

R E A L

truth
& life

T R U S T • L I V E • R E V I V E

DR. ROB GODARD



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dedication

To mom and dad, who through their love and faithfulness taught me to trust God and the importance of being devoted to a local church so that together we grow.



» **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

It is exciting to serve God at Cloverdale Baptist Church. I am thankful for great elders and deacons, and a staff that seeks God glorifying excellence. Pastor Les and Elias, well done again on pushing for this to get done. It is good to serve Jesus together in this local church!

I love Jesus' Church and am honored to serve her!



introduction

God wants His children to live together in community. The Christian life is designed by Him for His family to fit together as a body, where Jesus is the head, and we, His people, love one another in relationships that are healthy and deep, and do His bidding. We need one another to be healthy individually.

Growth Groups form an essential ministry at Cloverdale Baptist Church for care and growth, for intimacy and renewal.

Hebrews 3:12-15 states, ¹² *Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.* ¹³ *But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.* ¹⁴ *For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.*

This not only is a warning of the incredible danger of the deceitfulness of sin, but also the way to fight being deceived, and that is living life together in community. The ministry that we believe most helps us in this is what we call **GROWTH GROUPS**.

We are delighted that you have decided to take this journey with us, and to seek to grow your faith together in a way that glorifies God and encourages other believers!

This book will be made up of three individual series, each seeking to help our church family in our desire to live our lives actively in the presence of God, and in that, to rest in Him as we live for Him.

Series #1: Trusting God Series #2: Pursuing Holiness Series #3: Building Ambassadors

We at Cloverdale Baptist Church believe that the Word of God is powerful and active (Hebrews 4:12), and is what the Spirit of God uses to shape the people of God (Isaiah 55:11). As we enter this series, it is our hope that we will present ourselves to God and His Word to be shaped by it as we learn what God is saying, and choose to obey.

May God use this study to change His people and help Cloverdale Baptist Church be all that God wants her to be!

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GROWING A CHRIST-HONOURING CULTURE

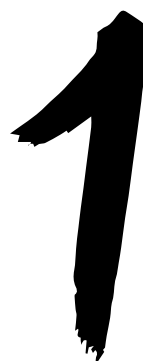
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Trusting God

SERMON



TRUSTING GOD:

He is actively looking to help

2 CHRONICLES 16:1-10

» **QUICK THOUGHTS FROM PASTOR ROB**

Life is sometimes cloudy, and it makes it difficult to see the things that are real. The better we are able to see who God is, and what He is at work doing, the more we will be able to fully rest in Him. He is a God who loves to help His children. In fact He is actively looking to support those who are devoted to Him. One of the main reasons we struggle in trusting God is because we don't see Him for who He has revealed Himself to be. He is not only all-knowing and all-powerful; He actively cares about our lives and is offended when we don't trust in Him first and always.

My prayer is that, through this study, you would once again see the greatness of God, and His intimate care for your life, and that you always would go to Him first in every area of your life. He can be trusted *always!*

1

TRUSTING GOD:

He is actively looking to help

2 CHRONICLES 16:1-10

» **INTRODUCTION:**

» **OLD TESTAMENT LESSON: ASA'S FOLLY**

ROMANS 15:4

PROVERBS 20:7

» **OLD TESTAMENT LESSON: ASA'S MISSED MESSAGE**

The past proves the faithfulness of God:

2 CHRONICLES 14:11-15

» **THE BIBLE DECLARES:**

God wants to help! Trusting Him pleases Him!

HEBREWS 11:1, 6

» *"True Bible faith is confident obedience to God's Word in spite of circumstances and consequences."*

2 CORINTHIANS 5:7

» **IMPLICATIONS:**

1. We Don't Know Him As We Should:

PSALM 9:10

2. We Ignore Him In Life:

PSALM 16:8

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-6

3. We Don't Walk By Faith:

2 CORINTHIANS 5:7

Extra Notes

» **What does a life of trust look like?**

» **Pastor Rob gave three reasons why people don't trust God, review those and discuss how we as a church/growth group/family can be a people who actively live lives of faith.**

» **What are some ways you can live your life conscious of the presence of God (Psalm 16:8)?**

» **How can we constantly grow in our knowledge of God so that we know He is trustworthy?**

Extra Notes

Prayer

It is important to us that we are more and more a praying church. Patterns help us to be sure that we are entering into the throne room with boldness and the appropriate reverence. For this series, we will follow the pattern CAST, and encourage you to do the same in your groups.

CAST

» **CONFESSION:**

Ask God to search you, and bring before Him any known sin, agreeing with Him about that sin, and turning your back on it. Be sure to accept His forgiveness alone.

1 JOHN 1:9

» **ADORATION:**

Focus on the attributes of God, praising Him for who He is. Brainstorm together on who God is, and then spend time praising Him for these attributes.

PSALM 96:4

» **SUPPLICATION:**

Requests that you have.

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-6

» **THANKSGIVING:**

This can mainly focus on the cross, but should also include every good and perfect gift.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:17-18

"Prayer is not a hard requirement – it is the natural duty of a creature to its creator, the simplest homage that human need can pay to divine liberality." **Charles Spurgeon**

SERMON

2

TRUSTING GOD:

He is able

GENESIS 22

» **QUICK THOUGHTS FROM PASTOR ROB**

To fully trust in God, we must know that He is *ALL POWERFUL*, *ALL WISE*, and *ALL GOOD*. If we believe these things then we are able to realize, in the midst of desperate pain that He knows more than we do, and His plan is never stopped due to lack of power. Genesis 22 introduces us to one of the greatest stories of faith in the Bible. Abraham receives an impossible command from God, and hurries to carry it out because He knows God.

The better we know God, and His *ALMIGHTY POWER*, the more we will be able to trust and obey Him in all circumstances.

2 TRUSTING GOD: He is able

GENESIS 22:1-19

INTRODUCTION:

» **OLD TESTAMENT LESSON:** ABRAHAM'S FAITH

A Clear Command: **Verses 1-2**

Instant Obedience: **Verse 3**

Full Follow Through: **Verses 9-10**

Extra Notes

» **Why do you think so many people struggle with the idea that God is all powerful and good?**

» **What reminders can you bring into your life to jog your memory so that in a crisis you can rest in God's sovereign plan and power?**

» **Review the implications of the sermon and discuss how you can apply them to your life.**

» **Is there anything else from this text or sermon that will help you walk by faith and not by sight?**

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1 THESSALONIANS 5:17-18

"When the devil sees a man or woman who really believes in prayer, who knows how to pray, and who really does pray, and, above all, when he sees a whole church on its face before God in prayer, he trembles as much as he ever did, for he knows that his day in that church or community is at an end." **R.A. Torrey**

SERMON

3

TRUSTING GOD:
He is all wise

GENESIS 45, 50

» **QUICK THOUGHTS FROM PASTOR ROB**

To fully trust in God, we must know that He is *ALL POWERFUL*, *ALL WISE*, and *ALL GOOD*. If we believe these things then we are able to realize, in the midst of desperate pain, that He knows more than we do and His plan is never stopped due to lack of power.

Joseph is one of the people in the Bible who had every right to feel oppressed by his brothers. His response is one that we can learn from, not only because it rested in the power of God, but also in the reality that His plan is always best (wisdom).

God knows every possible possibility (middle knowledge) and always chooses the best plan to accomplish His glory. You can trust Him no matter what, and be confident that His plan is best even if you are sold into slavery, falsely accused, or feel forgotten. May this text remind us of the great *WISDOM* of God, and the privilege we have of rightly trusting Him!

3 TRUSTING GOD: He is all wise

GENESIS 30-50

» INTRODUCTION:

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON: RESTING IN TURMOIL

» REJECTED:

GENESIS 37:12-36

» FALSELY ACCUSED & CONVICTED:

GENESIS 39

» FORGOTTEN:

GENESIS 39

» EMPOWERED:

GENESIS 41:40-43

GENESIS 45:1-8

GENESIS 50:15-21

» **WHEN WE TRUST IN GOD'S PLAN WE ARE NEVER HELPLESS IN THE MIDST OF MISTREATMENT.**

» **JESUS:**

ACTS 2:22-23

ACTS 4:27-28

» **IMPLICATIONS:**

1. Don't Be Anxious Ever:

2. Trust In His Wisdom Even When You Don't Get It:

3. See God More Deeply & More Clearly:

JOB 42:1-6

PSALM 9:10

4. Rest In The Reality that God Is Personal & Good In His Plan:

ROMANS 8:28-29

ROMANS 11:33

PSALM 147:5

5. Offer Him Your Life:

Extra Notes

Growth Group Questions:

» **What does it mean in your own words to walk by faith and not by sight?**

» **Why is it so difficult to trust God with the bigger picture when we feel lost in our pain?**

» **Can you think of a story in the Bible that shows why it is so important for us to trust in God's plan when our own lives are on thin ice?**

» **How can you make sure that you live your life with the reality of the existence of God and His power of wisdom in your life? Psalm 16:8**

» **How did Joseph's life and pain make sense in the end?**

» **How does this help us have hope, even when we find ourselves in prison or forgotten (metaphorically)?**

» **What changes can you make in your life that would enable you to rest in the reality of the wisdom of God?**

» **How does Ephesians 2:10 help us see not only God's plan that is perfect, but also the role we are to play in it?**

» **Take the time to discuss the huge portion of Scripture we worked through and praise God for His wisdom!**

Extra Notes

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1 THESSALONIANS 5:17-18

"The greatest tragedy of life is not unanswered prayer, but unoffered prayer." F.B. Meyer

SERMON

4

TRUSTING GOD:
He is loving

EXODUS 33-34

» **QUICK THOUGHTS FROM PASTOR ROB**

To fully trust in God, we must know that He is *ALL POWERFUL*, *ALL WISE*, and *ALL GOOD*. If we believe these things then we are able to realize, in the midst of desperate pain, that He knows more than we do and His plan is never stopped due to lack of power.

