

Millennium Men Outline

- 1. Week 1: Biblical Manhood: Discovering Our Purpose (Homework: Spiritual Gifts Test)**
- 2. Week 2: Who we are: Design Reveals Destiny (Homework: Personality Profile Test DISC or Enneagram)**
- 3. Week 3: SHAPE Going Over Spiritual Gifts Test and Personality Profile**
- 4. Week 4: SHAPE Part 2 (Homework: Write 100 Things You Like About Yourself)**
- 5. Week 5: Zeitgeist: Understanding our time and place in history and our response to modern culture.**
- 6. Week 6: Death Forgiveness and Love**
- 7. Week 7: The Royal Priesthood (Homework: Write a letter to Your Biological Father)**
- 8. Week 8: Our Father and our father.**
- 9. Week 9: Achilles Heel**
- 10. Week 10: Stewards of Blessing**
- 11. Week 11: The Power of Authority**
- 12. Week 12: The Holy Spirit. Who is He and What is His Role in Our Lives?**
- 13. Week 13: Sharing our Testimony. Every man has a story. It's time to tell yours. (No Written Lesson)**
- 14. Week 14: Testimonies Week 2: (No Written Lesson)**
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- 16. Week 16: Your Purpose**
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- 18. Statements of Faith**

Foreword

I wrote this manual, for that is what it is, a manual for men to live an abundant, fulfilled, meaningful life. It is a step-by-step guide to *becoming* at the highest-level Maslow or Stephen Covey ever thought possible—it is aligning ourselves as men, with our Creator and His wishes and dreams for our lives. This is a manual to step out into the great adventure as Bilbo Baggins from the *The Hobbit* stepped from the safety of the Shire into the unknown adventure that changed him forever, so that upon return to the safety and familiarity of the Shire, he could no longer stand living there. He had attained his higher purpose, his calling, and his destiny. This is a manual for men to help them discover their God-given purpose.

I'm a business consultant by trade. I've sat across the table from hundreds of men throughout my years as a consultant and asked the question, "Why are you here? What is your purpose in life?" Through this rudimentary survey, I've seen the vast majority of them, almost all save for the few, hang their heads in shame and whisper as if half lost, "I wish I knew." These are not the indigent or sloven. These are not men drifting through life or floating from job to job, woman to woman. Some of these men are anchors in their respective churches, solid husbands and fathers, politicians, multi-millionaires, and what society would call "winners". Men who have taken hold of the American Dream of owning their own business and forging their own empires. Many times, they would ask me if I knew mine, to which I would shake my head and say, "I am in the same boat as you, my friend."

For years, I searched and longed for the answer to one of the great questions, perhaps the greatest question, "Why am I here?". I began to pray and seek the answer. I read psychology books, books about manhood, spiritual books and I read my Bible. And it was there that God revealed to me my purpose, and the purpose of every man. For we are all born into the same human condition; we are all men, and we are built of the same stuff. Our souls long for the same things. We are all made by One Creator. He designed us all.

I am no more qualified to write this manual than any other man that has walked on the face of this earth. Perhaps, I am less so, for I am no scholar, philosopher, or esteemed thinker. I accepted a job with just six semester hours left before I graduated college with an English degree, but I never went back to get the sheepskin. I am no man at all to tell you how to live your life. I have made so many mistakes and blunders that I cannot count them all. It is by the grace of God that I'm still in business; in fact, it is by his mercy that I am still alive. But when I tell men that I know what the purpose of their life is, they perk up and say, "What is it? How can I know my purpose?" I tell them my story, for that is the one I know best. I tell them how I grew up, how broken I was until I found Christ. Many of them are Christians, so they ask me for more. I tell them how I searched out the

answer to the question, not as an Existentialist, with myself at the center of the question, but as a follower of Christ, with Christ at the center of the question, and I found a deep and satisfying answer. I found the illumination of God's Truth resonate with my spirit, and I hold these Truths to be self-evident. When you hear them or read them, I believe you will have the "Aha" moment that I did, and it will change your life. It will give you purpose and direction. That is my ultimate prayer.

There is also another reason to spell out these words that formulate sentences and thoughts into the ether... There is a deep heresy being fed and ingested by an unwitting world, and perhaps an unwitting church. As to its aim and the fruit it will bear, that is fully yet to be revealed, but the budding of it is at the very least divisive, diminutive, and devolving of man and men. Its roots are unknown except it was birthed in darkness. I do not know if there is a New World Order advancing like a swift nimbus, casting a shadow over everyone. Like most evils, it is disguised as good, like the good of equality, specifically women's equality—which is a half-truth, veiled in the advancement of women, but is copious in bondage. Men are being diminished for the sake of the goodness of all. Our authority has ended, the world lets out a cry of freedom, confetti rains, just as the statues and statutes of male role dominance in the workplace, in the marketplace, in the houses of worship, and in the home are crumbling. The warlord brutes, the slimy businessmen, the backroom politicians, the caveman with one hand on his beer and the other on his balls while screaming at the ball game, are fossilizing before our eyes as a new generation of empowered women, empowered they/them, flaunt their newfound liberation. Meanwhile, men slink back into the shadows. The world has coined the phrase, "toxic masculinity" which defines all masculinity that is strong, competitive, competent, and powerful is dangerous. Regardless of the protection it has done or the freedoms it has won, it is no longer deemed necessary in this New World.

If I were the enemy of this world, I would attack men. I would deem them worthless, and lump all of them into the category of "dangerous" or outdated. I would emasculate them and disenfranchise them from the rest of the world. What's coming is coming. We can see that nimbus on the horizon, and it has already started to rain. Men no longer know how to be men. Are we to be the WWII male, stoic and masculine, dutiful and honorable, or are we supposed to cry at our daughter's dance recital and let the woman lead, for it is her time. The advice "Happy wife, happy life" gets twisted into the worldview of letting our wives do all things in the home and relinquishes us from decision making and siphons our God-given spiritual authority in the home. Like many of the enemy's lies, it is a half-truth.

"Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers." (1 Peter 3:7 NIV) Here, the Holy Spirit through Peter, tells us how to treat our wives and

even puts a condition upon it, “so that nothing will hinder your prayers.” This isn’t a suggestion, but a commandment. We are to be considerate and respect our wives. In most marriage vows we say that we will “honor” our wives... As if we know what that means, anymore. We must define what honor is. We must define what respect and consideration means to fulfill the commandment, otherwise, our prayers will be hindered. There is a direct correlation between how we treat our wives and how God hears us. That is profound and something to pontificate.

I believe our manhood lies somewhere between the stoic John Wayne caricature and the effeminate creature the world is trying to cast into the mold of “modern man”. We should be dutiful, sometimes stoic, but there is nothing to be ashamed about the beauty of a father’s love for his daughter displayed in tears at a dance recital. We are to be respectful and courteous. That doesn’t mean always-acquiescent. Our houses aren’t democracies. We are the leaders. Good leaders take advice, listen to their teams, and move forward with every piece of data they can muster within the proper time frame. Good leaders don’t always submit. Jesus didn’t say, “Blessed are the peacekeepers.” In the Sermon on the Mount. He said, “Blessed are the peacemakers.”. There is no better contrast between the two than between Chamberlain and Churchill. One refused to engage with Hitler, no matter how shredded the Treaty of Versailles became; the other understood that to stop a bully, you had to go to war. Meekness isn’t weakness. Meekness is having the strength to engage but exhausting all peaceful solutions before engaging in battle. That is our job as servant-leaders. That is part of the character of Christ, and therefore should be ours, as well.

My hope is that this manual will help define manhood as God sees it, your role within your family and the reason God made you. That is my prayer. Enjoy the journey.

Scriptural References

I will refer to the following scriptures during the course. I’m placing them here for your reference. Take a moment to read through these before you begin.

You are called.

John 15:16 *16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.*

2 Peter 1:10

10 *Therefore, my brothers and sisters,[a] make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never*

*stumble, **11** and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

You were designed for a purpose.

Proverbs 20:5

The purposes of a person's heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out.

(This implies that it takes **insight** to draw out your purpose.)

1 Peter 2:9

***9** But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

God has a task for you to do

Ephesians 2:10

***10** For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

2 Timothy 1:9

***9** He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,*

God has a plan for you

Jeremiah 29:11

***"11** For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."*

Satan has a plan for you.

Job 1:7

The Lord said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the Lord, "From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it."

John 10:10

***10** The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.*

You are a warrior. You are in a war.

Ephesians 6:12

12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

2 Corinthians 2:10-11

*10 Anyone you forgive, I also forgive. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, **11** in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.*

(Forgiveness is essential to thwarting the schemes and plans of the enemy.)

Called to Victory!

Hebrews 12:1

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Matthew 16:17-19 (ESV)

*17 And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. **18** And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock[a] I will build my church, and the gates of hell[b] shall not prevail against it. **19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed[c] in heaven.”***

Matthew 11:12

And from the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.

Joel 3:9:10

Proclaim this among the nations: Prepare for war! Rouse the warriors! Let all the fighting men draw near and attack. Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears.

Why the man is the essential in the salvation of his family and home

Acts 16:29-31

And the jailer called for lights and rushed in and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what

must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household."

Why we need to build new neural pathways

Proverbs 23:7 (KJV)

For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.

The need for accountability partnerships

James 5:16

Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

Matthew 28:19-20

"Go, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."

What are my gifts and how do I know that I'm going to win my battles?

2 Timothy 1:6-7

"For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. 7 For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline."

Romans 8:37-39

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,[k] neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

M2 Week 1

Biblical Manhood: Discovering Our Purpose

The Problem: Biblical Manhood is under attack. The World's View of man's role in the world is contradictory to the role that God has designed for man. The World wants men to be weaker; because Satan knows that men submitted to Christ and engaged in advancing the Kingdom, are powerful.

Question 1: What does it mean to be a man?

