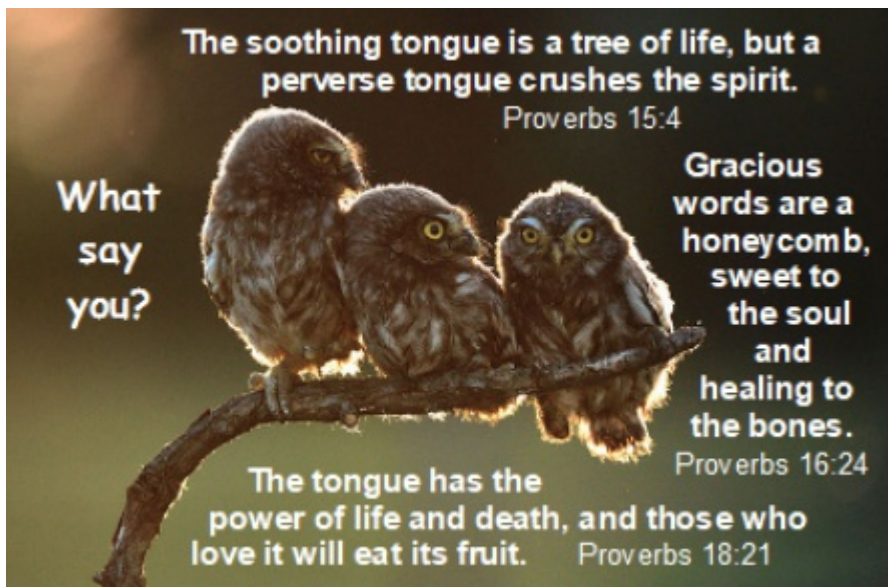
Wednesday the 20th - Failure and Success

The old saying is true - Failure is not fatal and Success is not forever. Knowing that, what should we do? One thing is to

embrace the journey you are on, and that includes the good, the bad, the ugly, and the enjoyable.

So first, show Jude this image and the words shown from Proverbs.

Why?



Because the words we use show as to the path we are on in life. If they are good, we're heading toward success. If they are bad, we're embracing failure and probably don't even realize it yet.

Second, share these 7 of the 20 attributes for men from Gene Getz book, **The Measure of a Man**. Tell him, if he ever wants to read that book, that I have it and he can read it when he gets a chance (our D2B Men's group did a mini study on this in May of 2018).

1. Am I above reproach ? (one with a good reputation)
2. Am I dedicated to my spouse ? (with love and honor)
3. Am I temperate ? (balanced in my words and actions)
4. Am I prudent ? (being wise and discerning)
5. Am I respectable ? (a good role model, Christ like)
6. Am I hospitable ? (demonstrating unselfishness and generosity)
7. Am I able to teach others ? (communicating in a nonthreatening way)

And be prepared - if Jude asks what about for the gals becoming women . . . I will leave that for Grams to offer her insights.

That was plenty. You got home around 7:15pm, grabbed some food and then took a shower. You then did your call with your Mom & Dad and then called us up to the loft so we could see them and say hi as well. It was fun chatting with them. The last time was 2 weeks ago when they, Luke & Noah were out for dinner and just checking in.

Then we had Thursday morning arrive and it was 6:45am when you came down for breakfast. You told us . . . "Good morning and am I ever hungry. I know I have to head out in a few minutes so Grams, your **Thursday the 21st** challenge is **What should we think about?** I'll be curious to see what you come up with on that and don't forget - tonight we cover this and your Wednesday challenge as well. Love you both!" And out the door you went. As you walked out and hopped on the ATV, Grams said "*Handsome, smart and good manners.*" I replied "Thanks!" She quickly retorted . . . "*Not you, Jude!*" And we both smiled.

That day was a bit toasty again - I think it was 93 or so and the humidity was up as well. After lunch, Grams and I went out and did some floating on the lake, enjoyed a couple of swims to stay cool and then took a pontoon ride around the lake at 430. At 5, it was time to come in and while Grams showered, I started to write and wrote this.

Thursday the 21st - **Do you THINK ?**

We all think but before we speak, do we think ? And then show Jude this image & words.

Why? I've always thought that there are a lot of smart people out in the world but surprisingly too many times, people start talking and you start to wonder . . . what is wrong with this person?

So, share with Jude the challenge of thinking before speaking. That pausing to think is okay and to remember the old saying . . . *'Sometimes it is good to not speak and to have people wonder if you are a fool than to speak and to remove all doubt.'*

That night after you got back to the Cabin and cleaned up, we had chicken on the grill, coleslaw, chips and ice cream for dessert (Grams skipped the ice cream and had some of her dark chocolate instead).

We then relaxed, shot some baskets and than sat downstairs in the Bear Den to cover his Wed. & today's challenges. You said you liked what I had for the 'Do I' and for the 'Failure/Success' topics. We also shared other examples that came to mind as we talked. It was good and fun relaxing. Grams popcorn 9pm snack was enjoyed too.



Friday morning arrived and we enjoyed eggs, sausages & toast. After our chit chat, you told us . . . “Thanks, great breakfast and Gramps, for your **Friday the 22nd** challenge, it is **Does Satan exist?** And yes I know that is true but I am curious to see what you come up with when we talk later tonight. Adios!”

You gave Grams a kiss on the cheek and we did a high five as you headed out. As you drove down the hill on the ATV, Grams said . . .

“It is so much fun having these Summer breaks with each of the grand-kids. They are all so good and we are so blessed.” I agreed and we then chatted about you and your cousins and their times here in the years before. Hard to believe the next one will be when Atom gets a chance to be here. Then, after our talk and the rest of the coffee was gone, Grams said we had to get dressed because we were going to drive into Emily and pick up steaks at the meat market so we could grill those tonight for dinner when you got off work.