This God who is *ALL POWERFUL*, *ALL WISE* and *ALL GOOD* shows His goodness to us by *LOVING* us personally. God is *LOVE*.

When we experience this love we will be filled to all the fullness of God, so understanding and experiencing this love is a significant part of Christian maturity!

4 TRUSTING GOD: He Is loving

EXODUS 33-34

» INTRODUCTION:

» **OLD TESTAMENT LESSON: GOD IS LOVING**

EXODUS 34:5-9

» **GOD IS MERCIFUL**

PSALM 103:13

» **GOD IS GRACIOUS**

» **GOD IS SLOW TO ANGER**

2 PETER 3:9

» **GOD IS ABOUNDING IN STEADFAST LOVE & FAITHFULNESS**

JOEL 2:12-13

EZEKIEL 18:20

» **IMPLICATIONS:**

1. Worship God

2. Trust God

ROMANS 8:32-39

REVELATION 5:9-10

3. Rest In God's Love & Plan. It is always best!

4. Offer Him Your Life. It is the only way to experience His love fully!

:

Extra Notes

Growth Group Questions:

D. A. Carson said, "*a text, without a context, is a pretext for a proof-text.*" That means, taking Scripture out of its context makes it impossible for us to understand.

» **How can we make sure that we are those who take Scripture passages in their immediate context, as well as Biblical context?**

» **What does the story of the golden calf teach us about worshiping God in culturally friendly ways?**

» **How did God respond to the Israelites seeking to worship Him in the way the Egyptians worshipped their gods?**

» **How does this help us now?**

» **Why do you think Moses was so passionate about the presence of God going with His people?**

» **Do we have this same desperation for God's presence in our lives?**

» **Daniel Block has said that God only has two names in the OT: Yahweh and Jealous. Discuss what each means and why it is important that we know the name of God?**

» **What attributes does God claim for Himself as He displays the beauty of who He is to Moses and to us?**

» **How can these attributes of God help us to trust Him with all of our life?**

» **Interact with Pastor Rob's implications and try to get specific with how you can do these things in your life. Be practical.**

Extra Notes

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PSALM 96:4

» **SUPPLICATION:**

Requests that you have.

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-6

» **THANKSGIVING:**

This can mainly focus on the cross, but should also include every good and perfect gift.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:17-18

"Prayer lays hold of God's plan and becomes the link between His will and its accomplishment on earth. Amazing things happen, and we are given the privilege of being the channels of the Holy Spirit's prayer." Elisabeth Elliot

SERMON



TRUSTING GOD:
He is there

GENESIS 16

» **QUICK THOUGHTS FROM PASTOR ROB**

To fully trust in God, we must know that He is *ALL POWERFUL*, *ALL WISE*, and *ALL GOOD*. If we believe these things then we are able to realize, in the midst of desperate pain, that He knows more than we do and His plan is never stopped due to lack of power.

He is with us at all times, and this will profoundly impact our lives if we can live conscious of His presence.

Jerry Bridges has said that all true revival comes from living consciously in the presence of God. This makes sense, as there we will find confidence and motivation. We will seek to please Him always and do His will with boldness.

5 TRUSTING GOD: He is there

GENESIS 16:1-17:1

» INTRODUCTION:

» **OLD TESTAMENT LESSON: GOD SEES ME**

PSALM 139

» **OLD TESTAMENT LESSON: HAGAR SEES GOD**

GENESIS 16:13

DANIEL 3

» **IMPLICATIONS:**

1. Remember: GOD SEES YOU!

LUKE 12:6-7

2. Choose Obedience Always!

JOB 1:21-22; 2:10; 42:1-6

3. Rest In Trust:

4. Place The Lord Before You

PSALM 16:8

PSALM 46:2

Extra Notes

» **Pastor Rob said that all revivals come from a conscious awareness of God's presence. How can we become more and more aware that He is with us always?**

» **What difference will living conscious of His presence make in our lives?**

» **Can you think of others in Scripture (and perhaps stories from your own life) who practiced the presence of God, and in so doing had their lives dramatically impacted?**

» **Work through the implications that Pastor Rob brought out and seek to apply this text to your life today in specific ways!**

» **What are some practical ways we can PRACTICE HIS PRESENCE?**

» **Discuss this series and how it can help you trust God more in your life.**

Extra Notes

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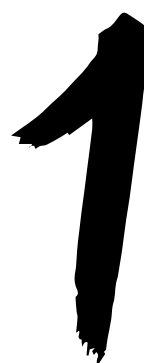
1 THESSALONIANS 5:17-18

"Any God shapes the world by prayer. The more praying there is in the world the better the world will be, the mightier the forces against evil." E.M. Bounds



**HOW IN THE
WORLD CAN WE
BE HOLY?**

SERMON



HOW IN THE WORLD CAN WE BE HOLY?

God is holy

ISAIAH 6:1-13

» **QUICK THOUGHTS FROM PASTOR ROB**

The Bible tells us that, without holiness, we will not see God (Hebrews 12:14), and this includes a practical pursuit of holiness. With holiness as an offshoot of salvation, and our pursuit of it key to proving our authenticity, we must understand what holiness is, and how to live holy lives in this generation.

The best place to go in terms of our pursuit of holiness is a relationship with God, and this must include a proper understanding of who He is!

If we have a Biblical view of God, then Christianity will make sense, and life can be lived without anxiety as we live conscious of His presence. When all of life falls apart, our view of God will keep us trusting and obeying, and cause us to live a holy life. God Is Holy!

1 HOW IN THE WORLD CAN WE BE HOLY? God Is Holy:

ISAIAH 6:1-13

» INTRODUCTION:

1 PETER 1:13-17

"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us...Always the most revealing thing about the Church is her idea of God"
A.W. Tozer

» REAL WORLD: VERSE 1

"Revival happens when we see God majestic in holiness, and when we see ourselves, disobedient dust." **John Piper**

King Uzziah was a good king

2 CHRONICLES 26

» REAL GOD: VERSES 1-4

Isaiah is saying, *"In the year we lost our earthly king, I saw the sovereign King"*

ISAIAH 46:10

DANIEL 4:35

God is on His throne!

ISAIAH 40:25

1 SAMUEL 2:2

» **RADICAL LIFE:** VERSE 5

I am ruined! Lost, annihilated, destroyed, utterly wiped out.

Carson: there will be no, *"healing for the church without massive recognition of guilt.. we are not secure in the love of God because deep down we don't think we need it"*

• Job 42:1-6	• Isaiah 53:1-12
• Luke 5:8	• Hebrews 9:22

» **IMPLICATIONS:**

1. Real Life

2. Real God

3. Radical Life

Extra Notes

Growth Group Questions:

» **Why is pursuing holiness as a Christian important?**

» **What is holiness?**

» **Why is seeing who God is essential for our pursuit of holiness?**

» **In the midst of a world that was falling apart, Isaiah received a clear vision of God. How does this vision help us, when our world is falling apart?**

» **Why do you think that the church in Canada, and perhaps our own church struggles so much with holiness, and being set apart for God, and being pure in our lives?**

Extra Notes

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Requests that you have.

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-6

» **THANKSGIVING:**

This can mainly focus on the cross, but should also include every good and perfect gift.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:17-18

"Any concern too small to be turned into a prayer is too small to be made into a burden."

Corrie Ten Boom

SERMON

2

HOW IN THE WORLD CAN WE BE HOLY?

I am holy

2 CORINTHIANS 5:21

» **QUICK THOUGHTS FROM PASTOR ROB**

If we have seen clearly the majestic holiness of God, we will fall apart. It is essential in our pursuit of holiness to keep the Gospel central and growing in its influence in every area of our lives.

If we try to pursue holiness without a grasp of the righteousness God has given us, we will quickly soften His demands with legalism or apathy. What He wants from us, He has provided for us in Jesus.

Our identity with Jesus is essential for healthy growth in holiness.

2 HOW IN THE WORLD CAN WE BE HOLY? I am holy:

2 CORINTHIANS 5:21

» **INTRODUCTION:**

Jerry Bridges said about this verse, *"I call this my all time favorite verse, if in old age my memory fail me, I would hope that I could remember this verse."*

Another scholar, *"there is no sentence more profound in the whole of Scripture; for this verse embraces the whole ground of sinners' reconciliation to God."*

» **JESUS KNEW NO SIN: VERSE 21**

- | | | |
|----------------|--------------|-------------|
| • Hebrews 4:15 | • 1 John 3:5 | • John 8:29 |
| • 1 Peter 2:22 | • John 8:46 | |

» **JESUS WAS MADE TO BE SIN: VERSE 21**

-
- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| ISAIAH 53:5-6 | MATTHEW 26:36-46 |
|----------------------|-------------------------|

» **SO THAT BELIEVERS ARE HOLY: VERSE 21**

-
- | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| PHILIPPIANS 3:9-10 | 1 PETER 1:17-21 | ISAIAH 64:6 |
|---------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|

» **IMPLICATIONS:**

1. Recognize Some Truths:

All Humans Are Sinners By Nature and Action

ROMANS 3:10

The more we grow in holiness the more humble we become because we see how far we have to go. The more we see Jesus and cling to the cross, the more confidence we have in His presence.

2. Revive Our Hearts:

2 CORINTHIANS 5:14 EPHESIANS 2:7

3. Grow in our experience, grasp, and glorify in the Gospel

- Freedom: Romans 8:1
- Passion: 2 Corinthians 5:14
- Love: Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:19; Ephesians 5:1-2
- Forgiveness: Matthew 18:21-35; Ephesians 4:32
- Identity: 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 2:20
- Humility: Matthew 5:3

Extra Notes

Growth Group Questions:

» **Why do you think the Bible takes so much time to display the sinlessness of Jesus?**

» **Why is this important in terms of your salvation?**

» **How does the holiness of God drive us to throw ourselves on Jesus and His death and resurrection?**

» **If we don't understand the depth of our sin, or God's majestic holiness, how will this impact our view of salvation and the experience of His grace?**

» **What does it mean that Jesus was made to be sin?**

Review Isaiah 53:5-6; Matthew 26:36-46 in your interaction with this question.