The first thing that God told Adam is found in Genesis 1:28: *God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."(NIV)*

God expects man to be fruitful and multiply and to subdue the earth. **God designed Adam to be a multiplier and a subduer!** If that was Adam's design, then it's also your design. To prove that, let me share with you two scriptures:

1. **Isaiah 55:11 God's Word never returns void.** *So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. (NIV).* Which Words that come out of God's mouth will not return void? Every Word. God doesn't give conditions to this in Isaiah 55. He just states very clearly that His Word will not return void. So, the very first command that God gave to Adam, is a command still echoing throughout eternity. And as God commanded Adam, God so commands us. God is not a respecter of persons. (Acts 10:34) In another translation, the same verse says that God does not show favoritism. Therefore, what God spoke to Adam, He is speaking to you: "Be fruitful and multiply. Subdue the earth." Your first calling as a man is to be fruitful with EVERYTHING that God has given to you. You can't be fruitful with something He didn't give to you nor can you multiply zero. Therefore, God has given you gifts, abilities, talents, attributes and people around you that God wants you to multiply. Furthermore, there are beasts of the field and of the spiritual realm that God wants you to subdue! This is your first purpose and calling which is quite contrary to what the world is trying to make into men. We can hardly turn on the television today without seeing a commercial where the man is portrayed as bumbling, aimless and clumsy, but clearly God doesn't see us that way. He sees us as men who subdue, men who multiply and men who are fruitful!
2. **Romans 8:37 (this might be my favorite verse in the whole Bible!)** *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. (NIV)* Men, you were designed to conquer! And the good news is that Jesus has beaten the enemy, already. He's won and He has all authority on earth and in heaven. **Matthew 28:18** *Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. (NIV)* Do you feel like a conqueror? Do you feel like you could literally battle the forces of evil and come out victorious? If you don't, then you need to go through bootcamp! You need to discover the Warrior within and get yourself ready because the world is turning and the enemy is active! Jesus may have won the war, but there are still battles that need to be won. Every person, every single life is worth fighting for. The addicted, the poor, the

depressed, the broken, the forsaken, the orphans, the disabled, the heartbroken, the frustrated, the listless, the cowardly and all of those effected by every scheme the enemy has designed against them and us! **Our fight is for souls and the stakes are eternal! This is part of your purpose! Part 1 of your purpose is to be enter into the battle! The problem is, most men have never engaged. My brothers, it's time to engage in the battle! There is so much at stake and we need you in the fight!**

How do we engage? How do we fight? We will raise up men, train them to be the spiritual warriors they are called to be by God!

- **Millennium Men is designed to do the following:**
- **Understanding Who, When, and Why we Exist**
- **Deal with Past Personal Pain and Issues**
- **Deal with our Issues with authority and our earthly fathers.**
- **Better know the tools we have for warfare and how to utilize them.**
- **Better know and understand the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives**
- **Teach Men how to share their testimony**
- **Create Accountability Relationships in order to keep us all on the right track**
- **Help Men understand their specific purpose!**

Let's cast off fear.

Let's be action based, not just talk.

Commit to being the spiritual leaders of our homes.

What is a Millennium Man?

A surrendered Christ follower that is engaged in the spiritual battle for his family, his church and his friends. A man that is a good steward of all of his resources and is actively Advancing the Kingdom of God by fulfilling his purpose through Spiritual Warfare and Making Disciples.

Question 2: What is Man's Purpose? What is my Purpose?

You Are Made with Purpose in Mind

Ephesians 2:10 (NKJV)

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

You were designed to do good works. Another way to say that is that you have a destiny! Have you ever felt a deep yearning inside of you for a destiny that you were certain was there, but uncertain of how to attain it? That's because your true purpose is only found when you are completely submitted to the Will of the One who made you! What if you were an alien that landed on earth and had never seen a riding lawnmower before and didn't have an owner's manual? You might fire up the lawnmower and use it to get to and from work or to run errands, but you'd be completely missing its purpose! Eventually, you'd find a Subaru or Toyota and abandon the lawnmower, thinking it wasn't nearly as effective as a mode of transportation, and you'd be right. How frustrating that would be if you were the lawnmower!

I believe most men aren't being used for the exact purpose that God has designed for them. Many men diminish themselves often with self-talk like, "I'm worthless.", or "I'm not good enough.". This isn't true and you must stop diminishing the creation that God so carefully made—YOU! Maybe you're not a Ferrari, but maybe you're the best John Deere tractor that's ever been built! All of us were designed with a purpose and for a purpose. 1 Corinthians 12:12 says that there are many parts of the body, some we can see and some that are behind the scenes, but all are worthy, useful and important. Paul was writing about usefulness and purpose within churches and churches are made up of people who also have different sets of gifts. You were created for a purpose and your design reveals your destiny!

God made the earth in six days and rested on the seventh. That means he made the Grand Canyon, the rivers, lakes, streams, the mountains and beaches, and all of the wonderful vacation spots that people flock to year after year, just to envision the handiwork, the artistry of our God! But He didn't make you in six days. He took His time making you. Psalm 139:13-14 says:

*For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.*

My mom went through a crocheting phase in the early 80's when I was growing up and she would crochet for hours and hours. It took her almost a whole year to make each one of us a blanket. I didn't appreciate it then, but she worked very hard making everyone in the family something that she could give them for Christmas. She carefully chose the colors that each one

of my brothers would receive. She put her heart into it and so did God when He made you! He carefully chose every detail about you. None of it was haphazard. From your eye color to your sense of humor. Every detail was carefully thought through, down to the nanometer. God didn't leave out anything that you need, and He didn't give you anything you didn't need. Your purpose lies within you and that's why we need to look at your makeup, in order to help us determine your overall purpose in life.

Please let me clarify something: Your purpose isn't your vocation. It's not your job. God's purpose for you is much larger than your 9-5. God placed inside of you a heart for eternity. Ecclesiastes 3:11 says, **11** *He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet[a] no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.* Somewhere deep inside of you, you KNOW that your place in history is an eternal one. I think often about how people desire to be famous, even if for a moment. I believe that carnal desire stems from a deeper one that God placed within us, it's only misguided in the search for fame, or in some cases, infamy. I can only promise that nothing the world gives, not fame, not fortune, not money or power will ever fulfill the need and desire for eternity within your heart.

God made you for a purpose and that purpose is eternal.

Question 3: What am I willing to die for? Maybe that is what is worth living for.

You may be asking, what purpose of mine could possibly last for eternity? What could I do that would be around even one hundred years from now, much less a billion or a trillion years from now? Think about it... In one thousand years, no one will remember or care who won the Super Bowl in 2020. Even the most famous players of our time will barely be a footnote in history, one thousand years from now and probably not even a vapor of thought in a million years. So, there's nothing you can do or accomplish that could make an eternal impact except to invest in something that lasts forever: People. Our souls are eternal. God said that He made us in His image. Your body is breaking down every day, no matter what age you are, or how healthy you are, one day, even the greatest athlete grows old and will die. But our souls live forever, and that soul will spend eternity either in Heaven with God or in Hell, completely separated from God. It's up to each individual person, where he or she spend eternity. No one decides, but ourselves.

Most of you taking this class probably know Jesus as your personal savior. You're here because you want a closer walk with Him, and you want to discover your purpose in Him. But I would be remiss if I didn't share with you the wonderful miracle that God freely gave us, His Son, Jesus.

Jesus was a real man who walked on this earth. That is undoubtable and there is more evidence that He was a real person than there actually is that Abraham Lincoln is a real person. Jesus was fully human, but He performed many miracles. His final miracle was that He was crucified on a cross by the Romans. He was tortured and beaten, and He died on the cross. A man named Nicodemus and Joseph took His body and laid it in a tomb. Roman soldiers guarded the tomb, but an angel came and opened the tomb and Jesus rose from the cleft in the rock. He rose from the grave, proving that He was God. Over 500 people saw Him alive after His crucifixion. Many of those people gave their very lives instead of recanting their testimony. Ten of those men that were martyred due to their testimony about Jesus were known as His disciples and their stories are well documented.

Jesus came because He wants to reconcile you to Him. Since the day that Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, God has been preparing to reconcile Himself to mankind. Why? Because He loves you and wants to have a personal relationship with you. Since the beginning, every man since Adam has chosen to sin. At some point in your life, you have sinned as well. Even the most righteous person you've ever met has sinned. I heard an analogy once that said if everyone stood on the shore in San Diego and we all had to swim to Hawaii, whomever swims the farthest is still going to fall short and drown. None of man's righteousness can get Him to God. Only Jesus is the bridge that will take us and reconcile us to Him. John 14:6 says, *Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.* That's very simply put, but also very profound. No one can get to heaven on their own goodness. No one can get to Heaven through Mary or John or Peter. No one can get to Heaven because of their mom or grandpa. We each are responsible for our own relationship with Jesus. What we do with Jesus is the key. The Bible even says that many will think that they are saved, but in the end, Jesus will say, "Depart from me, I never knew you." The Bible even says that they thought they were saved because they had done a lot of good works for Him. But still, they didn't know Him. I think it's comparable to saying, "I know who the President of the United States is." Yes. Most of the world knows who his name. But only his child could text him or call him at any hour and get a response.

I often hear these words when I'm sharing my faith with someone else: "But I couldn't believe in a God that would send people to Hell." My answer usually surprises them. God doesn't send anyone to Hell. He lets people make the choice. You can either choose Jesus who has paid the price for your sin or you can pay for your own sins. Please don't make the mistake of trying to pay for your own sins. The cost is eternity, separated from the God who loves you and made you. Everything inside of you that is good comes from Him. Everything that you see that is good, even the breath in your lungs, comes from God. God is love and He loves you.

If you know that, deep down and right now, I'm praying that God would be revealing to you that you are a sinner, just like me, and that you need a savior, just like me. Just like everyone on earth. We all need the saving grace of Jesus. His love is waiting. Revelation 3:20 says that He is standing at your heart's door and knocking. If you open the door, He will sup with you and you with Him. What a meal! God, the One who made everything desires to have a meal with you! The meal is peace, joy and love and all of the wonderful attributes that God has for you. Do you feel anxious or broken or sad? Jesus is the answer. You will immediately feel a peace that you cannot explain. A peace that comes only with being reconciled to your Creator.