We got that done and this afternoon we enjoyed some more lake time. The water felt great and I was hoping that after dinner you would want to do some water skiing if you weren't too tired. I got **BR2 (Big Red 2)** ready - just in case. Then I sat down and wrote . . .

Friday the 22nd - Does Satan exist ?

Many years back, I remember at our church that we had a prayer request for a church member's friend who did not believe in Satan. I remember thinking then and it was still true today - we all need to ask of ourselves: “Do I believe that Satan exists ?”

My thoughts - if you can answer 'yes' to that, then you realize we are in a battle. One that can be direct or even very subtle. For example I liked the words that I



noted were attributed to Poh Fang Chia. **"God notices and cares for all who fear and honor Him. He doesn't call us to 'fit in' but to draw closer to Him each day as we encourage each other."**

Remember . . .

Satan doesn't come to you with a red face and horns, he comes to you disguised as everything you've ever wanted.

Why?

Because if we believe in God, then we know that Satan does exist and like the Apostle Peter wrote . . . 'Satan prowls like a lion, looking for someone to devour.' So yes, we need to fight the good fight.

Then for that evening - it was fun. After you got done with work we enjoyed the steaks, the fries and onion rings that Grams made in the stove. Then as we relaxed for a bit after the snicker bar salad that we had - we made plans for some water-skiing & 'ride-for-life' tube challenges. We then did so and had a great evening. I think we did pretty good but Grams though that Luke still retained the bragging rights for the best wild tube ride. We then got cleaned up and sat down at the bar down in the Bear Den so we could talk.

You asked what I came up with in regards to Satan. I shared what I had pulled together. You asked some good questions and we ended up agreeing - if we believe God is alive and at work in our world, Satan is as well so we need to be vigilant.

Our Saturday morning arrived soon enough but today and Sunday will be only half days at the golf course for Jude. We enjoyed a brief talk for breakfast and when we wrapped up you said . . .

"Another great breakfast - thanks Grams. Gramps, for your **Saturday the 23rd** challenge, it is **What is good?** I'll then be done at noon and we can enjoy the rest of the day."

Out the door you went and we finished watching our morning news while we wrapped up the coffee that was made - and all was good.

Now I will admit, I was moving a bit slower that morning - more so than I usually do. It appears my old body can't quite do water-skiing and hang-on-for-your-life tube ride like I could in my years past. But that gave me the chance to relax, to think and then I wrote . . .

Saturday the 23rd - Do Good Anyway

Good is always nice, helpful and most often, a pleasant surprise. All of us most likely try to be good and when we can, we even do some good. But what about when we are frustrated or angry about an issue or a challenge? In those cases we may think . . .

'Nope, not going to do it' (or just think, I'm not going to help).

We need to remember that we are blessed in so many ways. Maybe it would be good to think on this a bit and take a few minutes to praise God. For example, I like prayers that start like this . . .

Dear God, I praise your Holy Name and I thank you for all your blessings upon me and my loved ones. I thank you for xxxxx . . .

Now, why this type of prayer and thanks to God? I've found that as I thank God for the good things in my life - I am reminded and motivated to do good for others, as best I can. And yes that prayer could include thanks for our loved ones, for our health, for the job we have, for where we live, etc. etc. The reason I want you to think a bit on this and to take some time to say thank you, is because we should praise God for all that He has done. And remember - don't do good to get the thanks, just do it because you are good and you want to do good - and yes, the good things we do are our gift to God - it is a part of the purpose that we have within us.

Now, as you said, you got back around a quarter after 12 and we enjoyed the lunch Grams made for us, you had asked if I had a chance to jot anything down on 'Good'. I handed you what I wrote, you read it, smiled and said . . . "I like it. Let me think on this today and then we'll talk about it tonight."

I replied that was good so we enjoyed the afternoon. And it started with some floating & swimming out on the lake - and yes, we enjoyed laying in the sun and getting some rays. Then we enjoyed a ride on the pontoon for a late afternoon break. While we were doing that, you got a call from some of your new friends at the golf course, they were going over to the Wharf at 7pm to listen to the band playing and wanted to know if you wanted to join them. You did after dinner, a great brats, chips & salad dinner. We agreed to move our talk to Sunday night and you took the truck in and had fun with your friends.

You got in last night just a bit after midnight. You said the music was good and you had fun with your friends. You asked if we could wake you at 7am and went to bed. And yes, 7am arrived right on time. This was your last half day for work so as we ate breakfast, you said . . . "Thanks again Grams & Gramps for waking me up and for breakfast. Gramps, your **Sunday the 24th** challenge, is **What is Rest and Relaxation?** Gotta go - I'll see you both for lunch." And out you went. Grams and I talked about all the energy you, your brothers and the rest of your cousins all have. Grams asked how I was feeling. "Old & a bit sore yet" but I was doing pretty good. So, after we cleaned up the breakfast mess we had, I sat down, thought a bit and then started writing . . .

Sunday the 24th - Rest and Relaxation

This brought back memories of a long time back when your Uncle

Alex reminded us that as we work away on our computers, we need to remember our 'eye break'. Aka the get up, walk around, take a look outside and enjoy looking at something different. For when we do, we get to change our focus, we get to see something better than a computer screen and may we create the few moments to think



about something we have not thought of or need to ponder. Changing things up keeps us sharp and makes sure we don't get bogged down in

the 'sameo, sameo' (and yes, I think that is a word). And as I was thinking on this, I knew that rest was good but I also always like the aspect of thinking. So, share the "F" test . . . as a keep in mind:

*How is my **F**aith, is it good or does it need attention ? How is my*

***F**amily, are all well or do I need to spend more time with them ?*

*How are my **F**inances, on track or do I need to take critical actions ?*

*How are my **F**riends, am I staying engaged or need to reach out ?*

*How is my **F**itness, am I doing well or do I need to work at this ?*

Close with - all of us know that our physical healthy & mental health needs to be good. That our R&R breaks give us the opportunity to reflect & to adjust on those and the other critical things in our life, but we must do the periodic pauses to ensure our desires are heading in the right direction. Aka do not just live for today, but also live for all the days ahead. And yes, we can do a better job on ensuring all of these when we make sure that we have the R&R breaks that we need.