» **What does it mean that in Him I am the righteousness of God?**

» **Why should this reality change my life?**

» **Work through the implications of this message together and seek to be very personal in your interactions and let this drive you to prayer.**

After your time of prayer:

» **What does it mean to preach the Gospel to yourself every day?**

» **Do you do this? If not, why not?**

» **How can you do this so that your experience of the Gospel is ever fresh, and continues to grow you and change you?**

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PHILIPPIANS 4:4-6

» **THANKSGIVING:**

This can mainly focus on the cross, but should also include every good and perfect gift.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:17-18

*"To desire revival... and at the same time to neglect (personal) prayer and devotion is to wish one way and walk another." **A.W. Tozer***

SERMON

3

HOW IN THE WORLD CAN WE BE HOLY?

I am becoming holy | part 1

1 PETER 1:13-17

» QUICK THOUGHTS FROM PASTOR ROB

Seeing God as Holy is central to our pursuit of holiness, as well as our experience of the Gospel. The more clearly we see God, the more our experience with Him can become one of true repentance and worship.

This relationship then forms the foundation of pursuing Him and seeking to live set apart by Him, and being pure. As Hebrews 4:11 states, without holiness we will not see the LORD. This means that pursuing holiness is non-negotiable for followers of Jesus. We abide in His love by keeping His commands (John 15:10-11), and if we truly know Him, we will live for Him.

Erwin Lutzer states, "*commitment to Christ means radical change in our perspective. Our priorities will be changed when we finally submit our will to God. And even then the struggle will not be over. Each day the initial commitment must be reaffirmed as new matters will be transferred to God's control.*"

It is our hope that God will use these next sermons in a practical way to help each person who hears them and uses this study to become more holy. Oh, to be like Him!

3 HOW IN THE WORLD CAN WE BE HOLY? I am becoming holy | part 1

1 PETER 1:13-17

» **INTRODUCTION:**

God goes out of His way to shock us with His holiness!

HEBREWS 12:14

JOHN 15:10-11

» **MOTIVE FOR HOLINESS: GOSPEL:** 1 PETER 1:3

MATTHEW 7:21-28

"The context of any and all NT calls to holiness is the Gospel"

» **MODEL FOR HOLINESS: GOD:** 1 PETER 1:15-16

GALATIANS 4:19

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11

JOHN 13:12-16

The holiness of God is His purity, and His devotion to seeking His own honour.

» **METHOD FOR HOLINESS: DEPENDENT OBEDIENCE:** 1 PETER 1:13-15

ROMANS 12:1-2

PHILIPPIANS 2:12-13

ROMANS 8:13

- Daniel
- Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego
- Joseph

» **MOVE OF HOLINESS | LOVE:** 1:22-23

1 PETER 4:8

» **IMPLICATIONS:**

1. Pursue Sexual Purity!

PSALM 101:3

JOB 31:1

2. Get Rid Of Divisiveness/Negativity!

1 CORINTHIANS 15:33

3. Learn from Achan

Extra Notes

Growth Group Questions:

» How does Hebrews 12:14 help us to understand the importance of the pursuit of holiness?

» Why is obedience to God's commands so important for the Christian (John 15:10-11)?

» How does the holiness of God encourage us to pursue holiness?

» Why is it important to have the Gospel as the foundation of our pursuit of holiness?

» If you are sinning, and apathetic about your sin, how does this show that you have not grasped the Gospel?

» What does it mean to have Christ formed in us (Galatians 4:19)?

» Why is it important that we are dependent in our pursuit of holiness?

Extra Notes

Prayer

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» **CONFESSION:**

Ask God to search you, and bring before Him any known sin, agreeing with Him about that sin, and turning your back on it. Be sure to accept His forgiveness alone.

1 JOHN 1:9

» **ADORATION:**

Focus on the attributes of God, praising Him for who He is. Brainstorm together on who God is, and then spend time praising Him for these attributes.

PSALM 96:4

» **SUPPLICATION:**

Requests that you have.

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-6

» **THANKSGIVING:**

This can mainly focus on the cross, but should also include every good and perfect gift.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:17-18

*"I saw more clearly than ever, that the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day was, to have my soul happy in the Lord. The first thing to be concerned about was not, how I might serve the Lord, how I might glorify the Lord; but how I might get my soul into a happy state, and how my inner man may be nourished... I saw that the most important thing I had to do was to give myself to the reading of the Word of God and to meditation of it." **George Mueller***

SERMON

4

HOW IN THE WORLD CAN WE BE HOLY?
Pursuing holiness: passion | part 2

1 TIMOTHY 4:1-16

» **QUICK THOUGHTS FROM PASTOR ROB**

In God's sovereignty He has chosen to use our wills in the process of becoming holy. Every Christian must make a passionate effort to be holy in his or her own life. This is impossible outside of the Gospel, and disciplining grace, however it always takes a huge effort.

For the Christian to want to be holy, he or she must know God through the Gospel. For a Christian to passionately pursue holiness he or she must experience the Gospel so richly that they have no choice but to seek to please God!

Now the question for those who know the Gospel and have experienced the Gospel, is *YES, BUT HOW?* This message seeks to show that training is needed, followed by the steps to become those who are driven and defined by their relationship with Jesus!

4 HOW IN THE WORLD CAN WE BE HOLY? Pursuing Holiness: Passion

1 TIMOTHY 4:1-16

» INTRODUCTION:

It takes discipline to become practically holy. We must say no to sin and second best, and yes to God's Word and ways.

» TRAINING IS NEEDED: VERSES 1-5/14-15

You can't coast to godliness!

Why do we need training?

- There is an attack on truth

- There is an apathy in application

- There is a neglect of the Gospel

» TRAINING WILL ALWAYS BE IN TRUTH: VERSES 13-16

PSALM 138:2

ROMANS 12:1-2

» **WE ARE CALLED TO BE WORD SATURATED:** COLOSSIANS 3:16-17

- Big picture reading
- Study With A Passion For Life Change
- Study In Community
- Memorize & Meditate
- Make God's Word A Topic Of Your Conversation

» **TRAINING IS ALWAYS FOR LIFE:** VERSES 7-8

JAMES 1:22

PSALM 119:9

» **IMPLICATIONS:**

1. Radical Commitment:

LUKE 9:23

1 CORINTHIANS 9:24-27

2. Radical Re-ordering:

- | | |
|--------------|----------------|
| • God's Word | • God's People |
| • Prayer | • Gospel |

3. Radical Application:

1 PETER 1:8

Extra Notes

Growth Group Questions:

» **Why do you think that many people who call themselves Christians are not pursuing holiness?**

» **Why do you need training in holiness? Feel free to use Pastor Rob's answers, but add to them and personalize them.**

» **Where do you see the attack on truth in your own life and feelings?**

» **Why do you think it is so hard for some Christians to keep the Gospel central in their lives?**

» **In your own words, what does it mean to discipline yourself for godliness?**

» **What does this look like? Be practical and personal in your answer.**

» **Why is truth so central to this practical pursuit of holiness?**

» **What does Psalm 138:2 tell us about the heart of God? Don't just repeat the words of the Psalm — try to express it in a way that is specific and practical.**

» **What is your plan to be someone who is not only word saturated, but growing in your saturation every day?**

» **Why is it so important that we see our spiritual growth not only include knowledge, but applied knowledge?**

Discuss the implications:

» **What does it mean to be radically committed?**

» **How can you radically re-order?**

» **What are ways you can deepen your application of God's Word?**

Extra Notes

Prayer

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PSALM 96:4

» **SUPPLICATION:**

Requests that you have.

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-6

» **THANKSGIVING:**

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1 THESSALONIANS 5:17-18

"Until you know that life is war, you cannot know what prayer is for." John Piper

SERMON



HOW IN THE WORLD CAN WE BE HOLY?
Pursuing holiness: priority | part 3

1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-12

» **QUICK THOUGHTS FROM PASTOR ROB**

To be holy means to be separated unto God, and to be pure in every aspect of our lives. Because we want to be those who not only please God *IN CHRIST*, but also please Him in everyday life, the pursue holiness must be a priority for followers of God!

My longing is that God would say to me, and you, as His follower: *WELL DONE MY GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT*. For this to occur, we must make the pursuit of holiness an observable priority. This means its pursuit displaces other things, some good, some bad, and causes us to go hard after God's ways.

5 HOW IN THE WORLD CAN WE BE HOLY? Pursuing Holiness: Priority

1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-12

» INTRODUCTION:

The pursuit of Holiness should be our priority because:

» **IT PLEASES GOD:** VERSE 1

» **IT OBEYS GOD:** VERSE 2

» **IT DISPLAYS IN LOVE:** 3:12/4:9

1 JOHN 4:7-12

» **IT HELPS US ON MISSION:** VERSE 12

1 PETER 2:11-12

» **IMPLICATIONS:**

1. Choose Holiness Over Happiness
2. Choose Holiness Over The Happiness of Others
3. Choose Holiness Over Laziness & Leisure
4. Choose Holiness As A Daily Pursuit
5. Choose Holiness That Leads To Love

Extra Notes

Growth Group Questions:

» **What does it mean to make holiness a priority?**

» **How can we know what our priorities are?**

(Some say where we spend our time, treasures and talents)

» **What are your priorities in word? In action?**

» **Why do you think that holiness pleases God?**

» **How can we choose obedience even when it is difficult?**

» **Why does Biblical holiness always show in love?**

» **Why does our view of people who pursue holiness so often lead us to think of dour legalists?**

» **How can we make “love producing holiness” our priority?**

» **How does holiness help us on our mission to reach people with the Gospel of Jesus?**

Work through the implications and discuss how you can make these choices in practical ways. Please: in this do not give what you think are the right answers, but seek to answer in a way that impacts REAL LIFE where the rubber meets the road.