Don't go into this moment lightly. Some say that salvation is free, but it's not. It's going to cost you the life that you want. It's going to cost you everything. When we give our lives to Christ, we are saying, "You are Lord." We cannot call Him Savior without calling Him Lord. There are so many people out there who think they're saved, but they've never really made Him Lord. Would you like to do that now? If you pray these simple words and believe them in your heart, then you will be saved:

God, I know that I'm a sinner and that I need a savior. I am turning away from my sin and my own will, and I accept Jesus Christ as my savior and the Lord of my life. Please send your Holy Spirit to dwell in me, change me and mold me into the man you desire. I ask this in Jesus's name, Amen.

Wow. Thank you for praying that prayer. Whether it's your first time or the thousandth time, there's something wonderful about calibrating your soul to the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. He's a good and faithful God. **He is love.** That's not one of His attributes, that's who God is. You may have felt judgment from other Christians or people pretending to be Christians, but the Bible says that God doesn't judge you until the end. Romans 2 says that it's the kindness of God that draws men. His grace, His kindness, and His love for you doesn't diminish, no matter where you are or what you've done. I've even had men tell me that God could never forgive them. That's a lie the enemy would like for you to believe. One of the most prolific serial killers in the history of the US was radically saved in prison and is now a prolific evangelist! His name is David Berkowitz, but in the bicentennial summer of 1976, he was known as the Son of Sam. Here is an excerpt from cli.world, The Prison Alliance website:

In 1987, 10 years into his sentence, a stranger approached Berkowitz in the prison yard. He said, "David, Jesus Christ loves you. He wants to forgive you and he sent me to this prison to tell you this." The stranger handed Berkowitz a New Testament with Psalms and Proverbs. At first, Berkowitz refused to believe that Jesus would want to save a man like him. But one day, as Berkowitz was reading his Bible, he came across Psalm 34, and as

he read verse six, "This poor man cried and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles," David knelt on the hard, prison floor and began to weep. At that moment, the Son of Sam died. The Son of Hope was born.

No matter what you've done, God can forgive you. The Son of Sam murdered thirteen people over that hot summer in New York in 1976. Today, the Prison Alliance estimates that his testimony has brought over 200,000 inmates to faith in Jesus Christ! You see, God can use your past, no matter what it is! So, welcome to The Kingdom. Today, we are brothers in Christ! (That's why I greet most men I see as, "brother". Because if they're not my brother in Christ yet, my goal is that they will be one day.)

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

When we make Jesus the Lord of our lives, we become a new creation! The old man dies and a new one is born, spiritually. So, right now, if this is the first time you've prayed that prayer or if you're rededicating your life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, then you're made new! The very man that God designed, that God thought of before the foundation of the world is born! You were dead, your soul was alive, your body was alive, but your spirit was dead and now it is alive! Hallelujah! So, mark the calendar, today is your new birthday! Your true birthday! I remember the day I stopped pretending. The day my life was falling apart, and I dropped to my knees and gave Jesus my life. I had prayed the prayer of salvation dozens of times in my life, but on July 12, 1998, I surrendered. I stopped living the life I wanted to live. I knew the truth because I had grown up in church, but I always wanted what the world had to offer first. That was the day that I knew that what the world had to offer was worthless, and all I wanted was what God had for me. And ever since that day, God has been refining me like a silversmith refines his masterpiece; He gently removes the dross until He can see his reflection in His creation.

You're a man and you're alive in Christ. Now what? I'm so glad you asked! The great adventure awaits, my friend! God's will and plan for your life is going to be amazing. Whether you're starting your journey today or you've been on the journey for 75 years, as long as there's breath in your lungs, God has a purpose and a plan for your life that will amaze you! He built you for this moment! He arranged your history to get you to this very place in time.

Out of Egypt

There is a correlation to our walk with Christ and the walk that the Israelites made, out of Egypt, across the Red Sea and into a wilderness desert. Let's embrace the metaphor for a moment, Egypt is a life of bondage

or sin, and the Red Sea is the redeeming blood of Christ. The moment we cross over the Red Sea, a miracle happened! God made a way where there was no way before. There was a powerful army, the army of Satan and his minions, that was set on your destruction. But God made a way for you where there was no way. No human could have parted the Red Sea and no human, born in sin, was ever going to provide a way for your salvation. Only Jesus lived a perfect life, born of a virgin, without the lineage of sin that is passed through manhood; He was the spotless, unblemished sacrifice for our sins, both sins of the past and those yet to come. Every sin you'll ever sin, Jesus paid the price for them on the cross.

Once you've crossed over the Red Sea, through the saving grace of the blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior you'll be faced with opposition. The first thing that happened to the Israelites was the attack by the Amalekites! Now, the Amalekites were descendants of Esau. Amalek was Esau's grandson. The son who was born that sold his birthright for a bowl of soup, that didn't regard the things of God as precious, attacked the Israelites. And the same thing is going to happen to you, my friend! When you accept Christ, those who don't regard the things of God as precious or holy are going to attack you. You are going to be tempted. You are going to wish you were back in the safety of Egypt. That is why it is essential for you to have a covering like Moses. What is a covering? **Your covering is your church, your pastor and your Christian teachers and leaders.** This is very important; plug into your church. Get connected so that when the attack comes, you'll have someone that can cover you in prayer and help destroy the attack of the enemy.

We'll come back to this analogy throughout the semester. Just know that you're in good company, my brother! Those of us who have been through what you're about to experience will help you along your way. The important thing for you to do now, for all of us to do, no matter where we are in our walk with Christ, is to CONNECT with Christian brothers!

Throughout this semester, you'll meet other men that have been through something you're going through now and vice versa. The enemy wants to keep us apart because he knows how powerful two men living life together is and Ecclesiastes says that a strand of three is not easily broken! So, connect with others right next to you. I promise, you have something to offer them and they, you.

Millennium Men is a brotherhood. We have each other's backs. We pray for one another. We love one another enough to notice when someone is heading off the right path. **We are motivated by love and are unashamed of Truth.** Welcome to the brotherhood! You have homework for next week:

Week One Summary:

God made Adam and told him to be fruitful, to multiply and to subdue the earth! What God said to Adam, He is saying to you, also. You are called to be a conqueror! The first step in conquering is to align ourselves with God's will. In order to do that, we must accept Jesus as our Lord and our Savior. Once we do that, we can start to understand that our design and our destiny is an eternal one! The things that are eternal and that are important to God are other people. God doesn't want anyone to spend eternity away from Him. He loves everyone, because He is Love. Therefore, our purpose, whatever that is, is tied to our interaction with other people.

Lastly, our design reveals our destiny. How we are designed determines our specific purpose. We were created with that specific purpose in mind.

Write down ONE THING that you could start doing or stop doing, that would make the most difference in your life over the next 30 days.

What's my ONE THING:

This Semester, we are going to explore what it means to be a man. We are going to define Biblical Manhood, our roles in society and in our families and how we become, "More than Conquerors". We are going to teach you Spiritual Warfare, but first, we need to help you understand the tools that are available to you. Here is the path we will take this semester. May God change us all forever! May He mold us into The Mighty Warriors we are all designed to become!

Group Answers

What is a man?

What is my Purpose?

What am I willing to die for?

Perhaps, these are the things I should be living for?

M2: Week 2

Who we are: Design Reveals Destiny/Spiritual Gifts

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2:10 NIV

Last week, we learned that God made man to be fruitful, to multiply and to subdue the earth. We are "more than conquerors", as Paul wrote in Romans

8:37. Yet, for some reason, many men that I know don't feel like conquerors. I know many seemingly successful men, titans of industry and even faithful Kingdom-minded men, that still ask, "*Why am I here? I still feel like I'm not fulfilling my calling.*" Mark Twain said it best, "*The two greatest days in a man's life are the day he's born, and the day he finds out, why.*"

Let's ask the question, "**Why am I here?**" It's the first question of existentialism and though their philosophy typically places man at the center of the Universe, (we know that man is under the authority and loving care of a God who pursues us, loves us, and knows the number of hairs on our heads) it is still a great question. **The God who knows EVERYTHING about you, your Designer, is calling you to something greater than yourself.** Many men live to become famous, rich, and powerful, only to find that those things may satiate a hunger for a season, but ultimately leave us unfulfilled deep within. Ecclesiastes 3:11 says, "***He has planted eternity in the human heart.***" (NLT). The desire for eternity is within us. We long to leave a legacy. Even the secular psychologist, Abraham Maslow found that the greatest need for man was "self-actualization" or becoming everything that we can become. As we age, we desire to teach the generations coming behind us all that we've learned. We long for a legacy. We long to be remembered after we're gone. Our hearts pant for Eternity.

All men die, but few men ever live.—William Wallace

What is eternal? What in this world will last more than a few decades or centuries or even a millennium? Nothing. Not championships or money or power or accolades. Nothing makes it through the fire of eternity except for the souls of those around us. Therefore, if we are to draw out the deep waters of purpose, we must understand that our ultimate destiny is only found through others. **You were called to make a difference in other people's lives.** Everything else is ancillary. If you aren't making a difference in other's lives, you will live a pointless, empty, and unfulfilled life. Your life will be just as those whom William Wallace quotes, "**All men die, but few men ever live.**"

You Are Unique

There has never been another YOU in the annals of history. God uniquely designed you and there will never be another person like you. Even if you're an identical twin and genetically, exactly the same as your twin, you are uniquely designed in every other way. When God made you, He broke the mold. He carefully made you, studying each and every aspect of you, knowing full well what you would experience and what to equip you with, before one minute of your life had passed. Your unique design reveals your destiny. God has made you for a journey, and God, being a good God, has given you everything that you're going to need before you embark.

- He gave you everything you need to be **fruitful**.

- He gave you everything you need to **multiply**.
- He gave you everything you need to **subdue** the earth.
- He gave you everything you need to be a **conqueror**.