The challenge - do we?

This afternoon then unfolded with lunch first, fun on the lake was second, and then some initial talking on Jude's 2 challenges in the late afternoon as we sat down in the shade by the lake. We agreed that we would just talk about what I jotted down on 'what is good?' and 'R&R' and then later that night I would show you what I jotted down. I liked your comments... "I've always thought you knew that something was good if it left a smile on your face or on the face of another." And on the R&R, I liked... "I never thought much on R&R before but I like the idea of doing what I can to keep it a part of my life - that there can be some pleasant surprises or good insights gained when we take a rest break and do our 'F' test from time to time."

That night, after dinner, you fished off the dock while Grams and I sat by the fire that we started. It was a peaceful night and when we went in around 930, we sat at the breakfast bar while you took a look at what I had jotted down - to go with our talk that afternoon. You jotted down a could of things it looked like and we three then just sat back and chatted away for the rest of the evening.

Monday morning - the 25th - brought about a different action plan for us . Your work at the golf course was basically done but they had asked if you could come in a few hours now and then to help if they had someone call in sick. You agreed and with that as the possibility to unfold for the week ahead, we got ready for your Mom, Dad and brothers to arrive. They were on their way - driving up - and should arrive 5pm or so tonight. As we talked over breakfast, we agreed to this 'talk plan' for your last week here.

Tonight I would ask a question for us all. Tuesday night would be Grams, Wednesday would be Luke, Thursday would be Noah, Friday would be Wendy, Saturday would be JJ and Sunday would be you.

As for that day, I mowed the lake side yard while you mowed the front yard and while we were outside sweating away, Grams was at work inside getting things ready for Wendy, JJ, Luke & Noah. We got our chores done by lunch time and after lunch we had fun on the lake - swimming, tubing and enjoying another beautiful day. We then had a light rain roll in around 4pm and so we relaxed inside. It was around 5:15pm when they arrived and because it was still raining, Grams moved the chicken on the grill dinner plans to Tuesday and we enjoyed a big spaghetti dinner that Grams then made in stead. We all just relaxed for a bit and by 7pm, the rain was gone, the sun was back out so we putz'd around the lake on the pontoon - and yes, you, Noah and Luke jumped in the lake for a swim break as we enjoyed the chance to catch up with your Mom & Dad.

Then by the time we got back in and you guys showered up, we all sat down in the Bear Den and I got to share my question for all to respond with their perspectives. I asked . . . **what do you think 'accepting Christ' means?** Our talk was good but what I think I will remember most is when Luke said . . .

“This reminds me of one of the talks that Gramps and I had a couple of years ago when I was up here for my Summer break. We talked about what does it mean to embrace the body of Christ. I had never heard of anything like that before. Gramps said 'As Christians we need to *develop our Legs of Perseverance*, not to run away but to stand strong when others do not; to *strengthen our Arms of Courage*, that know what to hold onto and what to let go of; to *feed our Mouth of Honor*, that speaks up for those who can not and encourages all with kindness; to *grow our Heart of Compassion*, that watches for and takes action when others are in need; and to *increase our Mind of Wisdom*, that leverages perception, works with integrity and loves humbleness.' And the reason I remember that is because he said when we embrace the **Body of Christ**, we can easily put on the **Armor of God.**”

Yes it was a lot of good thoughts shared and we all had a good time.

Then for **Tuesday morning - the 26th** - we had pancakes, sausages, eggs, juice and coffee for breakfast and planned our day. We had decided to take **BR2** over to Cross Lake so we could go and cruise around the lakes and enjoy dinner at the Wharf. It was a great time. Grams & your Mom put together the coolers with our lunch and drinks while your Dad and you brothers helped me get **BR2** loaded up and ready to go. And yes you three and your Dad showed how good you all can water-ski . . . Grams is a bit jealous but that does come with old age.

That night after we got back and all cleaned up, we sat out on the big lake side deck to talk and we shared our thoughts on the question that Grams posed for us - '**How should we act?**' We all touched on a lot of the same things . . . being honorable, helpful, compassionate, respectful, growing in faith, etc. You all teased me and asked . . . 'Grams, you probably have more to share on this - don't you?' I said to let me think on this and I would circle back down the road.

Then our **Wednesday morning - the 27th** arrive and after breakfast we had our plans. You, Noah, Luke, your Dad and I were heading over to Emily Greens for 18 holes of golf while Grams and your Mom were going to go antique shopping down in Crosby. Let's just say you four kicked my butt in golf but we all had fun. When we got done we had a quick lunch and then hit the lake. Grams and your Mom got back around 3pm and joined us down on the water. It was another great sunny day and the lake felt great. We had burgers left over from last night. Those with Salads and sweet corn made for a great dinner and the strawberry-rhubarb pie that Grams made was fantastic !!!

That night after we all got cleaned up, we sat down in the Bear Den to discuss **Luke's question** for us all. It was '**Are friends needed?**' We all that was a tough question and it triggered a good discussion.

We found out first what was behind the question and it appears that one of Luke's friends was trying to get too 'friendly' with Luke's girlfriend. Thankfully she handled that well but still, we understood Luke's frustration. She and Noah's girlfriend were going to go out with some of their friends so we knew they would be good. As for our talk, we agreed that friends are good but sometimes they can cross lines that can break friendships. We ended up agreeing that there is no way to ensure we have good friends but we can always do the best that we can to be a good friend to others.

Then our time together brought us to **Thursday morning - the 28th** and this was a change up day. While we enjoyed breakfast, you got a call from the golf course and they wanted to know if you could come in one last time for the afternoon shift for driving the shuttle boat back and forth to get the golfers out & back on the 9th hole. You told them no problem so we decided to do some fishing in the morning and the rest of us would relax on our lake for the afternoon.