Extra Notes

Prayer

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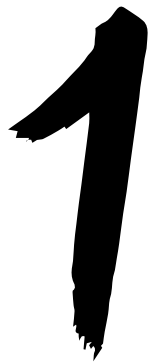
1 THESSALONIANS 5:17-18

"The power of our prayers, lies not primarily in our effort and striving, or in any technique, but rather in our knowledge of God." Timothy Keller

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GROWING A CHRIST-HONOURING CULTURE

SERMON



GROWING A CHRIST-HONOURING CULTURE:
Each one reach one

LUKE 9:57-10:3

» **QUICK THOUGHTS FROM PASTOR ROB**

Sharing the Gospel is not easy. In fact, one pastor has said if you want to make people around you feel guilty, talk about prayer or evangelism.

We do not want you to feel guilty! HOWEVER, we want to become more and more a church that understands life in light of eternity and sees that our purpose here on earth is to make Jesus and His Gospel known.

Our longing as a Joint Servants Team is to have each person who calls CBC home, equipped and unleashed in the world to represent Jesus well. 2 Corinthians 5 tells us that it is just as if Jesus was making His appeal through us. That is amazing and convicting. If each of us who calls CBC home would be willing to share the Gospel at least once over the next five weeks, this series will have been a huge success.

Our prayer is that through this study, your passion to point to Jesus will grow, and you will be able to effectively speak the truth in love as we live our lives where God has placed us, for His glory!

» **THE COMPASSION:** 9:35-38/51-55

2 CORINTHIANS 5:16-21

» **THE CALL:** 10:2

- Prayer

- Pursuit

» **IMPLICATIONS:**

1. Live A Holy Life!

2. Look For Opportunities!

3. Love In Jesus Name!

Growth Group Questions:

» **Why do you think it is so hard to have every person in the church thinking about how to reach others for Jesus?**

» **Discuss the principle of multiplication versus addition. Why should we be those who are seeking to share the Gospel with others (each one reach one)?**

» **How is our pursuit of holiness and our longing to share the Gospel with others tied together?**

» **What, specifically, is stopping you from sharing the Gospel with people around you?**

» **Why is counting the cost of being an authentic disciple key to living a life of ambassadorship?**

» **Why does the Bible emphasize that compassion was a central part of Jesus' ministry?**

Extra Notes

Prayer

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PSALM 96:4

» **SUPPLICATION:**

Requests that you have.

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-6

» **THANKSGIVING:**

This can mainly focus on the cross, but should also include every good and perfect gift.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:17-18

"We never know how God will answer our prayers, but we can expect that He will get us involved in His plan for the answer. If we are true intercessors, we must be ready to take part in God's work on behalf of the people for whom we pray." **Corrie ten Boom**

SERMON

2

GROWING A CHRIST-HONOURING CULTURE:
Pursuing greatness

MATTHEW 11:1-15

» **QUICK THOUGHTS FROM PASTOR ROB**

Jarome Iginla is the greatest hockey player to ever play the game. I suppose that is controversial to some of you who love hockey, because you would wrongly assume it was someone that you cheer for, but like it or not, Gino Odjick was not better than Jarome.

How we choose who is the greatest of all time at different sports or other areas of life is at least partially relative (okay, I know the greatest hockey player of all time is an Oiler as sad as that is), but when it comes to Christianity Jesus has declared to us, through His Word, how we can be great.

The key to our growth in this area is an understanding of what he defines as great as well as a willingness to pursue it together. May our minds be open to what the Word of God shows us in terms of G.O.A.T. pursuit, and may our feet pursue greatness on the pathway of God, not the world.

2 **GROWING A CHRIST HONOURING CULTURE:** Pursuing Greatness Together:

MATTHEW 11:1-15

» **INTRODUCTION:**

Who is the greatest?

» **LIFTING UP GOD'S NAME & GOD'S WORD**

ISAIAH 66:2

PSALM 138:2

» **LOVING ONE ANOTHER SELF-SACRIFICIALLY:**

1 PETER 4:8

JOHN 13:34-35

» **LOWERING YOURSELF TO SERVE:**

MATTHEW 23:11

» **LEAD TO JESUS:**

MATTHEW 11:1-15

Carson: *"Even the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater yet because, living after the crucial revelatory and eschatological events have occurred, he or she points to Jesus more unambiguously than John the Baptist."*

» **IMPLICATIONS**

a) Know Jesus Through The Gospel

b) Experience The Gospel

c) Live In Light Of The Gospel

d) Lead People To Jesus

JOHN 17:18

ROMANS 8:32

Do you know for sure that you are going to see God in Heaven?

If God were to ask you, *"why should I let you into My Heaven?"*, what would you say?

Extra Notes

» How can you effectively understand and apply Jesus' view of greatness?

» As you meditate on Matthew 11, what made John the Baptist so great?

» Discuss what it means to be greater than John the Baptist as one of the least in the Kingdom of heaven.

» Interact with the implications in a way that you seek to apply them to your life.

» What are some ways we can be transformed in our way of thinking about greatness so that it matches Jesus?

» How can we as a growth group, and church be great God's way?

Extra Notes

Prayer

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PSALM 96:4

» **SUPPLICATION:**

Requests that you have.

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-6

» **THANKSGIVING:**

This can mainly focus on the cross, but should also include every good and perfect gift.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:17-18

*"Regardless of your current life circumstances, spend some time in prayer right now thanking God for who He is and what He has done for you." **Erwin W. Lutzer***

SERMON

3

GROWING A CHRIST-HONOURING CULTURE:
Being ambassadors

2 CORINTHIANS 5:11-21

» **QUICK THOUGHTS FROM PASTOR ROB**

Who are you? Why do you exist? How can you use your life for maximum impact in the short time that you have here?

One of the most important ministry descriptions we are given in the Bible is, Ambassador. Once we recognize this role that we are to play, all of life becomes meaningful as we seek to represent Him well. The most important job that you have, is to be an Ambassador for Jesus. Our hope is that after interacting with this text, you will not only understand your role, but you will also be pursuing greatness as His representative, and through this, pleasing Him.

3 GROWING A CHRIST-HONOURING CULTURE: Being ambassadors

2 CORINTHIANS 5:11-21

» **INTRODUCTION:**

ACTS 1:8

» **I AM HIS:** VERSES 11, 14-15

1 CORINTHIANS 6:19-20

"We make it our goal to PLEASE HIM."

» **I AM HIS AMBASSADOR:** VERSES 18-20

ESTHER 4:14

- An Ambassador is, "a person assigned by the highest authority to represent him in a specific place. Usually a nation's president or prime minister".

"You are divinely assigned to the people in your world, divinely positioned by God as His spiritual rescuer for those around you. Grasp that reality and your everyday activities and relationships will gain greater significance. You will be getting a glimpse of the eternal impact you were made for"

» **I HAVE HIS MESSAGE:** VERSE 21

GALATIANS 1:8-10

- Romans 5: Weak, Ungodly, Sinners, Objects of Wrath, Enemies

» **IMPLICATIONS:**

1. Don't live for yourself but live for Him who died for your sake and was raised.

2. Live As An Ambassador

Extra Notes

» **Interact on how you are doing as an ambassador. Be specific.**

» **Why is it so important that we get the Gospel message right (Galatians 2:1-10)?**

» **Discuss the privilege of God making His appeal through us.**

» **How can you make sure your message is right?**

» **Interact with Romans 5 and the five words that are given there for who we were when God chose to love us.**

» **Interact with the implications from the message, and seek to be very specific in how you want to apply those to your life.**

Extra Notes

Prayer

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» **THANKSGIVING:**

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1 THESSALONIANS 5:17-18

"To pray is to enter the treasure-house of God and to gather riches out of an inexhaustible storehouse." Spurgeon

SERMON

4

GROWING A CHRIST-HONOURING CULTURE: An authentic follower

LUKE 14:25-15:7

» QUICK THOUGHTS FROM PASTOR ROB

What is the cost to following Jesus? There is a huge cost, and this cost is all that we have and all that we are.

Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. All who believe discover the reality that Jesus is the greatest treasure and in that reality choose to surrender all to Him. This means what He wants we will do, where He calls we will go, and we will treasure Him above all. When it comes to building a culture of evangelism, this counting the cost will include celebrating when lost are found. Our hope is that when you have interacted with this text you will count the cost, and realize the treasure that is found in your relationship with Jesus is worth any and all costs — times a billion.

4 **GROWING A CHRIST HONOURING CULTURE:** Knowing you are an authentic follower

LUKE 14:25-15:7

» **INTRODUCTION:**

A Follower Of Jesus

» **REDEFINES ALL OTHER RELATIONSHIPS AROUND JESUS**

LUKE 14:25-35

Jesus is demanding *TOTAL* and *EXCLUSIVE* loyalty from His disciples.

» **RE-ORIENTS THEIR LIVES ON PURPOSE**

LUKE 14:34-35

LUKE 15:1-2

LUKE 19:10

» **REJOICES WHEN ETERNITY IS CHANGED:**

LUKE 15:1-10

» **IMPLICATIONS:**

1. Be An Authentic Disciple:

2. Be Like Jesus

GALATIANS 4:19

3. Become Joyful Over What Causes Heaven To Party:

Extra Notes

Growth Group Questions:

» **What does it mean to count the cost?**

» **Why is this so important to Jesus?**

» **How can we make sure we have counted the cost as His followers?**

» **In Luke 14, Jesus says some pretty strong things about family, and the comparison with our relationship with Him. Discuss these, seeking to understand fully what Jesus meant, and what balances we can put in place to obey other Scriptures on the value of family.**

» **What does it mean to redefine all of our relationships around Jesus? How can we do this effectively?**

» **Why do you think that Jesus puts the stories of salt and light and friendship with sinners so close to these counting the cost passages?**

» **In your own words, what does it mean that Jesus came to seek and save the lost? How can you be a part of this mission? Be specific.**

» **Discuss the picture of the parties in heaven when one sinner is found?**

» **How can you learn to feel this way, when we see conversions around us?**

» **Work through the implications with very specific interaction.**

» **How does Galatians 4:19 fit into this pursuit of developing a culture of evangelism?**

Extra Notes

Prayer

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» **THANKSGIVING:**

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1 THESSALONIANS 5:17-18

"Our growth in prayer may be to us the test of our growth in all other respects."