When we analyze how we're made, we can start determining what good works God has prepared for us. If design truly reveals destiny, then diving into our SHAPE will help us understand our purpose. Proverbs 20:5 says, *"The purposes of a person's heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out."* Insight naturally comes through analysis. So, let's put ourselves under the microscope for a moment and really ask the great existential question, **"WHY am I here?"**. We already know it's for a good work that God has prepared, but what is that good work? Learning WHO we are will help us find it. Using this acrostic can help you remember the different aspects of your design:

- **S-piritual Gifts**
- **H-eart**
- **A-bilities**
- **P-ersonality**
- **E-xperience**

SHAPE/Spiritual Gifts

Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." Genesis 1:26 (NIV)

What are Spiritual Gifts? Spiritual Gifts are gifts that God gave you to equip you to help build His Kingdom. You were made in God's image. That doesn't mean that you have the jawline of Christ or "eyes darker than wine" (Genesis 49:12) or His gait. You "look" like Him spiritually, you resemble your Father in the eternal ways. You have a spirit, soul and body. You are an eternal being. Jesus had an earthly body that died and was buried in Joseph's tomb, but His spirit went to paradise that day, while separate from His body for He told the thief on the cross in Luke 23:43, *"Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."* I believe that this Spiritual makeup is extremely important when it comes to understanding our purpose. It is evident that the spirit can be separate from the body and that spiritual gifts are different from physical gifts or gifts of the body like making music or intelligence.

Therefore, if we are made in His image, the more we understand about our Father, the better we will understand ourselves. The best way to understand Him is to spend time with Him, to read the gift of His Word, the Bible, and to seek Him.

***You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.
Jeremiah 29:13 NIV***

We can also draw significant understanding of who we are by looking at the personality of God, Himself. God presented Himself to be a male figure for a reason. He could have presented Himself as female, but He chose to be male for some purpose. Why do you think that God chose to present Himself to us as a male figure rather than female or even an animal? Part of the answer resides in how we described the role of a father last week:

- Protector
- Provider
- Teacher
- Strong
- Courageous
- Just
- Loving
- Honorable
- Counselor
- Peace Maker

We know what a good father is because God has placed that in our hearts. The attributes listed above are all the things a father should be, and we intuitively know this. Romans 2:15 says, ***“They demonstrate that God’s law is written in their hearts, for their own conscience and thoughts either accuse them or tell them they are doing right.” (NLT)*** As societies began to form on the earth, they all began to share a similar moral code with one another because God wrote that code deep within us. We intrinsically know what is good and evil. From the beginning of time, societies have had laws against theft and murder, against cheating and taking advantage of the less fortunate. Something rises within us when we see an injustice. We love stories of triumph; we long to see those unjustly persecuted and the innocent set free, no matter our religious affiliation. God places that hunger for righteousness within us. The good father is within you, but only Christ can draw him out.

Men are Different than Women

Why did God present Himself to us as a male figurehead? I believe it's because God is showing us that our design and role as men is an important one. If you are a man, you are a leader. God made you to be the spiritual head of your home with Jesus as your covering and God the covering of Christ. That is the Spiritual Order that God designed. When we get away from that order, we find confusion and ultimately, chaos. God gives certain and specific roles to men. We are the stronger sex, but as such, we are to protect and love our wives. ***For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her...***
Ephesians 5:23-25 (NKJV)

Your role as the leader of your home is yours, but you must step into the role. It's an active role, not a passive one. It requires diligence, vision and direction. God has a vision for your life; do you have a vision for your family? Do you pray over your wife, seeing where she is weak and standing in the gap for her weakness? Do you pray over your children as you see them grow into young adults? Do you analyze where they are and create an individual spiritual action plan for them? If you don't, who will? Seize your role as the spiritual leader of the church and provide spiritual food for your family, pray over and protect your family from the enemy who is prowling like a lion to try to destroy you!

Spiritual Order

God

Jesus

Man/Husband

Woman/Wife

Children

Men's Needs

Men have different needs than women. You have different physical and emotional needs—that's been well documented; you also have different spiritual needs. God presented Himself as a male to us for a specific reason. His design is similar to ours. God demonstrates His need through the Ten Commandments. The first four are about Him and our relationship with Him.

Here is a summary of the first four commandments found in Exodus 20:

1. Do not have any other gods before Me.
2. Do not take make an image out of anything and worship it.
3. Don't take My Name in vain.
4. Honor my Day.

God specifically says in verse 5, "*for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God*". What is He jealous of exactly? You! Your heart and your worship. Likewise, I don't know many men that would be excited if their wife came home from work and started talking about the great looking man that she met at work that day! You would be jealous and rightfully so! We NEED to be honored as God needs to be honored. We need to be the only one for our wives as God needs to be the only one in our lives. How would we feel if our son took on our neighbor's last name because he took him to the zoo? We would be hurt and probably more than a little bit angry! Shakespeare famously penned through the words of Juliet, "What's in a name?". Your name means something to you. When our sons and daughters are born, deep down, we hope that our offspring carry on our family name with honor.

We are made like God. We desire honor.

Question: What is Honor? _____

Spiritual Gifts we Receive

Remember, you were called to be warriors. When Paul wrote to the Ephesians, he told us to "Put on the armor of God." The metaphorical armor Paul wrote about was the exact armor the Roman soldiers wore. He wasn't saying your life should be passive. The very description of what we are to do daily is to gather up the weapons of warfare and get ready for a fight. **You as a man, won't feel useful until you are engaged in the battle.**

Our primary battle is spiritual. You may think it's your boss, or your bills or your kids acting up... But **Ephesians 6:12** says, "**For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.**" (NIV) Therefore, if our battle is in the spiritual realm, it's time that we engage in that realm? How do we do that? First, we need to understand our role on the battlefield.

God has given you specific gifts in order to engage the enemy. You are called to battle. If you were engaged in a normal battle, you might be a gunner, a tanker, a pilot or a drone operator. In the book of Ephesians, Paul tells us the different roles God has for His army.

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers... Ephesians 4:11(NIV)

These roles are the main roles and missions of a church. As a Christian, we should all be operating in our spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts can be nurtured and grown. As we mature in Christ, God will grow each gift. You may not have the gift of teaching, but you can still teach a small group. You may not have the gift of being a pastor, but you can still help guide a close friend through a divorce. Here is a small definition of the five main gifts that God has given to the Church. Each role is different and complimentary. **The gifts of the spirit aren't to be confused for the Offices assigned within the church. You may be called to fulltime ministry, but if you're not, you may still operate in one of the 5-Fold ministry gifts, daily. As a father, you'll pastor and teach your children. As a friend to a lost friend, you may be just the evangelist that is needed in his life. Ask God to lead you and guide you in how you should utilize your gifts. He will!**

Apostle: *On a Mission from God.*

Prophet: *A Messenger from God*

Evangelist: *Someone who shares the Gospel with the Lost*

Pastors: *Shepherd*

Teachers: *Instructor*

Here are other Spiritual Gifts listed elsewhere in the Bible:

- **Serving, Encouraging, Giving, Leadership, Mercy** (Romans 12)
- **Wisdom, Knowledge, Faith, Healing, Miracles, Discernment, Tongues and Interpretation of Tongues** (1 Corinthians 12:4-11)
- **Helps, Government**

Summary

After you've taken the Spiritual Gifts Test, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you and reveal to you how you should use the gifts that God has given you. God wants you to start **now**. There is a task for you to do, today. He has a plan. Put one foot in front of another, ask God to lead you and keep putting your own will in the back seat every time it tries to drive. You are uniquely you. You were made to do good works and those good works start now! Ask God what His plan is for you **DAILY**. You don't have to wait. Your purpose begins right where you are and as you grow, mature, and nurture the gifts God has given to you, God will expand your territory.

Homework

Spiritual Gifts Test: Go to the link below and take the test. Please bring the results to next week's class so that we may go through them, together.

<https://spiritualgiftstest.com>

Millennium Men: Weeks 3 &4/SHAPE

Recap of Last Week:

Last week we learned that God has created us for good works. (Ephesians 2:10) We are designed to DO, to function, and not to just live our lives aimlessly. God made each one of us with unique gifts designed to perform the tasks that He knew would need to be done, before we were even born. Psalm 139 says that He knit us together in our mother's womb. We are fearfully and wonderfully made. Nothing about you is a mistake. You are destined to make a difference!

Psalm 139

For the director of music. Of David. A psalm.

- 1 You have searched me, Lord,
and you know me.*
- 2 You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.*
- 3 You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.*
- 4 Before a word is on my tongue
you, Lord, know it completely.*
- 5 You hem me in behind and before,
and you lay your hand upon me.*
- 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain.*
- 7 Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?*
- 8 If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.*
- 9 If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,*
- 10 even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.*
- 11 If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me
and the light become night around me,"*
- 12 even the darkness will not be dark to you;*

*the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you.*

13 *For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.*

14 *I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.*

15 *My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.*

16 *Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book
before one of them came to be.*

17 *How precious to me are your thoughts,[a] God!
How vast is the sum of them!*

18 *Were I to count them,
they would outnumber the grains of sand—
when I awake, I am still with you.*

SHAPE: Spiritual Gifts, Heart, Abilities, Personality, Experiences.

Heart

Your heart is what you're passionate about. Your heart may be your biggest need or a place of learning that was particularly impactful for you. Many times, your heart is tender around the biggest pain in your life. A great example of someone's heart effecting the path of their life is the movie, "**Lorenzo's Oil**", which was a true-life drama about parents, **Augusto and Michaela Odone** whose five-year-old son, Lorenzo was diagnosed with a rare and incurable disease. Their struggle fueled their passion, and they ultimately found a cure and rewrote medical history. Many times, before healing someone, the Bible would say that Jesus was filled with compassion for the person he was healing.

Our heart, our compassion, will help direct and define our mission in life. Take a moment to reflect now.

What was or is your biggest hurt in life and how do you think God can use it?

You may be going through that pain right now. If you are, it's difficult to see through the pain that you could find your ministry within that, but it's often true. A Godly compassion will rise up within you and you'll want to help those you see in need. Your HEART is where your deepest compassion resides. God is likely moving you to help or aid in a ministry that is connected to your HEART.

Ask God today to fill you with a Godly Compassion for a group of people. You'll be amazed how God will break your heart for a people and how God will use you to help them. It could be that you have a compassion for orphans, though you had two great parents. God may break your heart for a group of people somewhere across the globe, if He does, be open to the mission before you. God may be moving you into full time missionary service. If you're like me, you may have a friend group from college that are great guys, but don't know Christ. God may be calling you to sit down, one by one, with each one of your old friends and share with Jesus has done for you.