That's what we did till 4pm but then we all headed over to the golf course at 4pm. It was all a part of the plan that the management team had for you and 3 of your friends who were ending their time there as well this week. You were surprised when you wrapped up work and they told you to head up to the 9th floor of the hotel there on the lake. We and the other invited guests were waiting out on the Sunset Observation Deck. The dinner they provided was good but your big smile was the best of all. It was great to see the warmth and appreciation of the golf course's management team.

When we got back to the cabin, we decided to stay outside, we shot some baskets - and yes I lost again at playing 'horse'. As we enjoyed a great evening, we discussed **Noah's question** for us all . . .
'**What should we not be?**' We all offered up what you would expect.

We covered from not being a jerk, not being a bragger, not being a liar, not being a criminal, etc. etc. It was all good but if I had to say, it was Grams comment . . . 'On not being alone' that I thought we all thought was a great one to ensure - hence our love of family.

Which then brought us to **Friday morning - the 29th** and to fun on the lake time for the afternoon, fishing after dinner and talking around the campfire to wrap up our day. Grams and your Mom did a great job on all our food for today and your Dad was the grill master and we had steaks and chicken that was delicious.

It was a fun day and we were tired out - possibly a little too much sun but we worked through it. That night as we sat around the fire and talked and we shared our perspective on **your Mom's question 'What do we think about encouragement?'** Basically we all agreed that whatever we can do, whenever we can to encourage others, is the right thing to do. You and your brothers brought up some good examples of the negativity and nastiness you all have seen and I know when your Mom, your Dad, Grams and I shared how we've seen it so much in our years - you, Noah & Luke asked the good questions in follow up - which basically asked - why does this continue? So we wrapped up the evening addressing that as we all best could.

And the above brought us to the weekend (our last 2 full days of being together), therefore it was **Saturday morning - the 30th** and it was suppose to rain on and off all day long so we thought we would just putz, relax and do some fishing (well, you three brothers and your Dad did, while your Mom and Grams ran into Emily to pick up all the stuff we needed to make pizzas for tonight - and me, I was your snacks and drinks butler). But before we got into all of that, it was now **your Dad's** turn and his **question** for us to ponder throughout the day was '**What is achievement?'**

That evening (after our fun afternoon), we made pizzas and had a good time talking about what each of us thought achievement was. We talked about completing college, trade schools, getting a job, winning competitions, etc. etc. It was all good stuff to ponder and we ended the evening with ping pong playoffs in the garage and yes old Gramps & Grams were the first ones to loose out.

Which then brought us to **Sunday morning - the 31st** and while we all enjoyed breakfast, it was now **your** turn and your **question** for us to think on that day was '**Is having a high paying job critical?**' But that would not be discussed until that night because we all were going to our little and then it was going to be fun in the sun and goofing off on the lake for our last afternoon all together. And yes it was a great day. After church we relaxed out on the big lake side deck and talked about the week, For lunch we at up just about all the left overs we had - and they were good. After lunch, we gave you boy rides on the inflatables (**BR2** was up for the job), you three and your Dad also did some water-skiing and there were no wipe-outs which was pretty impressive. Grams & your Mom agreed to be pulled around the lake on the flat raft - just like they had done over the years past. We also swam, floated on the lake and got some sun - which all felt great! (did I tell you that I kind of look like a well tanned Pillsbury Doughboy - but in a Gramps version?)

For dinner that night, we enjoyed dinner at the Pickled Loon and then came back for chatting outside, shooting baskets and playing horse-shoes (and yes, I lost at all of them). As for our discussion on Jude's question on the critical nature of jobs, everyone had good comments and if I had to summarize . . . everyone ended up with the thought that we need jobs to pay the bills but if we are not happy in our jobs, that is not good. Also, a lot of money can lead to a lot of problems. So the key - find a good job and make sure you enjoy it.

And with those words above, I thought it was a good place to stop and now work on wrapping this up – what Grams & I call our 'Time with Jude'.

*It was a fun time and a lot of great talks. What made it even better was that when your Mom, Dad, Luke & Noah joined us, we had additional fun thinking back and sharing memories of our Summer get togethers on the lake. And yes, it appears that we all agreed, it was that Summer way back in 2022, when you all got here that early August time-frame and we first created **Cabino Beach** (we had that periodically over the years since when the weather was dry and the lake level would drop a bit). I found this old pic and words that tie back to then . . .*



And yes – we have been blessed with many great memories.

A now to close (for part three)

If you are reading this - then you probably know by now that there is a bit more to share (if you are interested). I saw that after Grams and I had our fun visit with Jude & his family, I had some follow up to do and that unfolded with these emails going out later that year.

My first email was this (sent on October 25th & it contained . . .)

Dear Jude, Noah & Luke. This is just a short note to circle back and to say thank you again for the fun time and great talks we had when you all visited Grams and me this Summer. As I told you then, I did circle back to my thoughts on what we talked about that Monday night the 25th. Here is what I wrote down in follow up:

Monday the July 25th - Embracing the Body of Christ

Although Christmas is months away, looking forward is good. As we do so, look at this visual below. It helps us to think about Jesus and on what helps us to act like Him? At a minimum, never forget **WWJD?**

**'TIS THE
SEASON**



**'TIS THE
REASON**



By that I mean, we all need to remember to look at and to emulate Jesus as best we can.

So, as you take on the challenges that come your way, remember to **'Put on the Armor of God'** and to know it fits well when we **'Embrace the Body Of Christ'**.

And you can ponder back to what Luke shared as to what that is.

Yes those words may seem a bit silly - but it is good to ask.

In what shape are your legs, arms, mouth, heart and mind ?