Spurgeon

SERMON



GROWING A CHRIST-HONOURING CULTURE:

I am dependent

COLOSSIANS 4:2-6

» **QUICK THOUGHTS FROM PASTOR ROB**

Apart from Him we can do nothing. That is easy to say, and yet hard sometimes to truly believe and experience.

As we bring this series to a close, the key to having a Christ-Honouring Culture that reaches out with His Gospel is to be actively filled with prayer. This passage shows us Paul's desire to be prayed for, and the content and context of the prayer are very helpful for those who know they are dependent to reach up, as they long to reach out. Our goal as we work through this passage is to not only to be those who are aware of our dependence, but also those who are prayerful.

5 GROWING A CHRIST HONOURING CULTURE: I am dependent

COLOSSIANS 4:2-6

» INTRODUCTION:

» CONTINUE STEADFASTLY IN PRAYER: VERSE 2

- | | |
|------------------|------------------------|
| • Psalm 16:8 | • Luke 18:1 |
| • Ephesians 6:18 | • 1 Thessalonians 5:17 |

Be *WATCHFUL*

Be *THANKFUL*

» CONTENT OF STEADFAST PRAYER: VERSES 2-6

- Open A Door: Verse 3

- Open A Heart:

ACTS 16:14

ACTS 14:27

- Open My Mouth: Verse 4

» **CONTEXT OF FAITHFUL PRAYER:** VERSES 5-6

» **IMPLICATIONS:**

1. Relationship

2. Reminder

3. Ready

Extra Notes

Growth Group Questions:

» **What does it mean to be dependent?**

» **Why do you think that so few of us in Canada realize just how dependent we are on God?**

» **How can you grow in your grasp of what it means to be dependent?**

» **Why is it important we continue steadfastly in prayer?**

» **What does this look like? Be specific and personal in your answer.**

» **When you pray, what does it mean to pray without ceasing?**

» **Why is it important in this text (and therefore in your life), to be watchful and pray with thanksgiving?**

» **What does it mean to pray that God would open a door?**

» **When we pray for God to open someone's heart, what does this look like practically, and why are we praying for this?**

» **Who are you praying for that needs God to open their heart?**

» **Why is it important to pray that God would open our mouths?**

» **Who has God placed in your life that He wants you to have an open mouth with?**

» **Work through the implications in a way that applies them specifically to your life.**

Extra Notes

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1 THESSALONIANS 5:17-18

"I know of no better thermometer to your spiritual temperature than this, the measure of the intensity of your prayer." Spurgeon



Additional Articles

Article 1

The danger of isolation

In the beginning God declared, *"It is not good that the man should be alone..."*. This verse is about marriage, and our need for one another as men and women, but it is not out of context for us to realize that we, as humans, made in the image of God, need one another. Perhaps, as never before, our culture is living with a false sense of community through our phones, emails, and church online, and missing the essential call to community for believers. We are engulfed in the danger of isolation, and sometimes are not even aware of it.

Community in church is under attack, and many see the gathering of believers and small group ministry as optional, or secondary to so many other things. Biblically speaking, we are made and redeemed to be in community. Small group relationships, and commitment to a local church are essential for spiritual growth.

The Bible displays four main dangers that isolated believers face in the midst of loneliness and the danger of despair.

» DANGER #1: DECEIVED BY SIN

"¹² Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. ¹³ But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

¹⁴ For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end." Hebrews 3:12-14

In this passage, the reason for avoiding isolation is that sin is active in seeking to deceive those who want to follow Jesus. What does this mean? It means that if we are not helping one another, and being around one another in a spiritually healthy way, then sin will deceive and destroy. Those in isolation will start down a road with small compromises that will end in destruction. Sin hardens hearts, and those with hard hearts only awakened to the destruction sin causes when it is way too late.

One of the sure offshoots of isolation is that sin will trick its way into our lives. The only hope we have in our pursuit of purity, and lasting faith, is by living with ONE ANOTHER in a fellowship around the Gospel.

If you want to sin, and have that downhill pathway to destruction coated with ice, then choose isolation. If not, choose community!

» DANGER #2: DEVOID OF LOVE

"³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13:34-35

Love is the greatest of these commandments (1 Corinthians 13), and is only possible to be displayed, the way God commands and desires, in the community of faith.

Jesus has declared that we will be known by our love for one another, and the place where this love is most richly given and received is community.

An isolated believer can't love—at least not in the way that Jesus requires of us. Jesus declares clearly that His followers will be known for their love, and therefore they must choose to self-sacrificially and joyfully be a part of a community of faith. This is also best displayed in a small group where needs can be shared and love displayed. Isolation always leads to a lack of giving and experiencing love God's way.

» **DANGER #3: DEPLETED SERVICE:**

*"¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, [c] to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love." **Ephesians 4:11-16***

The goal of those serving the church in pastoral roles is to equip the church for works of ministry. This passage is very clear: if the local church does not have each person serving, their knowledge of God will suffer, and maturity will be found lacking. In other words, God has so prepared the local church that His followers are a part of that, and if they don't use their gift(s), not only will they miss out, but so will everyone else.

Isolation leads to a lack of service, and the opportunity to be served. When individual followers of Jesus are isolated, the whole body suffers. Jesus has created and redeemed people for a purpose, and that purpose is to do the good works that God has prepared in advance for them to do (Ephesians 2:10), which not only includes, but focuses on, God's people. You have a gift that the local church needs, and isolation makes everyone suffer!

» **DANGER #4: DESTROYED INTIMACY**

*"²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." **Hebrews 10:23-25***

This is a command to help one another stay true to God. This is the passionate pursuit of God that is always done best in community. In fact, this passage makes clear, as the return of Jesus draws near, that the best and perhaps most important way of

staying true to the one "who promised" is for His followers to meet together.

Isolation destroys! It is not good for the Christian to be alone! In fact Christians were created and redeemed to live together in love. Being in community takes effort; avoiding isolation is a decision with feet.

» **SO WHAT NOW?**

1. Commit with your mind to the importance of being a healthy part of a local church, and participate in a small group from that local church that will effectively help you to live in community. You need to see clearly from Scripture the danger of isolation, and the deep need all Christians have for relationships with other believers.

Know this, so that you make a choice this year to deepen your commitment to a local church, and commit to a small group community where love can be flowing. It is biblically essential, and you must see and know this for the danger of isolation which is to be avoided!

2. Commit your heart. This is how you feel, so now it is your mind engaging your desires. You won't always feel like going to church, or being a part of a small group, but now that you understand its importance, pursue it with your emotions.

Long to be together, and in this longing decide to pursue obedience to Jesus and the avoidance of isolation.

3. Commit your feet. Make it hard to miss Sunday morning in your local church. Your church needs you, and you need her. Choose your holidays and your breaks around Sunday morning service.

Join a small group and make it a priority to be there. IN FACT RIGHT NOW, PUT DOWN THIS BOOK AND CONNECT.

Community is more important than work or entertainment and, unless you are committed to active connection with your mind, heart and feet, you will drift . . . and if you drift, you will soon be isolated, and isolation leads to destruction and devastation.

Choose to fight the dangers of isolation with the joy of community!

Article 2 | Trusting God

The two keys to peace in a panicked world

The war to end all wars was fought from 1914-1918. About 61,000 Canadians were killed, and 172,000 injured. This was a war that left many shattered in mind and body. Sadly, as devastating as it was, it was not the war to end all wars.

The great war, known as World War 2, after the war to end all wars, was fought from 1939-1945 and involved virtually all the known world. It included the death of six million Jews, and 40-50,000,000 (three percent of the world's population) deaths all told. Canada again paid her price with 44,000 giving their lives and another 54,000 returning injured. The impact was overwhelming—not only for those wounded and killed, but for the many more it impacted.

Following WW1 and WW2 came the “cold war” (1947-1991) that left the world concerned about its own destruction. A bunker mentality occurred, and children were taught in schools to duck under their desks for protection from nuclear attack. What protection a desk would give you from a nuclear explosion is unclear, but certainly it did not protect these children from what seemed to be an overwhelming cultural anxiety. The USA alone is said to have had 61,000 warheads in the 1960's, and the destruction of the world if they all went off would have been overwhelming and total.

Perhaps the peak of this cold war was in October of 1962, during the Cuban Missile Crisis. For 13 days, the world was poised on the brink of war. Thankfully, cooler heads prevailed and disaster was averted, but it sure seems like the world moves from crisis to crisis, never resting from war.

Today, North Korea is threatening the US (and Canada) with nuclear war. They test missiles and respond to sanctions, and it seems like crisis around the world is a constant companion to humans willing to read the newspaper or watch the news, or even more pronounced, look on the internet. Will Korea strike when they can? Who will respond first to this threat—the US, the rest of the world?

It seems like we live in a world gone mad, and more personal pain is not found just at the world scale. Cancer is awful and real, as so many know, and its impact seems to fall on every family at some point.

I recently checked, and the number of people in the world who die is still at 100%. The impact on others is real and painful, even if the memories are good. Car accidents claim children; people long for a life that would be different from what it currently is; whether that be a longing to have children, or a happier marriage, or, or, or ... the pain is real! Clearly we live in a fallen world, that appears chaotic and out of control, and our own lives often follow this same painful pattern! No wonder anxiety is the normal pattern for so many.

So how do we, as Christians, respond to a fallen world and the pain that sin and its consequences cause all around us? There are many answers to this, but the real question that must be answered is: can we trust God in a world gone mad? Can we rest knowing that He is in control and loves us, even when it feels crazy and chaotic?