Pray this prayer right now, **"God use me. Break my heart for a people. Give me compassion for the lost. In Jesus's precious name, Amen."**

Abilities

Your abilities are definitely going to be used by God! We often think of the outward abilities, as they seem to be on display, but they're clearly not the only gifts that God gives. Are you a concert pianist? God can use you! Are you a physician? There is a need for Godly physicians! Are you a police officer? God can use your vocation and giftings, right now. Start your day with this tiny prayer, **"God use me today. Put people in my path that could use whatever I have to give."** That's a great prayer and a great way to start each day. God desires to use every resource you have at your disposal. Your abilities are sometimes the easiest to see that you can give. We are all part of the body of Christ. Many have abilities that are seen and many of us have abilities that aren't celebrated on a stage or seen by many. 1 Corinthians 12:12 says, **12** *There is one body, but it has many parts. But all its many parts make up one body. It is the same with Christ.* (NIV)

What are some of your abilities that God can use to build His Kingdom?

Personality

Are you an extrovert or an introvert? There are several different personality profiles and different tests use to measure them. It's fun to take a personality profile test with a close friend and then ask them their honest opinion as to its accuracy. Not all tests are foolproof, and you may not agree with every assessment. Personality profile tests are blunt instruments. But finding out the basics of your personality can absolutely help you find your purpose. God designed you. Danny DeVito is a great actor, but he was probably never going to be an NBA Center. Just as physical characteristics can help determine our vocation or outward gifts, our personality will help us understand more about how God might want to use us.

The Enneagram Personality Test

The **Enneagram** is a system of personality which describes people in terms of nine types, each with their own motivations, fears, and internal dynamics.

The Enneagram is an emotionally focused system of understanding people — honing in on one’s core emotional motivations and fears. Each of the nine personality types has its own driving force, which is centered around a particular emotion.

Some Enneagram types experience strong emotions, while other types aim to avoid emotions in one form or another. However, whether running from emotions or diving into them, each type describes some aspect of emotional experience.

The nine types of the Enneagram are divided among Heart Types, Head Types, and Body Types.

- **Heart types** depend on their emotional intelligence to understand their own reactions and connect with others.
- **Head types** depend on their intellectual intelligence to make sense of things and navigate the world around them.
- **Body types** depend on their instinctual intelligence to follow their “gut” and respond to threats and opportunities. (Truity.com)

Experiences

Much like your heart, your experiences are going to help define your direction. Life is so much better with a guide! If you’ve been to a city several times, chances are you know the best routes around town to avoid traffic jams, you know the best places to eat and the best places to stay! Your experience can be valuable to someone else if you’re willing to share it. If you’ve successfully raised teenage girls, share your experience! If you’re a veteran who battled PTSD and found hope and peace on the other side, reach out a helping hand to your fellow veterans! God will use everything that you’ve been through for His glory. All of your experiences can be used by Him. It’s up to you whether you want to keep your experience bottled up or to use it. If you hold onto a past pain and can’t seem to get over it, try helping someone that’s going through the exact same thing. I believe your burdened will be lightened and you’ll find joy in sharing. That’s not easy for us men to do sometimes, but the reward is worth it. Remember Joseph, whose brothers sold him into slavery. His response to his past pain is exactly how we should respond. ***But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. Genesis 50:20(NKJV)*** If you’ll allow your past pain to be used by God, part of your purpose will be found through the pain of your past. You’ll develop a godly compassion for those that are walking through what you’ve already walked

through, and you'll desire to help lead and guide them through the pain, and to Jesus. When people go through hard times, they need a counselor. Jesus is The Counselor. When men go through turbulent times, they need peace. Jesus is the Prince of Peace. When we lead others to the still waters of Jesus, His love, His grace, His kindness and His healing, we will understand that what we went through wasn't in vain. Our past pain, will be useful.

Other Factors: Environment

We could insert the "Nature vs Nurture" argument here, but the bottom line is both play a role in who you are. God wasn't surprised when your parents got pregnant with you. He never scratched His head and said, "Oh man, that wasn't supposed to happen." Your parents, your siblings, your grandparents, your cousins and even your next-door neighbor were all put there by God. Everyone in your environment and even where you grew up was part of God's design for you. Were you raised in the big city or a small town? Were you raised on a farm or in the suburbs? Did you join a gang when you were young or play Little League baseball and your dad was the coach? None of these things were mistakes or surprises for God. Psalm 37:23 says, "*The steps of a man are established by the LORD, And He delights in his way.*" (NASB) God's purpose on your life will not be determined by your past environment, but your past environment will play a crucial role in your purpose.

Other Factors: Mom

One of the best assessments is what other people say about you. The term, "Mother's know best" is appropriate here. What does your mom or someone that unconditionally loves you, say about you? Are your friends constantly saying, "You should open a restaurant! You are the best chef I know." Or are they saying, "You could be a professional fisherman! or "You should write a book!". Sometimes, those things are confirmations of what God has placed in our hearts. The best thing to do is to ask God! Talk to Him about what you should be doing. Many times, men think of this as your vocation but that's not always the case. You might be the best mentor of young people, but your title is bus driver. You might have the gift of encouragement, but your job is to be a crossing guard and to smile and pray for people as they drive by. Your little gift can change the world if you give it to God. But if you try to hold onto it for your own glory, it will only serve as a snare.

Other Factors: Dad

We will have a whole lesson on the relationship we have with our fathers. Here are a few statistics that will help you understand the role of a father in your life and your children's lives:

What happens to the Fatherless? (fatherhood.org)

- 7 times more likely to become pregnant as a teen
- 7 times more likely to be abused or neglected
- 7 times more likely to abuse drugs or alcohol
- 4 times more likely to live in poverty
- 4 times more likely to have behavioral problems
- 2 times more likely to be obese
- 2 times more likely to commit a crime
- 80% of incarcerated inmates in the US come from fatherless homes.

Other Factors: Those we Admire:

There's a great line in the old Paul Newman movie, "Hud", "**A nation will come to resemble those whom it admires.**" We tend to adopt the traits and customs of those we admire. That's why it's really important to guard our hearts. Many times, you can tell whom someone admires by the way they dress. Once we're past about five years old, our mothers no longer pick out our clothes for us, so many times, we subconsciously choose clothes and styles that resemble people with whom we most identify.

Who are your favorite actors or sports figures? Your favorite people from history? Chances are, they have had an effect on the lens through which you view the world. Many times, we admire characteristics in people where we are lacking. That's healthy and part of your design. However, when the people we admire also have character flaws then we subconsciously say to ourselves, "That person is successful here, so it must be ok to have the character flaw..." How many times have we heard our children say that their hero does this or does that and it must be ok? That's why the One we should admire and pattern our life after is Christ alone. It's healthy to admire traits we may not be as strong in as another, but we must be cautious enough to keep that admiration from becoming an idol.

Other Factors: Dreams

God may have already planted a vision in your heart for your life. I've heard story after story about people who have had this wild dream inside of them, perhaps for as long as they can remember. You may have always known that you would go to college, even if no one in your family has ever been. You may have always known that you'd be a pilot, or a physician or that one day, you'd help raise foster children... Luke writes this in Acts, "***In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old***

men will dream dreams. Acts 2:17(NIV). God has more than likely already given you a vision for your life. He plants things in your spirit that you should pay attention to. Do you have a vision that God has whispered in your ear?

God's vision for my life is...

What is my calling?

Many people ask me, "what is my calling"? to which I ask them to open their hand and look within it? What's in your hands right now? I'm not talking about things, I'm asking you what people God has placed in your path. God wants you to be a good steward of those around you. Are you being a good steward of the relationships God has currently placed in your pathway? Are you honoring your parents and your elders? Are you serving in your church, even if it's not the perfect church. Are you praying over your wife, are you fasting for your children? I don't say these things to indict you, I say them to encourage you to begin being a good steward of the relationships that God has placed around you. God wants His Kingdom built and His Kingdom is people, not church buildings or castles or crowns or things! Start pouring your life into the relationships that God has already given you and you'll see an incredible difference in how you approach the day. Start intentionally having coffee with your lost neighbor or putting your phone down at dinner and spending quality time with your family or reaching over and grasping the hand of your wife and praying over her before you both fall asleep at night... These are what God wants us to do NOW. And when we do, He will see that you care about His Kingdom, that you are seeking it first (Matthew 6:33) and all the things you need will be added unto you. There is an incredible peace that flows through you when you know that your life is purposeful. I call it the Great Adventure. I hope you'll go on this journey with me.

Emotional Intelligence

One of the best books I've ever read is a secular book by Travis Bradberry called "Emotional Intelligence 2.0". I highly recommend this book. The beauty of Emotional Intelligence is that no matter where you start, you can improve your EQ score.

Tips on Emotional Intelligence:

- Take an assessment of a person's emotions before engaging
- What is the emotional feel of a room?
- Respond instead of reacting to conflict.
- Utilize active listening skills

- Practice self-awareness of your emotions
- Learn to take criticism well
- Empathize with others
- Be approachable
- Be sociable
- Count your blessings

Summary

You are an amazing creation! Your SHAPE will determine how God is going to use you. Take the spiritual gifts test and the personality profile test and then ask a close friend if they agree with the assessments. You may have to take each test a few times in order to get an accurate depiction of who you are. Remember that design reveals destiny!

The key to living the Great Adventure and becoming “more than a conqueror” is to give your gifts to God. We can despise our beginnings or we can learn from them. Zachariah 4:10 says, **Do not despise these small beginnings, for the LORD rejoices to see the work begin.** (NLT). Give your today to God. Give your SHAPE, and all that you are to Him and you’ll find delight in being used for your specific purpose.

Homework

Personality Profile Test

Enneagram Test: www.truity.com

Go to Personality Tests Tab. Chose Enneagram. Start test.

DISC Personal Profile Test: www.truity.com

**

Go to Personality Test Tab. Choose DISC. Start test.**

Write 50 things that you like about yourself:

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M2 Week 5: Zeitgeist

Understanding our place in history

Zeitgeist—(German) *The spirit or mood of a particular culture as defined by their ideas and beliefs of the time.*

Weekly Scripture Focus

Esther 4:14

For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?"