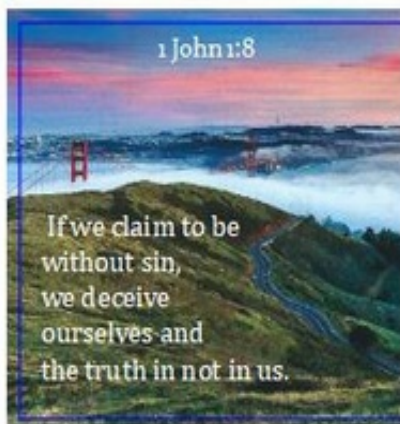
And if they could be better, what and when will be your next steps?

My second email was this (sent on November 1st & it contained . . .)

Dear Jude, Noah & Luke. Hi Guys, Grams here again. I was looking through my notes and see that I notes from our talk that night of **Tuesday the 26th** - it is FYI on: **Behavior Matters.**

I though more on Grams question about how should we act and I thought about how this ties in well with the topics I had talked with Jude on earlier in that month: Our Walk Matters, Taking Action, etc. I share this now because the news of so many men behaving badly, is in the new too often. I thought, if I could share with my grand-kids on this - what would I say? I would encourage them - you now, to not forget 'past actions'. It frustrates me as to various men of success, their actions many to even a few years back - in how they treated women - badly, is always coming to the surface and being viewed with disgust. So why did they then and/or still do ?

Let me first share an example and this is not an excuse, just reality. I know for myself, before I got married, at work we had promotion parties and I drank too much (and yes I passed out under a tree). Embarrassing ? Yes. Now I did not plan at that time to do so but I let events unfold and I ended up doing what I wished I had not. For me, it was when I got engaged to Grams that I woke up to the



To feel
guilt is no
tragedy;
to feel
no guilt is
- Max Lucado

fact that what I do matters. I had to decide what type of man did I want to be. Now good intentions are only that, it is what we do that matters. So please consider what I share and know that everyone needs to step up and the sooner the better. So just remember:

Each of you have great lives yet ahead. Decide, do you want achievements or regrets? I hope you choose to avoid regrets.

My third email was this (sent on November 10th & it contained . . .)

Dear Jude, Noah & Luke. Old Gramps is back at it with another email for you and it is in follow up to our talk we had that night of **Wednesday the 27th** and I title this: **Friendship.**

I know that each of you know that I like us all to think. So, when you get a chance, read and ponder the rest of this when you can.

There is an old saying . . . 'To have a friend is to be a friend' but too often, people only embrace half of that requirement.

So how do we go about enabling or growing friendship? First, I will



what I know and encourage you just to keep in mind. Which is: Yes you know how to have friends, but this is for you to consider as your years continue to unfold. What I want to point out here are the types of actions that ends friendships - like being cold (a lack of the warmth), being cruel (devoid of humane feelings), being contemptuous (expressing disapproval or hateful or jealous), or being pathetic (uncaring).

And why is this important?

Because most of us think we don't do those type of things but we may do so at some time or another. If we think about avoiding these, we can think about the example Jesus showed - being compassionate and courageous. He was committed to His friends.

And friends will do the unexpected. Like this image on the goofy sayings I show above. I've saved that since you were kids so you can use them with your friends who would get a chuckle or with your kids some day who may really enjoy them.

My fourth email was this (sent on November 19th & it contained . . .)

Dear Jude, Noah & Luke. Hey guys, Gramps here on the halfway point of my follow up with all of you. And yes this email hopes you all are well and it ties back to our fun evening and talk we had that night of **Thursday the 28th** and I title this: **To Be or Not to Be.**

These are the start of some very famous words but why are they here and should we care? They are here because I didn't think of this that night - but I wanted you to know now - that each week, we should know when to connect and when to disconnect. You three young men will be busy for years to come and to help this make sense, consider the following words.

[ask]

Do I need to be connected with any of my friends or family that I have drifted away from? The reason I share this is because we all need to remember to ask ourselves these types of

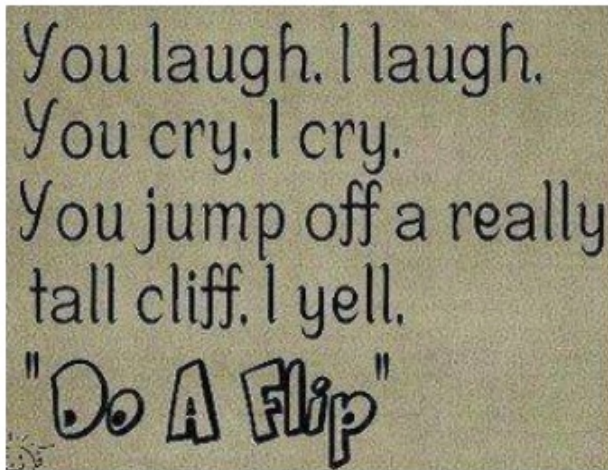
questions because we can become so busy, trying to do all the right things but we get tangled up or fatigued and we may not mean to neglect others but it is too easy to fall into that distracted mode.



Do I need to be disconnected from someone who is pulling me into their mess, from too much time on things that are taking over too much of my life that I don't like or I don't see as well as I should ?

So, my challenge for you is to sometime this week ahead, take the Shakespearean challenge and ask yourselves . . . 'To be connected or not to be, that is my question.' Because **when we make the time to pause and to review the things we need to do or need to stop doing, we can then decide the how best and when, which then allows us to make the progress needed** (our faith could be a part).

My fifth email was this (sent on November 29th & it contained . . .)



Dear Jude, Noah & Luke.
Greetings, greetings, greetings from Gramps and Grams. As you know, Christmas will be here before we know it so I better wrap these emails up. This one is the follow up to your Mom's question of **Friday the 29th** and I title this: **Encourage others.**

Did you know that one of the easiest things that we can do, is often rarely done ? That is, if you paused and thought about how many times over the last few days or so you have encouraged someone, would you be able to think of any examples? Unfortunately in the busy world in which you guys have, it may be hard to even think of one or two examples. This email asks - why not change that ?