People, like Rabbi Kushner have answered “no”, as they reflect on what seems to be chaos in the midst of the pain, and have proposed that God can't be all powerful and good. Unfortunately, this idea has gained popularity, sadly even in places that call themselves churches. It would seem that the culture we live in has a small view of God. In fact, in my estimation, our greatest need as a church is to see God as He is, and live conscious of His presence. As Tozer has powerfully stated, “What comes into your minds when you think about God is the most important thing about you”. So can we trust God in the midst of chaos? And if we can, what does that look like, and what will that yield in our lives?

» DOES THE BIBLE TEACH THAT WE CAN TRUST GOD IN THE MIDST OF CHAOS?

The Bible's answer is “yes”, as Psalm 46 so powerfully teaches:

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.² Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea,³ though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. Selah” **Psalm 46:1-3**

In fact, if we read the Bible carefully, we discover that God is offended when we trust in anything else but Him (Proverbs 20:7; 2 Chronicles 16:9). So how can we be those who please God by taking refuge in the shadow of His wings and trusting Him fully (Philippians 4:4-6)?

» KNOW HIM

This might seem really obvious and yet so few truly trust in Him. We live in an age where our view of God is so small in comparison to what God has revealed Himself to be.

Psalm 9:10 states: *“And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek you.”*

To know God's name here refers to knowing His character—knowing who He has revealed Himself to be. This takes careful study of God's Word in its entirety! It is so easy to be swept away by the world's view of God, and in that find chaos and insecurity! Knowing God intimately always begins with a grasp of His Holiness (Isaiah 6), and a clinging to the cross (Galatians 2:20). To know Him takes effort, takes saying “no” to things that are good, and choosing what is great, such as time in His Word and time in His presence.

Make it your goal to get to know Him better, and to seek to remove any and all unbiblical ways you have of viewing God and to see Him for who He has revealed Himself to be.

Romans 12:1-2 [WHY IS THIS SCRIPTURE VERSE SITTING HERE?]

If we want to be those who take refuge in Him, we also must choose to:

» **LIVE CONSCIOUSLY IN HIS PRESENCE**

Psalm 16:8-9 states: *"⁸ I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. ⁹ Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices [a]; my flesh also dwells secure."*

God is always with us, and we can always trust in Him, but sometimes in the midst of the business of life we can forget. Setting Him before us means that we have reminders that constantly cause us to remember He is with us! This will help us to always be secure and to always pursue purity. Jerry Bridges claims this is where true revival starts and continues and I agree with him. Find ways you can constantly be aware of the presence of God and it will change how you live your life!

Pray continuously! Go to Him at every time of day, and for everything that comes up - always! You can rest in Him if you know Him and if you are conscious of His presence. Trusting God is never passive, it is always active in pursuit of deeper and more authentic relationship. Resting in God takes work, and it is worth it! If you want to trust God, then knowing who He is, and living consciously in His presence, are essential steps for you to take to find peace, purity and purpose in a world that seems so out of control.

Rest in Him! The only way to live out Philippians 4:4-6:

"⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵ Let your reasonableness [a] be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."

So, see reality through your knowledge of God, and interact with reality knowing He is with you, and you will find peace in the shelter of His wings!

Article 3 | Knowing God

3 key pillars to trust

In the last chapter we noted that knowing God and experiencing His presence is key to finding peace in the midst of all anxiety. What do we need to know from God's Word, about God in order to find rest? Many in history have struggled with the reality of who God is, in conjunction with the reality of what they are experiencing. This can lead to chaos, confusion, and despair. If we want to be people who trust God, then our knowledge of God must transform the way we see God.

Jerry Bridges in his great book, *Trusting God: Even When Life Hurts*, declares that there are three attributes of God we must believe in if we are to trust God. He describes them as a three-legged stool, and if any of the legs are missing, we are in trouble in terms of living a life of trusting and obeying God no matter what comes our way.

Can you trust God? Yes, because He is Sovereign, He is All Wise, and He is Loving. Knowing these three things builds faith and yields obedience, no matter what else is going on in life. Knowing God, resting in His power, wisdom, and love, will yield peace in the pursuit of God's glory. So imagine a stool, with three legs holding up a restful place to sit. All need to be known, believed and experienced for the rest that this stool can provide in all of life. For true rest and peace to occur in the midst of life, we must believe what God's Word teaches of His control, His wisdom and His love.

» **LEG 1: GOD IS IN CONTROL**

The Bible not only teaches that God is ALL POWERFUL, but also that God is SOVEREIGN— meaning: He is in control of all things. We can see this in specific verses, in stories, and in the big picture plan of the Bible.

God is in heaven and He does whatever He pleases (Psalm 115:3). This means that He not only can do what He wants, He does what He wants.

Isaiah 40 reveals that He is incomparably great (v. 25); unteachable (verses 13-14); reigns supremely over nations and rulers (verses 15-17); and all of creation (verses 25-28). He is in control, and no power or new information, or anything can stop His hand.

Verses to meditate on that teach of His Sovereignty over good and evil:

- Isaiah 45:5-7
- 1 Samuel 2:6-7
- Lamentations 3:37-38
- Isaiah 42:8-9
- Daniel 4:34b-35

The Bible teaches that God is never off the throne, and always accomplishes His perfect will (Ephesians 1:11). Not only does the Bible teach this in didactic ways,

it also shows it in narrative, in stories. This control of God is displayed clearly in Biblical history, maybe most powerfully in the lives of Joseph, Job and Jesus (the story line of the Bible).

The story of Joseph is not only a wonderful Sunday School story, it provides an overwhelming example of how God works through the free choices of men. Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery, and God used this to accomplish the saving of the Israelites, including those same brothers. Poor Joseph, not only thrown into a pit to die by his brothers, not only sold into slavery and abuse, not only falsely accused and imprisoned, but also for years seemingly forgotten, hope glimpsed - then extinguished. Joseph's response to this situation is clearly related to his understanding of God's working through the choices of men, keeping them responsible, but not letting go of the reality that even when people sin against Him, God is in control.

In Genesis 45:4 Joseph states that his brothers sold him into Egypt. In other words they were responsible for what they did. He goes on to say in verses 7-8 that, "*God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. Now therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt*".

God worked through the free responsible choice of Joseph's brothers to accomplish His decree of what needed to happen for the good of His people and the glory of His name. God is in CONTROL. Joseph sums it up at the end of the book of Genesis saying, "*as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive*" (Genesis 50:20). Clearly in this passage we see that the brothers are still responsible for their free choice of evil, and we see that God works through those choices in His plan to save many lives!

The story of Job is heartbreaking, and overwhelming when understood in the depth of its teaching. Job is faithfully serving God. One day God brings him to the attention of Satan, and chaos occurs. It is helpful to note that Satan can only do what God allows: even as Job loses his wealth, his children and his health. His life comes to an overwhelming end as it were, and the statement of Job is hard to grasp - even when God's Word affirms that he was right.

Here it is:

"²¹ And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."²² In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong." **Job 1:21-22**

Job attributes the loss of his family and wealth to God's control. He could have blamed Satan, the weather, the Sabeans, the Chaldeans, bad luck, or even the consequences of sin in general, yet Job makes it very clear that it was the LORD who has taken away. He rested in God's control in the midst of His deepest pain (and God affirmed this as correct) but did not charge God of doing wrong. He repeats this—perhaps more strongly—in his interaction with his wife, after his health is affected, in 2:10, "*But he said to her, you speak as one of the foolish women would speak.*

Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?" God's response again is to fully receive what Job said, *"in all this Job did not sin with his lips"*.

God is in control! God gave and God took away, and Job was correct to see it that way. Jesus rested in the plan of God, and it is amazing, and repeated in Acts, that God was Sovereign over this. This is the worst, and greatest event in all of history! Jesus, the eternal Son of God, the creator and sustainer of the universe, was crucified. Horrific and heavenly!

Who was in control when Jesus went to the cross?

The Scripture is very clear: God was in control and did not leave His plan, nor His Son, to chance.

"²² Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—²³ this Jesus, [c] delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.²⁴ God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it." **Acts 2:22-24**

God's Word tells us that He knew this would happen, and that He planned for it to happen. He is and always has been in control!

"²⁷ for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel,²⁸ to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place." **Acts 4:27-28**

God can be trusted, because God is in control. Not only over the big things, but even over small things, like sparrows. Matthew 10 states something that, when understood, shows the measure to which God will go to explain His control, His sovereignty:

"²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? [i] And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.³⁰ But even the hairs of your head are all numbered.³¹ Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows." **Matthew 10:29-31**

This is saying that for a sparrow to die, the Father has to will it. The Sovereign power of God, and the carrying out of His plan, is absolute. Meaning that you need never fear—no matter what is going on around you!

God is ALL POWERFUL! He is in control!

LEG 2: GOD IS ALL WISE:

This simply means that, not only does God know all things infinitely so that He can never learn anything, nor be surprised by anything, but that He also uses this knowledge to choose (wisdom) as the best pathway.

What He wills is "best", as He defines it.

This is where God takes Job, at the end of that marvelous book. God speaks, and Job responds in total submission. He saw God, but what did he see? He saw that God knows all things, is all powerful, and can be trusted no matter what happens. As a result, Job "*repents in dust and ashes*", and is restored.

God's will is always best; God's ways are always right; He knows all things and is all wise!

"³³ Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! ³⁴ For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor? ³⁵ Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid? ³⁶ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen." **Romans 11:33-36**

We cannot always understand His plan. In fact, so often we don't; but we can rejoice in the greatness of a God who knows so much more than all of us!

"⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. ⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." **Isaiah 55:8-9**

God's knowledge is so complete that, in Luke 12:6, we find that not one sparrow is forgotten by God, and that not one hair on our heads goes uncounted. God knows all that is knowable, and His wisdom is infinite, so God can be trusted at all times and in all situations!

We are told that God works out all things for the good of those who love Him in Romans 8:28-29. He is not only in control, but in this control, He is working towards what is best in His sovereign all wise plan.

As He is in control, God can be trusted. As He is all wise, God can be trusted.