2 Corinthians 4:4 (ESV)

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

There is a battle for Truth today. Pilate asked, “What is truth”, in John 18:38. That question still resonates. The John Thomas Scopes trial ran from July 10-July 21, 1925, and though Scopes was found guilty of teaching Evolution, which was against the law at the time, and ordered to pay a \$100 fine, the trial was more of a stage. What was really on trial was the fundamental Christian beliefs of Creation versus Science. Attorneys argued that there should be a separation of Church and State and since schools are funded by the State, then they shouldn't be teaching fundamental Christian beliefs.

The consequence for that trial has been that Evolution has been taught in our school systems and colleges for nearly 100 years. The predominant curriculums today teach that Evolution is a fact, and not just an alternative belief to Creation.

Cultural Norms

We tell our children that Santa, the Easter Bunny, and the Tooth Fairy are real and then expect our children to decipher the difference between the Gospel and fairy tales. We've created a paradox within our culture that now questions everything and lacks a foundational Truth spectrum through which to accurately view God, Creation and our world. I'm not condemning anyone that plays the Santa game; I did it with my children when they were young, but looking back, I wish I hadn't. Santa has godlike qualities, he's benevolent and magically travels to every child's home across the world in one night. He also judges between “naughty” and “nice” children. Personally, I wish I had taught my children that Santa was a “game” we play, and not try to convince them that he was real. I should have read the Word to them more. That should have been the priority in my home, not the American Tradition of Santa or other “traditions”.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (NIV Emphasis Added)

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is One. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

These words I am commanding you today are to be upon your hearts. And you shall teach them diligently to your children and speak of them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as reminders on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates.

Our job as men is to hold fast to the Word of God and pass it onto our children. There are plenty of competing voices for “Truth” in the world, today. The world will tell you that there are more than two binary sexes, the world denies that there is a God, or if they admit to His existence, they diminish Him, His Creation and they deny the deity of Jesus. You must

decide what you believe. You must decide what Truth you pass onto your children. After taking inventory, I decided that what I knew about God was Truth.

Foundations of Truth

- There is one God and He loves me.
- God is holy. He cannot lie. He cannot sin.
- Every Word of the Bible is True.
- The Gospel of Jesus is True.
- Jesus is the only way to heaven. There is no other way.
- Heaven and Hell are real places.
- We are eternal creations, and we will spend eternity in either Heaven or Hell.
- We wrestle not against flesh and blood... (Ephesians 6:12)
- God and Jesus is more powerful than all the powers of evil. Jesus has all authority on earth and in heaven.
- God desires good things for me.
- God is love. He loves me right where I am.
- Jesus died for all my sin. There is nothing that He left undone when He gave His life for me. ALL my sins are forgiven, both past, present and future.
- There is a purpose to my life. My existence isn't by accident.
- The paramount purpose of my life is to help build God's eternal Kingdom.
- God has equipped me with talent and skills to help me fulfill that purpose.
- Everything bad that has ever happened to me wasn't God's design. Anger at God is misdirected anger.
- The fulcrum of the Gospel of Christ is forgiveness. I play a part in that in that I must ask for and receive forgiveness from God.
- My required response to the forgiveness God has given to me is to forgive others.
- What others may have meant for harm God can use for good.

- The Holy Spirit is my teacher, my guide, my counselor, and my friend.

There are many truths that you could list out if you took the time. The above list is a short list, but a firm foundation to build a life upon. If we use these truths and use the Word of God as the litmus test for every motive, action, directive, and pursuit, then our lives will be calibrated to the will of God. We will not fall for the deception the world sets forth as truth. We will not pursue worthless things that will pass away. Our hearts will pant for eternity. Our lives will have purpose and meaning.

Here is a set of modern belief systems in which we must be cognizant. We aren't called to argue a person into heaven, but we are called to know the truth and be ready to share the good news that we have found in Christ. (1 Peter 3:15).

Zeitgeist Beliefs

- **Postmodernism**—*I define truth. Each has his own truth. Your truth may not be my truth. Since I define truth, I therefore define God.*

2018 Barna Survey

- ***Only 17% of Adult Christians in the US believe that the Bible is the inherent Word of God.***
- ***28% of Christians believe in the “New Spirituality”. All people pray to the same god or spirit, no matter what name they use for that spiritual being.***
- ***27% of people believe that meaning and purpose come from becoming one with all that is. (Pantheism)***
- ***32% believe that if you do good, you will receive good, if you do bad, you will receive bad.***

The world is full of false religions, systems, ideologies, and beliefs. It is the plan of the enemy of our souls to confuse, to dilute and to turn people away from God. Why? Because Lucifer has denied God, rejecting Him and His goodness and mercy. The enemy cannot love because he has no part of God in him, for God is Love. When we think about the attributes of God, we can easily see that a creation that opposed God and has lost everything good that God originally gave to him is a depraved, hateful, scorned, and jealous creation. Lucifer is the opposite of God because God left him to his own depravity. When the gates finally close and Hell is sealed for eternity, all hope, all love, all joy, all peace, and every good and perfect gift that God has given will be removed from those in Hell and they'll be there for eternity without a trace of God. Not because God wants it that way, for it is His will that none should perish. (2 Peter 3:9). People will spend eternity in

Hell because they've rejected God's grace, rejected the Gospel and Jesus and have decided to pay for their own sin.

We tend to resemble our parents, physically, but our personality and our traits tend to resemble those around us. If we adopt an infant from India and bring her to America, she won't speak Hindi unless you speak it. She won't dress the way they do in India; she will dress the way you do. She will acclimate to her surroundings and become a part of her culture. As the world denies God and moves away from Him, it will come to resemble Him less and less. As that occurs, people will be drawn to our salt and light. God's goodness should shine through His people. Our job is to be the hands and feet of Jesus and to be His reflection in a world that needs Him.

Zeitgeist Fear

There is a pervasive undercurrent of fear in the world today. Fear seems to be a driver of a great deal of human behavior, today. According to the National Institute of Health, 31.1% of Americans will have an anxiety episode sometime in their lives. Yet, Americans have a better per capita living standard than most people in the world, and there hasn't been a war fought on our soil since the Civil War. What is the driving force behind the fear and anxiety that seems so pervasive in our society, today? It's the lack of trust in God. Even Christians suffer from fear, but this shouldn't be the case. The words, "Do not fear" appear 365 times in the Bible. That's one for every day of the year! 2 Timothy 1:7 says, "***For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.***" The Bible addresses fear and tells us not to be afraid. As Christians, we know how the world ends. We should take comfort in knowing the endgame, while we're still living it out.

Current Pervasive Fears

- **Famine**
- **Asteroids Hitting the Earth**
- **Nuclear Threat**
- **Global Overpopulation**
- **Global Warming**
- **Natural Resource Depletion**
- **Crime**
- **Terrorism**
- **Ozone Depletion**

- **Wars**
- **Natural Disasters**
- **Economic Crash**
- **End of America**
- **End of the World**

You may read this list and think, “Gee, thanks. I forgot what I was supposed to be worried about until you mentioned them!” We have a good Father that loves us, cares for us and provides for us. When we’re in His will, nothing on this list should bother you. In fact, for God’s children, there are promises we can run to! Psalm 37:18-19 (NKJV) says:

“The Lord knows the days of the upright,
And their inheritance shall be forever.
They shall not be ashamed in the evil time,
And in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.

Furthermore, in Psalm 138:8, the Bible says, “The LORD will work out his plans for my life— for your faithful love, O LORD, endures forever.” God has a plan. Does that mean we won’t suffer? Absolutely not. But it does mean that our suffering will not be in vain. Our suffering will be used to fulfill His purposes. Recall what we learned last week in Proverbs 12:21, which says that “No harm befalls the righteous...” (Berean Study Bible). The original Hebrew word for “harm” is Aven, which means, “no meaningless, purposeless affliction.” God’s purposes are going to be fulfilled and when we decide that we trust Him enough to allow His purpose to be fulfilled in our lives, we step into an eternal perspective. We understand that bad things will happen because we live in a fallen world, but these momentary and light troubles, as Paul describes them, aren’t as painful, because our hope and our focus is on eternal things.

However, we shouldn’t condemn or judge others for being afraid. It would be incredibly scary to live in a world where we had no hope. I can’t imagine what they go through, not knowing or believing in God.

Question: Do I trust God with my future?

Anti-Zeitgeist Perspective

We have a foundation of Truth that we can build a life upon. **Psalm 1:1-3** (BSB *Emphasis Added*) says:

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, or set foot on the path of sinners, or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the Law of the LORD, and on His law he meditates day and night. He is like

a tree planted by streams of water, yielding its fruit in season, whose leaf does not wither, and who prospers in all he does.

We shouldn't be afraid of the future. We shouldn't be afraid of the times in which we live for we were made for "such a time as this". Each and every one of us was specifically made for these days. God has a purpose for you and one of them is to share the hope that you have. So many people are afraid, today and you have the opportunity to share with them why you're at peace. I alluded to this verse earlier, but here we should take the time to memorize it:

1 Peter 3:15

But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,

The only way that someone would ask you why we have hope is if we demonstrate hope.

The Prophecy

I know when Jesus is coming back. He told us in His Word. Many people say they know, but I know for certain. We all actually play a part in WHEN Jesus will return. Here it is:

Matthew 24:14 (NIV, Emphasis Added)

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

Sorry to disappoint you if you thought I was going to toss a date out there. I don't know the date or the time. No one does. I only know that my job and your job, if you'll take it on, is to spread the good news. ***"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."*** (John 3:16 NKJV) God placed the desire to spread good news within you. We don't have to get coaxed to tell people about a great restaurant or movie; we shouldn't be ashamed to tell others about the hope that we have in Jesus.

Summary:

The world's foundational beliefs aren't based in The Word. We have a foundational Truth that guides us. We have a hope that the World does not have. We have not been given a spirit of fear. Regardless of the economy or the geopolitical landscape, God is still sovereign. About 2000 years ago, Pilate asked, "What is truth?". That question is more poignant than ever. We should be ready to give the world the good news, the hope that we have in the Gospel. We should live in such a way that others see hope in us.