Now what that could be - may unfold in many ways. For example, as I look at myself, I would say . . . I could encourage others in their faith pursuits, in the treatment of others, in their pursuit of their goals, etc. But for each of you, there may be so many different things that come to your mind about 'how best to encourage others'.

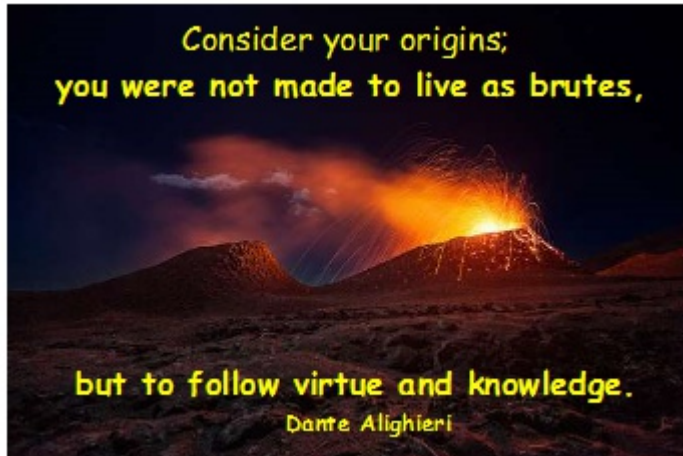
I just encourage each of you to remember that this, like all the other big things in life - starts with awareness. We too often are just focused on our challenges, our goals and our own happiness. Yes that is okay but wouldn't it be great if we encourage others on their pursuits? Our loved ones, friends and even those we may not know, have challenges, have doubts and have their own goals as well. We just need to remember - *'it is not all about me'*. So, thanks for thinking about this and for when you can . . . encouraging others.

My sixth email was this (sent on December 7th & it contained . . .)
Dear Jude, Noah & Luke. Hey guys, Grams & I hope you three Musketeers are well as this last month of the year unfolds. We are well and I'm reporting in with my follow up to your Dad's question of **Saturday the 30th** and I title this: **Carpe Diem** (and yes we talked with your Dad earlier today to say Happy Birthday and it was fun talking with him & your Mom). So, for this email, here goes.

Yep, seize the day (Carpe Diem) is a great saying. And I share this with you three as a reminder to 'seize every day as best you can' (as in . . .). What is our challenge? To do today (what should be done), not (waiting) tomorrow (procrastination). Now for me, I thought of 'running' . . . for example, running for exercise is good; running from God is bad and running toward God is best. Now what do these mean and how do they relate to 'Seize the Day'? Consider these 3.

First, when you are busy, one of the things that you can overlook is your own personal health. I mentioned this before, you need to make the time to stay healthy. If it be walking, jogging or a more in-depth health routine - that is great, just start keep doing it. If you do, there is a side benefit and that is it enables us time to think (how things are going, are there things you need to stop doing or start?).

Second, as for the 'running from God', surprising is the fact that so many are. They have awareness to God, to faith and for whatever



reason . . . don't want to be a part of it. Could they (or you) being doing well, seem to be happy? Yes but know this, for these people it is the 'long game' that is key. How will they be in 7 months or 7 years? Where is the accountability, the sacrifice and or the impact? To me,

for those in this status, they can run but they can not hide. Now, for each of you - you will have to make a decision on faith and your focus on it (does this really matter to me, do I need to make any changes in my life?). You get to decide, just think about it.

And third, for those 'running to God'. Each of you may know of someone in this situation. In my opinion, that is great. For any of us who are working as best we can for a growing faith; you, us, they - got it - that fire within. And while you think on this, don't forget when you can to work on figuring out what your purpose is (that God has



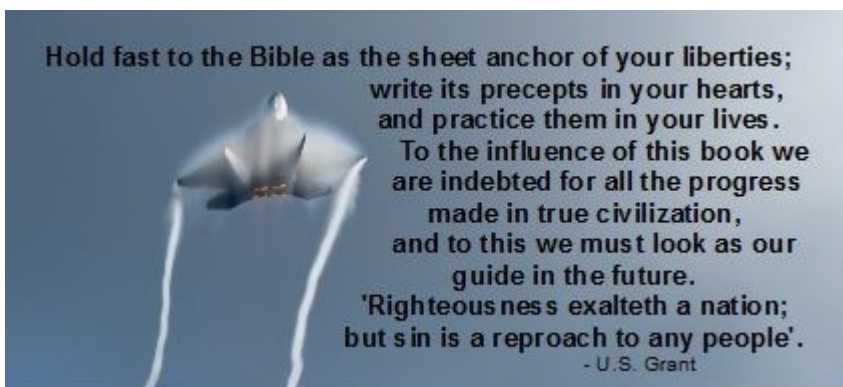
enabled within you) and once you know it, adjusting your actions when you can to best enable your purpose to be fully embraced. A big or tough challenge? Maybe but why not seize the day & life that is out in front of you? And remember, it's not so much - what about me?

It is about - what does God want me to learn and to do?

My seventh and last email for that year (sent on December 14th and it contained the following . . .)

Dear Jude, Noah & Luke. Greetings men. Early Merry Christmas wishes to the three of you . Grams & I hope you are all well and that there are now problems in getting home to celebrate the Christmas & New Year's break with your Mom & Dad. We are well and we will all talk then. Now, as for this email - you know me and I wanted to do a follow up on Jude' question from **Sunday the 31st** and I title this: **Profitability.**

First, that month of July was sure a lot of fun and for us to also get time with Luke, Noah, your Mom & Dad as well as with Jude - I'll tell you, Grams and I feel blessed - we thank you all for a great Summer. Now, in the big scheme of things, it all boils down to this. When we live a life that is growing in faith (in my opinion), we see time & time again how we are blessed. As we see those blessings more and more, we work to show our appreciation - our gift back to God - which then means our life as we live it is our gift to God. Now those are what I embrace but I know each of you decide the if, how, what and when of any faith aspects that make sense to you. For me, I believe if we try to live a life that is good - it is a gift, not only for God but also for our loved ones as well.