» LEG 3: GOD IS LOVE

God is personal and knows us by name. If that is not awe-inspiring enough, He not only knows us by name, He loves us! What this means is so much richer than we can even comprehend (Ephesians 3:14-21). God is love, and this love is seen most clearly in the demonstration of Jesus for His people (Romans 5:8-11).

What does it mean that He loves us? It means that God sent us His One and only Son (John 3:16). It means that Jesus came, lived a perfect life, and died in our place. It means that we can see and experience this love, through faith and prayer

(Ephesians 3:14-21). It means He wants what is best for us, and is at work accomplishing that through His eternal plan!

The Gospel is the good news of the love of God for His children, and this love is revealed to us in His sacrifice!

"⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us." **1**

John 4:7-12

This love is not only to be experienced by those who know Him, but is given as a guarantee that nothing separates us from the love of God. What does that mean? It means we can trust Him fully and completely!

"He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" **Romans 8:32**

No matter how you feel, no matter what you are experiencing, you can trust God and His love if you look to the cross, and see it not only as eternity-changing by grace through faith, but also as His guarantee of who He is, so that He will graciously give us all things!

You can rest your trust on God in all circumstances: on His sovereignty, His wisdom, and His love! You are never out of His control, and nothing can happen to you that is not first placed in His path! There will be times when the situation we are in will feel overwhelming, but we who know God, will choose to trust in Him.

"³ When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. ⁴ In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?" **Psalm 56:3-5**

Know God, that He is IN CONTROL, ALL WISE, and LOVING, and that in all situations, in the midst of any fear, you can put your trust in Him!

Article 4

Holiness as an overflow of seeing & experiencing the holiness of God

God Is Holy Holy Holy. This is a statement that most Christians can confidently make, and yet few would be able to define what this attribute of God really means.

It is the only attribute of God that is repeated three times in its description of God (Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8), and in both of these times it is angels shouting out the beauty of who God is. God reveals Himself to His people as HOLY HOLY HOLY! The reason it is repeated in this way is that God is emphasizing His holiness as a core attribute of who He is, that He wants His followers to know. This is not an easy attribute to understand, but essential that God's people try as it becomes the basis of a healthy pursuit of holiness, and the only attribute that God has revealed in this way!

As R.C. Sproul helpfully shares, *"The Bible says that God is holy, holy, holy. Not that He is merely holy, or even holy, holy. He is holy, holy, holy. The Bible never says that God is love, love, love, or mercy, mercy, mercy, or wrath, wrath, wrath, or justice, justice, justice. It does say that He is holy, holy, holy, the whole earth is full of His glory."*²¹

» GOD IS HOLY HOLY HOLY

Grudem defines God's holiness as follows, *"God's holiness means that He is separated from sin and devoted to seeking His own honor"*

When the Bible speaks of God's holiness, it is referring to these two key realities, that God is completely separate (primary meaning), and in this separation, absolutely pure and undefiled seeking His own glory. Sproul goes on to say, "When the Bible calls God holy it means primarily that God is transcendently separate. He is so far above and beyond us that He seems almost totally foreign to us. To be holy is to be 'other,' to be different in a special way. The same basic meaning is used when the word holy is applied to earthly things."²³

Exodus 15:11 shouts out that He is unique, majestic in holiness, 1 Samuel 2:2 that there is no one like Him, He is absolutely and totally unique (Psalm 99:1-3)! He is totally other, completely separate.

To be holy, is to be set apart in moral purity. God hates evil, and is too pure to approve evil (Habakkuk 1:13). Because of His holiness sinners who are in His presence fall apart (Isaiah 6:5), and know immediately their desperate need of grace (Revelation 1:17; Luke 5:8). A proper understanding of the holiness of God drives the sinner to the cross, where they stay and cling (Romans 3:23; 6:23). The only way to stand before a holy God is in the purity of Jesus, sin paid for in full, His righteousness given to those who believe in His name (2 Corinthians 5:21).

In fact, the cross makes profound sense only in light of the holiness of God, and the richness of the righteousness of Christ being imputed to the believer allows His followers to stand in His presence forgiven and pure positionally!

A proper understanding of holiness drives the sinner to pursue practical holiness because God is holy (1 Peter 1:16; Hebrews 12:14). God's holiness is to be a pattern for believers to pursue holiness in their own lives, as well as a strong motive. When someone comes to know Jesus as LORD and Savior, they are not only declared righteous, they are now in a relationship with God that will cause them to pursue holiness, obedience.

To pursue holiness is to seek to know and obey the Word of God in every area of life. This will impact how life is lived 24/7. The question that a wife pursuing holiness asks, is what is God's will for my marriage, and me in it and how do I pursue that. The question for a Christian employee is how can I obey Jesus in whatever circumstance he allows in my life in a way that shows how glorious He is. The question for a child is how can I so respond to my family, and live in my school that I am obedient in every area all of the time.

The great producer of happiness and holiness is a clear view and experience of the holiness of God, seen through the blood bought freedom of Jesus. When humans truly see Him as He is (Job 42:1-6), they will delight in His grace, and pursue holiness like His (1 Peter 1:15). All who know God personally by grace through faith seek to be holy as He is holy! The holiness of God is foundational to a proper experience of the Gospel, and a passionate pursuit of personal holiness.

It is my prayer that this series not only deepens our grasp of the holiness of God, but also overflows into delight in the Gospel and our diligent obedience in every area of life! Almost every issue that I face as a pastoral counselor could be profoundly helped by a clear view of the holiness of God, and a rich experience of Gospel centered living!

Article 5 | Holiness

Gospel delight foundational to holy happiness

Anyone who has tried to make changes in their life knows that it is difficult. More difficult than most other pursuits is a pursuit of holiness, and there are many reasons why a pursuit of holiness can fail. It can fail because those pursuing holiness are not truly saved, so they don't have the power of God at work in their lives. It can fail because people don't have the proper discipline at work in the pursuit. The pursuit of holiness can fail because of a lack of understanding of its importance, and in that an apathy that grantees failure.

All of these are real and dangerous to the authentic Christian, but the number one reason why Christians fail in a long victorious pursuit of holiness is a lack of daily focus on, and experience of the Gospel. This lack of experience of the Gospel will cause a slip into legalism, and/or apathy, so this focus on the Gospel as a moment by moment reminder is essential.

The first reason why this is so important is because the closer one gets to God in their pursuit of holiness, the more sin they will see in their lives. The brighter the light, the more the dirt will show. This showing of sin in the life of a follower of God will lead to despair unless they have experienced the freedom the Gospel produces from sin, in full forgiveness (Romans 8:1; 2 Corinthians 5:21). The Gospel is a constant reminder of the holiness of God, and the length that He went to forgive sinners, who deserve only His wrath. God's love and grace is needed as a daily experience for those who know the holy holy holy God of the Bible!

For the follower of God to experience daily the freedom from condemnation that the Gospel guarantees to those who believe (Romans 8:1) the Gospel must be central! One of the attacks of the demonic realm on followers of God is as the accuser of the Christian (Revelation 12:10) and the demonic realm would love followers of God to feel overwhelmed with the guilt of their sin. The joy of the one centered on the Gospel is that there is freedom from condemnation, and this is absolute and eternal (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Another thing a consistent review of the Gospel produces in the followers of Jesus is a passion to please Him no matter what the cost (2 Corinthians 5:14). The Gospel, when experienced richly, is so compelling that it will always produce a willingness to please Jesus as the priority and passion of the life of His follower (2 Corinthians 5:9). The solution to apathy foundationally is focused on a consistent and ever deepening experience of the Gospel! The pathway to passion is paved with preaching the Gospel to yourself every day!

Selfishness is a mark of the modern era, and can be found throughout history. Even the best of intentions, when done in the flesh are marred by self-interest. The love that the Bible commands followers of God to have (John 13:33-34) is a love that must come as an overflow of experiencing the love of God! We can love, and do love

because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). This is the foundation, source and power of the love that believers are to have for one another! Ephesians 5:1-2 calls the believer to be an imitator of God, and live lives of love and again this call is based on Gospel reality and love. Experiencing the richness of the love of Jesus is necessary to be a person that self-sacrificially displays this defining mark of the followers of God!

The Bible commands followers of God to forgive as they have been forgiven and then teaches that an experience of the forgiveness of God always overflows in a forgiving spirit (Matthew 18:21-35). The more we understand and experience the Gospel the more obvious it becomes that we have been forgiven so richly that any offenses against us become simple to forgive. A lack of willingness to forgive always comes from a lack of experience of the Gospel. The pathway to being a willing forgiver is to have the Gospel and the richness of the love of Jesus something you that is constantly on your mind.

Insecurity is blown away in the context of understanding and living in light of the love of Jesus on the cross (Romans 8:32). No matter what comes the way of the follower of Jesus, there can be a confidence in the love of God, and a deep conscious awareness of His care and promises. The identity of the follower of Jesus is IN CHRIST, and as such, protected and pure. The Christian can have full confidence that who they are in Christ, is beautiful and amazing, and while here on earth they have become His work of art (Ephesians 2:10) as an overflow of their experience of the Gospel (Ephesians 2:8-9). Nothing could be more securing than knowing and experiencing His love, and having confidence in His work in every day life through those who are committed to Him.

Pride and its death are the entrance point to the Gospel (Matthew 5:3), and it is also the Gospel experience that daily brings humility. Humility is, "not thinking less of yourself, but thinking about yourself less", and if this is true the way to lose self is to fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:1-2). The pathway to greatness in God's eyes, is the pathway of servant hood and this is always paved through a proper understanding and experience of the Gospel.

A growing Gospel centered life is a life that reaches out to others with the good news of Jesus the Messiah! The more someone experiences the richness of His love (Ephesians 3:14-21), the more they will reach out with His love to others. A culture of evangelism that is powerful and consistent is always an overflow of the richness of the love of God!

If these things are true, that freedom, passion, love, ability to forgive, identity, security, humility and purpose are an overflow of experiencing the reality of the good news of the Gospel every day, then how do we do this? How do we preach the Gospel consistently to ourselves so that we can live as an overflow of our first love relationship with God (Matthew 22:37-38).