Points to Remember:

1. *God did not give us a spirit of fear.*
2. *We are more than conquerors*
3. *We are sons of The King*
4. *The Word "Gospel" means "good news" the war is won.*
5. *We have a place in history.*
6. *Do not worry about one that can kill the body... (Matthew 10:28)*
7. *God wants to prosper us. Not harm us. (Jeremiah 29:11) There was the land of Goshen in the Exodus during the plagues of Egypt. The Israelites didn't feel the wrath of God and Revelation states that the elect won't either.*
8. *The wealth of the wicked will be laid up for the righteous. (Proverbs 13:22)*
9. *God appointed our leaders just as He appointed Caesar and Pilate. (John 19:11)*
10. ***We should be ready to share the hope that we have. (1 Peter 3:15)***

M2 Week 6: Death, Forgiveness and Love

He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey; -Deuteronomy 26:9 (NIV)

Recap

Last week, we discovered that we are not anachronistic. God made us for "such a time as this". We are created for a purpose, and that purpose is manifested in the advancement of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom is people. God's new temple resides in every person that accepts Him as our Lord and Savior.

Your design reveals your destiny. You are not a mistake. The sum of all that has happened to you, both good and bad, can be used to help others. Sometimes, God uses our greatest hurts to set the trajectory of our lives. Our makeup may determine how we accomplish our purpose, but our heart determines our course. God will give you an affinity for a people and there you will find your destiny. You may be called to help guide young people or sit with the elderly in their last days. You may be called to walk with men through addiction or divorce or you may be called to build a well in Rwanda. God will use your passions to help others if you'll allow Him. Your purpose

is to help build the Kingdom. The Kingdom is people. God didn't send His Son to die for a building. He sent Jesus to die for everyone because He loves us all, and it is His will that NONE should perish. (2 Peter 3:9)

It is difficult to be a Kingdom builder while we are still in a spiritual hospital. The first four weeks, we've discovered more about ourselves and asked the great existential question, "**Why do we exist?**". We've looked introspectively, discovering our spiritual gifts, and learning about our design, but this week, we will focus on three important topics: **Death, Forgiveness and Love**. Our view of these quintessential topics will shape our paradigm and helps chart our course. **We need to have a healthy view of death, forgiveness and love in order to move out of the spiritual hospital bed and start helping others.**

Death

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.—Romans 6:23 (NIV)

We have sterilized death in our society. Since Abraham Lincoln was embalmed in 1865, Americans have embraced the embalming process and today, most Americans will be viewed in a casket, looking more youthful and well-groomed than most of us are in our everyday lives. Furthermore, most Americans live in cities, far away from their food sources. We do not see the violence that occurs when something gives its life for our sustenance. Hunters understand the process of death and most of the hunters I know honor their kill by using every part of the animal that's possible and let scavengers feed on the rest. I have looked into the eyes of an animal that I was about to kill for food and felt the mixed emotions of both exhilaration, gratitude and remorse. I have seen its light pass from it, while its blood slowly dripped into the soil. When you process meat for yourself, you understand that we eat food because something had to die. Even wheat is cut down, crushed and ground into bread. Death is all around us. If you've ever farmed, you've seen the hundreds and thousands of rodents, snakes, birds and reptiles that are killed in the cultivation of potatoes, corn, beets, soybeans and fruit. Much of our sustenance is derived from death. President Teddy Roosevelt put it this way: "***Death by violence, death by cold, death by starvation—these are the normal endings of the stately and beautiful creatures of the wilderness; ... life is hard and cruel for all the lower creatures, and for man also in what the sentimentalists call a 'state of nature'.***" For many, getting back to nature is idealistic and lacks the veracity of its cruelty. But God promised us a land flowing with milk and honey. These two food items are the only two that stem from life. Nothing dies in the cultivation of milk and if done correctly, honey. God's promised land is a land without death.

Yet, we are conjoined to death. Our very baptism is a symbolic ritual of our old selves dying and the raising up of a new creation. Life and abundance happen on the side of obedience, but sin has a cost. The Old Testament demonstrated that sin must be paid for by blood. The priest put his hand on the head of the sacrificial animal, symbolically transferring his sin to the animal and then slaughtering it, sprinkling its blood on the altar. We no longer sacrifice animals for our sin because Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice when He died on the cross. We weren't there to witness it. We did not see the cost of our sin.

Our society has pushed death into a well-manicured corner. Instead of embracing death as part of life, we do our best to ignore it. Psychology has proven that those who embrace death as part of life are better adapted to life and are even happier people. The Bhutanese people are some of the happiest on earth, yet their GDP is in the bottom third of the world, and making money isn't their focus; the focus for Bhutan over the past 40-years has been on the happiness of its citizens, the meaning of life and their own human frailty. Their word for human frailty: **Mitakpa**, which means "impermanent". Embracing the impermanence of life, understanding that it can end at any moment, helps them live their lives with more purpose. How would we live if we lived every day as if it were our last?

Stephen F. Covey said that we should begin with the end in mind. We should think about the narrative of those standing around our coffin and live accordingly. We must receive the finality of death to understand that our sins have a cost. Jesus died because of our sin. Adamic sin altered the world where once lion and lamb lived in harmony. Sin changed all of creation. **A proper view of death will help us grieve appropriately for our sin.**

Grieving Consequences vs. Sin

Grieving our sin isn't grieving the consequence. If the banker gets caught embezzling and is facing prison time, he may feel regret, not necessarily because he has sorrow for his behavior, but rather because he longs for freedom. Grieving the sin is means that you have sorrow for the way you once were, but that you've seen the goodness of God and that His way is what you desire.

Two Paths of Grief

There are two ways we can grieve our sin. 2 Corinthians 7:10 says, "**Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.**" Both Peter and Judas had sorrow for their sin. Judas threw the money he received back into the temple and then hung himself. Peter went fishing and was restored by Jesus on the beach. Jesus broke the curse of the words Peter spoke, but Judas snuffed out all chances of being restored.

We can choose which path we take with our sin. It is good to see the consequence of our sin, to fear it, to understand it, but to be sorrowful for the sin itself is a matter of the heart.

Forgiveness

There is an ancient elixir in mythology called **Nepenthe** that helps a man forget his pain. But Nepenthe doesn't exist. There's nothing short of a lobotomy that can make you forget your pain. Our natural response from pain is to avoid it. God gave us the ability to feel all types of pain in order to protect us. He gave us our memories to help us gain wisdom. Pain is essential to our growth and to keeping us from repeating mistakes.

Forgiveness is not forgetting. Forgiveness is not condoning injustice. Forgiveness is not reconciliation. Forgiveness is letting go. Christian author, Lewis B. Smedes said that **"To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you."** That is freedom. John 8:36 says, "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." You've been set free by the only One who can set you free. .

The fulcrum of the Gospel is forgiveness. Christ paid the price for our sin through His death and resurrection. We cannot approach a holy God unless we are righteous and none of us are righteous. Romans 3:23 says, *"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," (NIV)* Yet, His blood covers us, so that God can look upon us, love us and see us as righteous. Hebrews 10 says, *"Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus,... "* (NIV). God has freely forgiven us of our sins. The death required has been satisfied. Jesus paid the price. Our debt is paid. We are forgiven. We are not only forgiven for the sins we committed up until the moment of salvation; we are forgiven for every sin we have ever committed, ever will commit, and even ever thought of committing. God's grace is sufficient! He has paid it in full. When you die, there will be nothing for you to do except to saunter through the gates of Heaven knowing that Jesus paid the price!

However, we share in the responsibility of forgiveness. When Jesus taught his disciples how to pray, He said this line in what has become known as The Lord's Prayer, ***"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."*** (Matthew 6:12, NIV). Clearly, Jesus is placing the responsibility of forgiving others on us. He further clarifies it in the following story found in **Matthew 18:21-35:**

The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant

21 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?"

22 Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.[a]

23 "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. **24** As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold^[b] was brought to him. **25** Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

26 "At this the servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.'**27** The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

28 "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins.^[c] He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. **29** "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.'

30 "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. **31** When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.

32 "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. **33** Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?'**34** In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

35 "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

You play a role in your own forgiveness. It is essential for us to take inventory of all of those that we have wronged and those who have wronged us. We should constantly be self-assessing whether we harbor unforgiveness towards anyone.

A good litmus test for our hearts is found by the writings of King David in Psalm 34:11-15:

*Ruthless witnesses come forward;
they question me on things I know nothing about.*

12 *They repay me evil for good
and leave me like one bereaved.*

13 *Yet when they were ill, I put on sackcloth
and humbled myself with fasting.*

When my prayers returned to me unanswered,

14 *I went about mourning
as though for my friend or brother.*

*I bowed my head in grief
as though weeping for my mother.*

*15 But when I stumbled, they gathered in glee;
assailants gathered against me without my knowledge.
They slandered me without ceasing.*

David ran from Saul for sixteen years, yet never lifted his hand against the anointed of God. Saul was delivered twice into David's hands, yet David refused to kill Saul. When David went to live in the land of the Philistines, the very people who sent forth Goliath, the Philistine general said these words, "*Achish replied, "Is this not David, who was an officer of Saul king of Israel? He has already been with me for over a year, and from the day he left Saul until now, I have found no fault in him."* (1 Samuel 21:5 NIV) David's own enemies could find no fault in him. He lived in a way that was beyond reproach. David was a man after God's own heart. (1 Samuel 13:14). David's life should be studied in order for us to become men after God's heart.

David was quick to forgive. He was quick to admit his wrongs. Like David, we must set down our unforgiveness. (Even that directed at ourselves) Do we mourn when bad things happen to those that belittle us, gossip about us or hate us? Do we fast for our enemies? What a powerful concept! According to Psalm 35, we should. We are called to be light and to love our enemies, even as we love ourselves. What a difficult thing. I believe it's impossible without one key ingredient.

Love

I used to end the forgiveness lesson by asking the men in my small group to take inventory of those they need to forgive. We still need to do that, but there's one thing we must have in order to forgive others. Love.

Love may be the most misused word in our vocabulary. We say we "love" chocolate or that we "loved" a movie. We even say we love one another, but is our love limitless or does it have boundaries? Do we really have an authentic love for others, the kind that God has for us? Romans 12:9-21, we find thirty love commandments. These commandments are impossible to uphold without authentic, God authored love:

Romans 12:9-2 (30 Commandments)

Love must be sincere. Detest what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Outdo yourselves in honoring one another.