These words from Ulysses S. Grant are a great reminder to us but **how do we best go from there?**

Second, just remember that all that Grams & I share with you are things that we hope you will consider as your years ahead unfold. You get to decide which you like and which actions you will pursue and I know that whatever you pursue further, you will all do it well.

Third, now from that Sunday talk that we had, I just encourage you - when you can - to take a few minutes and think about - is there anything about the Christian faith that can be viewed as profitable ?

Now the reason I ask that question is because it is a different type of question that most would never ask. As for me, as I thought on this and the challenge of the decisions we make . . . it prompts the question - what would I do or at least recommend to others in regards to how should we pursue our Christian faith ? I would say:

"When we accept Jesus Christ as our Savior, everything since then builds upon that. We need to pursue our prayers daily, and to work on reading the Bible as best we can, when we can and as often as we can. Which means, multiple times over all your years is good and yes, this may take many years and that is okay. If possible, we should join a Bible based church, so that we can appreciate the faith insights shared by others. We also need to be careful and not to abdicate our responsibilities in faith. Which is to be careful and to not just accept the words of others, but that we should be able to find and see how all faith insights are reinforced by the Bible and that we are responsible for a growing relationship with our Triune God." Our actions can all be summarized by 'Be in Faith = Grow in Faith.'

Yep, that is a lot from Gramps but that is why I wrote this out and did not just say it back at the end of July. Listening and talking on different things is always good - but when you read something, and you can go back and read it again as often as you like, a much deeper learning is enabled. So, I will close with these words.

I thank you for listening and in considering all that I have shared. I don't want you to think I am telling you what to think - just that I want you to think. For if you pursue a life where you think and you pursue those things that you believe are honorable, I believe you're on the right path. And last of all - please remember that no matter what comes up, talk with your parents or even with us. Grams and I

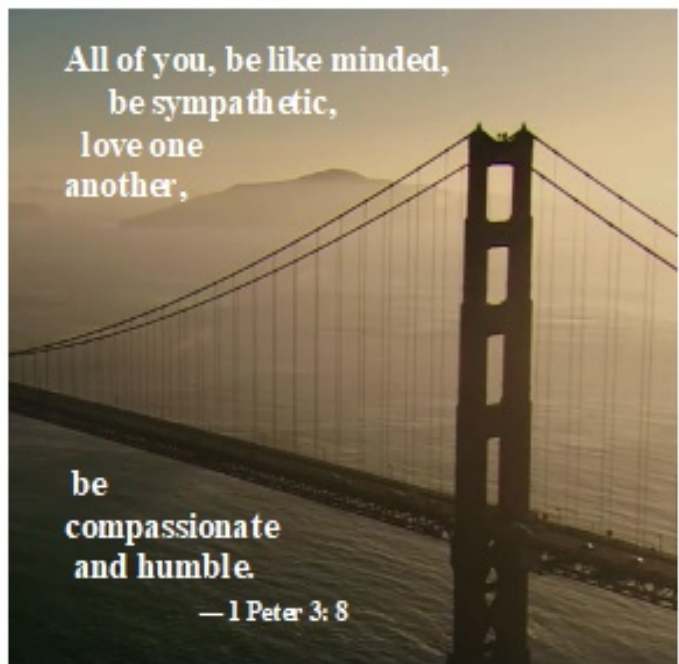
are also happy to listen and to offer advice if and when you ever would want. Each of you and your cousins make us so proud of what you all are pursuing. Thank you, each of you for being who you are.

Now, that last email and the others I sent - did have some added 'Gramps words and best wishes' but you've seen plenty so I wanted to keep them as brief as I could for sharing here. But last of all - is there anything more? Well, it was during that Winter break when Jude had sent me a nice email, thanking Grams & me for the fun time he had, the good discussions, etc. He then closed with these words - which I thought would be great to use in the closing out this Part Three. Thank you Jude, you and your cousins coming here and spending time with us has been such a great blessing. We love you all!

[FYI: Jude's email to me]

Gramps, I just wanted you and Grams to know that everything that I heard from you both, and I wrote in my notes - I do like to go over periodically. I'm glad for everything that you had me write down. I know at the time, I had just some initial thoughts and that was good. But it is in the way,

or times that I go back and read a part and think - that I see that I believe you would call the 'bigger picture'. Like this picture and Bible verse above, which is great to read and great to pursue. Love you both! Your favorite, **Jude** :)



Gramps note: After all of the above, things settled down and over the rest of that Winter, Jude and I got to have some brief follow up talks, all based on his notes taken that Summer. He also shared these with me and yes, I like reading them over from time to time:

The Challenges:

Sunday, June 20th: Be good, learn, persevere, cry/laugh, love, faith and enjoy life. This should be interesting. Starting that Monday the 21st, I started to think on these when I could. I was surprised, it was easier to be busy and distracted but as this week rolled on, I found myself making the time to think about these. Good stuff.

Fri. 7/1: God calling; listen, love, laugh, learning.
What am I hearing ? I was surprised and the sounds I heard, the loons, birds, traffic, etc. and I'm not sure if I heard God tell me this but as today unfolded, I had this sense of relax and enjoy this beautiful day.

Sat. 7/2: My words, my actions reflect who I am, good/bad ?
This was the first time I tried to actually be careful on what I said and what I did. I was glad that I did.

Sun. 7/3: Judas watch - am I guilty as well or doing well ?
This one surprised when I read it Sunday morning. I also found myself thinking about it when I went to church with Grams & Gramps. I think I'm doing well but time will tell.

Mon. 7/4: What are my talents ? Faithful/Successful ? This was interesting because I'm not sure yet what my talents are. I like to do a lot of different things, I try to be as good as I can but I think there is more to this. I'll have to circle back to this and see what I think later on this.