There are some aids for remembering the Gospel that are built into the rhythm of the church that are helpful. **Being committed to the local church** will be a huge help (if that church is healthy) of an ever deepening experience of the Gospel. Every sermon should include a focus on Christ and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 1:23), and the ordinances of the church are built by Jesus for His church for their focus and experience

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to be growing ever deeper (communion and baptism). Being committed to a healthy community of believers where this is a priority is helpful to the ever deepening pursuit of living a Gospel centered life.

The second key to living a gospel-centered life is to learn to build in reminders. Jerry Bridges calls this preaching the Gospel to oneself every day. It is bringing to the conscious what is real and should impact every other reality. This is done by reminding oneself of the content of the Gospel, and then praying for an ever deeper experience of it in relationship to Jesus. This is something that should be done moment by moment through the day so that the experience and reality of the Gospel shapes our thoughts, our motives and our behavior!

Any practical pursuit of holiness must be done as the overflow of a Gospel centered life or it is doomed for failure! If you are a follower of Jesus, center your life on the Gospel, and in that discover the joy of an abundant life loyal to Him on all points (John 10:10).



Article 6 | Evangelism

Preparing your testimony

1 Peter 3:15

How can you prepare a testimony that is short, covers the most important things, and is effective at exalting Jesus and at pointing others to Him?

» MY LIFE BEFORE I KNEW JESUS

- What was my life like? Try to relate this to the person you are talking to.
- What was the focus of my life? Security? Happiness? Value?
- What emptiness did this produce?

Remember not to exalt sin in any way.

» HOW I GOT TO KNOW JESUS:

Be sure to include the content of the Gospel.

- God is Holy.
- I am not.
- Jesus lived a perfect life, died in my place, and rose again, paying the penalty for sin, taking the wrath of God on Himself.
- Through faith and repentance, I can know Him.
- He gives me new purpose, and the power to live for Him.
- Were there any struggles that you went through before you surrendered your life to Jesus?

» WHAT MY LIFE IS LIKE NOW:

- Celebrate how your life is now, finding satisfaction in Jesus
- Be realistic.
- Share what motivates you as you move forward in your relationship with Jesus.

Biblical Example: Paul (Acts 22:1-21)

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I was born into a loving family that made God a priority in their lives. Mom and dad loved us as children and we always had the privilege of going to church, and learning about God.

Camp was a significant part of our family's summers, and at the age of five I responded to an altar call, and said, "the prayer". I'm pretty sure that this was not the only time that summer I said this prayer. In fact, over the next many years it became a much repeated prayer, sometimes with tears, as I longed to make sure that if and when I died I got to go to heaven, and not to hell. Over the years I continued to grow in my knowledge of God, trained by my family, church and a love for reading. I tried to follow God, but always found myself slipping into a worldly way of living and finding satisfaction. I wanted friends and tried to be cool through sports and being like everyone else, minus my Mennonite religious no's. It seemed to me that I was missing out on a true relationship with God, even as I was missing out on all the fun my friends were having. I was missing the best of both worlds, and I knew it.

After High School, I went to S.A.I.T. to become a Power Engineer, to make good money in an easy job. I still attended church, but also had a lot of good friends in the program. At one point, one of them thanked me for not being like some of the other Christians they knew, but being just like them. I took it as a compliment, but my conscience was starting to awaken. A close friend was dragged behind a car after a night at the bar, and could have died. His face was scraped up, and it hit me that if he had died, I had not shared anything with him about the Gospel. I cried out to God, and decided that if He was real, I would serve Him with all my might. If He wasn't, I would join the partying going on around me and have "fun"- with the friends my religion was causing me to avoid. I sought God, but really, He found me, and I realized that this Gospel was much more than a prayer to keep me out of Hell! I realized that what I had was not a relationship with God that drove and defined me, but was rather an empty religious tradition. I wanted more, and so cried out to God and gave my life to Him.

Realizing that God was holy, and I was a sinner, falling so short of His glory, awakened in me a longing to experience His love. As I engaged my heart in what Jesus did in living without sin, and dying in my place, I realized that the risen Savior not only deserved a professed faith, but real faith, my entire life. I believe that Jesus died in my place, and through that paid my penalty in full, so I am forgiven. I am bought with a price, and now that He owns me, I am set free!

I surrendered to Him, and from that point felt His call on my life. Following Jesus has not always been easy, in fact sometimes it is harder than the coasting that I used to do, but it is my overwhelming privilege now to introduce others to Him, and I would have it no other way. The authentic Christian life is costly, but WORTH IT! The greatest treasure is found not only in being forgiven, but also in choosing to know Him, and live for His glory. I still struggle sometimes with sin in my own life, and not being as focused as I want to be, but with all that I am, and all that I have, I want to serve Him!

Article 8 | Evangelism

Multiplication

Isn't it great that we have evangelists like Billy Graham. It is so good that he has reached so many with the Gospel! We know that no one is perfect, and so are not claiming that for Billy or other evangelists, but we are glad that people like him exist so that the Gospel can be shared with others.

As thankful as we might be for evangelists, and people with the gift of evangelism, the plan of God includes every follower of God representing Him to others—as if He was making His appeal through each one of us. Our goal in this mini-series can be summed up with the phrase, “each one reach one”. What we mean by this is that each person who knows Jesus makes an effort to pray for opportunities to share the Gospel within their sphere of influence, and when those opportunities arise, to take advantage of them. If each of us were to take this call from God seriously, the impact on making disciples would be overwhelming!

Walter Hendrikson, in his great little book called, “Disciples are Made Not Born”, shows the power of multiplication, through a story. He supposes that a father offers his two sons the choice of taking either one dollar a week for 52 weeks, or one cent the first week, and an amount each week over the next 51 weeks that is double the previous week's amount.

The first choice would earn \$52—a good amount if you lived in the early 1900's; but the penny, in the multiplication game, would earn \$22,517,136. The power of multiplication on display, but no one is offering us a dollar, or a penny. So what does the power of multiplication have to do with making disciples?

Another story: Suppose you are a really great evangelist, so good in fact that you lead 1,000 people to faith in Jesus every day. Over a year, you would lead 364,000 people to faith. WOW! Would that not be an amazing growth pattern for our church - if we just had that one person! However, if one person led someone to Jesus, and then over that year disciplined that person so that he or she were to become a fully devoted follower of Jesus - well, at the end of one year you would have two followers (I am good at math!). If those two, in turn, led one person each over the next year to Jesus, and disciplined them so that each person reached one more person, who would then reach one more person, at the end of two years, you would have four followers (Dr. Nosal would be proud of me). If this process were to continue, at the end of 10 years the evangelist would have led 3,650,000 people to Jesus, and at the end of 25 years, would have led 9,125,000 into a heaven-bound relationship.

The “Each One Who Reaches One” group, growing one-by-one a year, at the end of 10 years would have 1,024 people growing and maturing in their faith and ready to reach one more. By the end of 25 years, there would be 33,554,432 followers of Jesus, and from there it is astronomical in terms of growth! As far as I know, Cloverdale Baptist Church does not have anyone reaching 1,000 people a day. However, if each of us reaches one person, we will experience incredible multiplication growth.

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Here is the challenge: Will you pray that God would prepare you to reach out with the Gospel this year, and help one other person know Him, and be equipped to reach out and live for Jesus? If each of us will do this, who knows what will happen over the next 25 years for the glory of the KING!

The best way to be a culture that reaches out, is for each of us to take seriously this call, and to become equipped, and unleashed into the world of the harvest. The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Will you pray for laborers, and commit to become one of those EACH ONE, WHO REACHES ONE?

What is the gospel?

[<https://www.gmarks.org/answer/what-gospel/>]

» ANSWER

The Gospel is the good news about what Jesus Christ has done to reconcile sinners to God. Here's the whole story:

1. The one and only God, who is holy, made us in his image to know him (Gen. 1:26-28).
2. But we sinned and cut ourselves off from him (Gen. 3; Rom. 3:23).
3. In his great love, God sent his Son Jesus to come as king and rescue his people from their enemies—most significantly their own sin (Ps. 2; Luke 1:67-79).
4. Jesus established his kingdom by acting as both a mediating priest and a priestly sacrifice. He lived a perfect life and died on the cross, thus fulfilling the law Himself and taking on himself the punishment for the sins of many (Mark 10:45; John 1:14; Heb. 7:26; Rom. 3:21-26, 5:12-21); then he rose again from the dead, showing that God accepted his sacrifice and that God's wrath against us had been exhausted (Acts 2:24, Rom. 4:25).
5. He now calls us to repent of our sins and trust in Christ alone for our forgiveness (Acts 17:30, John 1:12). If we repent of our sins and trust in Christ, we are born again into a new life, an eternal life with God (John 3:16).

Now that's good news!

A good way to summarize this good news is to biblically unpack the words: God, Man, Christ.

» RESPONSE.

1. **God.** God is the creator of all things (Gen. 1:1). He is perfectly holy, worthy of all worship, and will punish sin (1 John 1:5, Rev. 4:11, Rom. 2:5-8).
2. **Man.** All people, though created good, have become sinful by nature (Gen. 1:26-28, Ps. 51:5, Rom. 3:23). From birth, all people are alienated from God, hostile to God, and subject to the wrath of God (Eph. 2:1-3).
3. **Christ.** Jesus Christ who is fully God and fully man, lived a sinless life, died on the cross to bear God's wrath in the place of all who would believe in him, and rose from the grave in order to give his people eternal life (John 1:1, 1 Tim. 2:5, Heb. 7:26, Rom. 3:21-26, 2 Cor. 5:21, 1 Cor. 15:20-22).
4. **Response.** God calls everyone everywhere to repent of their sins and to trust in Christ in order to be saved (Mark 1:15, Acts 20:21, Rom. 10:9-10).

(Some of this material has been adapted from *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism* by Mark Dever, p. 43).