Tues. 7/5: What is generosity and am I generous ? Now this is one that I really hadn't thought much on but the more I watched others, I could see what I thought - who was nice, who wasn't, and where I saw others being generous. I think it doesn't have to be just money related, it can be our time and how we share it with others.

Wed. 7/6: Am I or someone I know in a rut, if yes, do what ?

I remember seeing the old Back2theFuture movies and got a chuckle when Gramps told me about the hover board talks way back. As far as being in a rut, I don't think I am but when I thought about this, I saw myself looking at people - to see if I could tell, were they struggling or in a rut ? It is surprising what you see when you are looking at others verses being distracted and in your own world.

Thurs. 7/7: Do I do what I should or what I want ? For this one, I asked Grams & Gramps if they needed my help on anything tonight. Although I was tired about working at the golf course today and really wanted to lay back and relax, I was glad to ask them and it made me feel good helping them.

Fri. 7/8: My walk matters - who am I associating with ?

This was what I thought was the easiest challenge because I really don't know others up here . . . but I did think about my friends and who I hang out with normally. We're all a good group and I think I appreciate those good friends more.

Sat. 7/9: My decisions - are they good ones ?

(get the 'choose to' last from Gramps, that is pretty good). I liked how Gramps had share his words on this via Choose to. . . but I flip his words slightly and like this: Don't hate, love. Don't frown, smile. Don't destroy, build. Don't quit, persevere. Don't gossip, praise. Don't wound, heal. Don't grasp, give. And yes, I know there were others, I'll get those. I just like how these got me thinking about the decisions I make and then the actions I take or don't take. I like the challenge of being more purposeful.

Sun. 7/10: God is at work - do I see it - any thoughts ? I think I get what Gramps was saying on this, that there is a lot more to everything if we look for it. Church was good again and I found myself throughout this day thinking of God at work. I'll admit, I never really thought much on this before but now that I think on it, I'm paying attention.

And yes, I enjoyed our follow up talks on what he had jotted down. I told him . . . "Everything you have is all good stuff that you have jotted down. You're thinking, you're listening and you are looking all

around. Too many people don't realize until their later years that they missed so much. And that is the challenge on each of us; the how do we work hard when we have to, slow down and enjoy when we can and if you are at least a bit like me, you begin to see more and more of the blessings that you are receiving."

Now, we then wrapped up our talks on the things that we pursued that Summer before. Jude, like his older cousins will do well. And in talking with him, it made me realize that next up will be Atom in a year or so - or at least I think he will be getting here soon. I'll have to work on what type of talks or challenges or whatever for him.

When you have fantastic grandkids, you want to do your best in having fun with them and helping to ensure they enjoy all the time that they get with you (at least that is what Grams & I think).

So, I have some time to think about the **thought thinking** we can pursue with Atom when he gets here for his Summer break after he graduates from high school. Each of our grandkids have great personalities; that trying to do something unique and hopefully memorable with each of them, is an easier said then done challenge.

And if I had to say where my thoughts are at the moment? I am wondering if we can do anything wrapped around thinking and talking about these 11 questions. At the moment, they seem to be better suited for one who now has a few years under their belt. How best to use these for an 18 year old to think and ponder - may be a stretch.

Am I accountable?

Am I compassionate? Am I dedicated? Am I faithful?

Am I forgiving? Am I grateful? Am I patient? Am I purposed?

Am I respectful? Am I trusting? Am I valued?

So first, I'm going to ask these of myself and I'll see where those thoughts take me. Then, I'll think on - 'How best to help my grandkids to think on what to believe and what to know?'

That's it - the end (I think).

7 THINGS OUR TEENS NEED TO KNOW

1. You do not have to be in a romantic relationship to enjoy your high school years. *Read Romans 8:28*
2. You are beautiful in a unique way, even if no one has ever told you that. *Read Psalm 139:14*
3. While your education is important, you are not defined by your GPA, the classes you take, where you're going to college, or what you do after high school. *Read Matthew 6:34*
4. It's okay if you don't fit in. It's okay if you're not like other teens. No matter how much pressure you feel to fit in with a certain group or be included with certain people, standing out is not always easy, but it's a good thing and it will make you stronger and braver than you've ever been. *Read Romans 12:21*
5. Don't beat yourself up over the past. In Jesus, there is forgiveness for all sins no matter what has happened. *Read Galatians 5:1*
6. Surround yourself with wise people that are older than you and believe what you believe. Don't ever feel like you're in this alone, especially if you're dealing with abuse or self-harm. God has placed people in your life to help. *Read Proverbs 19:20*
7. Never feel like you have to dress a certain way or act a certain way just to win the approval of someone else or a certain clique at school, or even your youth group. As a follower of Christ, you're not after people approval. You're after God approval! *Read Galatians 1:10*

Maybe.

Epilogue

There you go – 158 pages of some deeper looking, some wider thinking, and some longer wondering . . . where can our thoughts take us? Now, as soon as I think about what I just wrote for this page, I realize it was me sharing a bunch of thoughts and you hopefully thinking at least a bit on what I shared.

And you know what?

It may not mean much what I think – because you have to decide what you are going to think on and pursue.

Just know that I thank you for pondering and for deciding what you will pursue.

And don't forget that the past exists in memory (to learn from), the the future is in imagination (to motivate us), and that today exists in reality (to challenge us).

And that it all is good.



This is a 'Cabin Captures easy-read' that reminds us . . .
to get where we're going, we need to remember where we
came from (like this from our past).

Welcome to the Cabin!



For those who look beyond themselves... you are blessed.
Curiosity, imagination and desire are the foundation to build
from for a successful life. While you are here... pause, relax, look
around and see the gifts that God has given us all.
Thank Him for what you have, ask Him for what you need and
He will bless your life!



And yes, never forget . . .
our **Outing Adventures** publisher
thanks you for reading this **Book Three**.