Do not let your zeal subside; keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, persistent in prayer.

Share with the saints who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you. Bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud but enjoy the company of the lowly. Do not be conceited.

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Carefully consider what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible on your part, live at peace with everyone.

Do not avenge yourselves, beloved, but leave room for God's wrath. For it is written: "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, says the Lord."

On the contrary, "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink. For in so doing, you will heap burning coals on his head."

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

How does God love us: "*For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" (Romans 8:38-39)

Ask yourself, "Do I love like this?" Is it possible for me to live out the thirty commandments given to me in Romans 12? I believe it is impossible for man, but with God, all things are possible. (Matthew 19:26). Remember the verse that says, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."? (John 14:15 ESV) Part of the "Freedom" curriculum written by Pastor Chris Hodges of Church of the Highlands teaches us that we're probably reading this verse with the wrong emphasis. Many focus on the "keeping" part of the verse and not on the "love" part. If we love God, we find it easy to keep His commandments. Our focus should be on loving God. Why is this important? Because true freedom comes through obedience. We are free in Christ, and we find joy in keeping His commandments when we love Him. Romans 12 becomes easy to accomplish when we focus on loving God. ***How do we love God?*** How do we love at all? The mystery is solved in 1 John 4:19, "**We love because He first loved us.**" (NIV)

The revival at Asbury College started after one of their pastors taught on this passage. The message wasn't "turn or burn" or repent, but rather the message focused on receiving the authentic love of God! We can love authentically, as Christ loved us, only when we receive the beautiful, cleansing, edifying, pure, holy, unfettered, complete and transformative love of Christ! **The verse uses the condition, "because". We love, because.** BECAUSE. He first loved us.

I ask you this question: Do you feel that God loves you? Do you feel right now the wonderful grace of His love? Can you close your eyes and feel His grace and forgiveness? Zephaniah 3:17 says, "*The LORD your God is among you; He is mighty to save. He will rejoice over you with gladness; He will quiet you with His love; He will rejoice over you with singing.*" God loves

you very much. He doesn't look upon your sin, nor is He trying to squash you like a bug. Many people believe that God is out to get them or playing human "Whack-a-Mole" with their lives. That's simply not true. God has a good plan for your life. (Jeremiah 29:11) God adores you. Our approach to God determines how we love others. It is essential to being able to fulfill His commandments, to love and to forgive.

Since forgiveness is our part; it is requisite to being forgiven, then we must be diligent in forgiving others. Matthew 10:8 says, "Freely you have received; freely give." (NIV) We have been forgiven much; therefore, we should forgive much. Your forgiveness is dependent on how you forgive.

Summary

The wage of sin is death. A wage is something we've earned. Our sin and even our sustenance has a cost. God's desire is for you to live in a land full of milk and honey. A land, where there is no death. However, since sin abounds, Creation requires death to fulfill life. When we focus on death, it helps us live our lives with better vision for what is truly important. The paramount in life, after our relationship with God, is our relationships with one another.

Since those relationships are so essential, God wants us to freely forgive one another. We receive His forgiveness and Jesus made it clear that God will forgive us in the same manner that we forgive others.

Forgiveness is a byproduct of love. We love others BECAUSE Christ loved us, first. When we receive His love, then we are able to love others, forgive others and live with purpose.

M2 Week 7: The Royal Priesthood

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."

1 Peter 2:9

He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the LORD.

Proverbs 18:22

Recap

*We've been on a journey of discovery. We discovered that there's a problem with the worldly definition of manhood today and have set out to discover true, authentic, Biblical manhood and what our role is, our calling and our purpose in life. We started with our core design and makeup, and with the question "**who**" we are, understanding that design reveals purpose.*

Hopefully, we discovered more about “who” we are through our spiritual gifts, personality profile tests, and really being introspective with our hearts. Our heart or our passions matter, and what we love will often help determine our purpose.

*We learned “**when**” **we are** by defining the zeitgeist or culture of the day and our roles within it. We also learned “**how**” **we are** to respond to our world, which is found in **1 John 4:19**, “**We love because He first loved us.**” Our response to the world should be motivated and our actions interwoven by love. The 30 Commands to love found in Romans 12 are impossible unless we first receive the love of God. It is the foundation of our walk.*

***This week, we will help discover our “WHY”.** We live to leave a legacy. We live to leave the world a better place. God placed eternity inside of you (Ecclesiastes 3:11) and that longing is only fulfilled in the perpetuation of our species, **through our families, our children and discipleship.** We have a deep longing to be remembered after we’re gone. God placed that longing within you and the first manifestation of that starts with our family, both the ones we’re born into and the ones we make along our journey.*

Q: If your house was on fire and you could bring out one thing, what would it be?

Why We Are

When God made the earth and everything in it, He said it was “Good”. Yet, when He made man, He said it was not good for man to be alone. (Gen. 2:18) We are designed for relationship; specifically, we are designed for Covenant Relationship. (That is a deeper level of relationship, where two are one and are intertwined together with Christ as the Head) The family was the first church and still is the microcosm church. If you were part of the westward expansion of the US and you packed up your wagon full of supplies along with your family, when the Sabbath came, your church was wherever you were. That old frontiersman was the priest of his home, and you are still called to that priesthood. **1 Peter 2:9** says, “**But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.**” You’re not only the priest, but you’re also a “royal priest” in Covenant Relationship with your wife. Your first calling is to your home. That “royal priesthood” is a duty that’s bestowed upon you from the moment you said, “I do.”. Therefore, the duties of both royalty and of priesthood are yours and they’re modeled by Christ Himself. God placed it in you to be the protector, provider, comforter, counselor, teacher, and vacation planner for your home, but **have you accepted the duties of the royal priesthood?** Let’s outline those duties.

Sidebar about families

Today, there are fewer and fewer traditional family units. Pew Research states that 4 in 10 Americans have a stepparent, sibling, or half sibling. No matter how functional or dysfunctional your family was, when you start your own family, you get to choose the template by which **your** family will live. I hope and pray that you'll choose the foundation that the mighty warrior Joshua chose, "***But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.***" (Joshua 24:15 NIV) The family that raised you might have served the god of alcohol or addiction. They may have served the god of favoritism or pride. But you get to choose your family's spiritual lineage. It's your choice. No matter what happened to you in the past, you get to choose this day, whom you will serve. Don't let your parent's failures keep you from the blessing of having your own spiritually thriving family.

Royal Priestly Role

As priests, we are to mediate, to pardon, to bless and to guide our family toward God. We are to pray for and with our families. We are to fast for them, lead them, guide them, and protect them, both away from danger and evil, and toward the light of Christ. We teach the law to our children; **we teach them to honor what is holy and what is sacred.** The Levitical Priesthood of Aaron had a process of consecration for the altar and all its utensils, they offered sacrifices for their people and once a year, they entered the Holy of Holies to speak to God, directly. They established ebezers so that generations would remember the things that God had done for them. Today, we can enter the throne room of heaven and speak to God, ourselves. We need no intercessor. Hebrews 4:16 says, "**Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.**" Our role is similar however, to Aaron's if not in form, at least in function. We do not sacrifice animals anymore; Jesus was our ultimate sacrifice. We do not have to burn incense night and day, instead we are to pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17) for our family. We are to lead our family to the cross. Jesus is the only way. There is none other. John 14:6 says, "*Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*" We are to lead our families to the only One who can save them. Anything short of this is eternal failure. Our fervent, paramount prayer should be for the salvation of our children. **Who will pray for your children if not you? Who will fast for our children if we do not fast?** This is our solemn duty. If we say we love our families and lead them to love worldly pleasures, modern culture and forsake the cross of Christ, we have led our children to the gates of Hell. May it not be so! There is still time to change course! It doesn't matter how old your children are; today, put on

the cloak of the royal priesthood and lead your children to the cross. No matter the cost, lead them. If you love them, lead them to Jesus.

Definition: Ebenezer: A stone of help and remembrance.

Q: Do you have an ebenezer in your family?

Priestly Role

- Mediator
- Intercessor
- Teacher
- Offer worship on behalf of
- Offer sacrifice on behalf of
- Reminder of the sacred
- Establisher of the ebenezer
- Institution of Holiness

We are not just the priest; we are the **royal priest**. **Therefore, we take on the role of both priest and king over our home.** So, if we are royalty of the Kingdom that will never fail, our office, our position is permanent. Our royalty is irrevocable. Your position as husband and father is irrevocable. You are a royal priest. **The only one who can lay that down is you.** What does a king do for his people?

Royal Role

- Vision Caster
- Protector
- Provider
- Leader
- Builder
- Teacher

The roles of a king are as variant as the roles of the priest. Proverbs 29:18 says, **“Where *there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.*”** (KJV) We are and should be casting a vision for our family. We should have spiritual, financial, relational, educational, health and recreational goals established for our families. Many of us plan vacations better than we plan our lives. The weight of our

royal priestly role should be setting in by now. Being a husband and a father is serious business and takes planning. We can't do it alone. We need the help of other successful royal priests in our circle, and we need wisdom, endurance, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

1979-1989 Harvard Study

A 1979 Harvard University study on goal setting found that of their graduating class from 1979, only 16% had goals while only 3% had goals with a written plan. The 3% with goals and a written plan made 10x as much income as the remaining 97% of the class. Having a written plan or set of goals for your family is essential! Leaders lead with vision.

We understand the role of protector, because if anyone broke into your house, they'd likely have to go through you to get to your children. We know that we are called to provide because it says in 1 Timothy 5:8, ***"Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."*** (NIV) That speaks for itself. We are called to honorable and godly work. I've seen several families where the dad stays home these days and on the outside things seem ok, but as I counsel these men, I find them to be broken inside. Their manhood is in breach and their wives are the leaders of their homes. This isn't the paradigm that God designed for us. *

We are also called to be the leaders, builders, and teachers of our homes. King's advance the technology of their kingdoms, build new roads, acquire new territories, and establish the educational institutions of a society. Earthly Kingdoms throughout history are known for their technological advancements. The Phoenicians invented the alphabet, the Romans built roads and the Greeks established the sophists to rule their land. Kingdoms are known for justice or harshness. We use the word "draconian" because Draco the King established that every law broken required death. **You establish the rule of law in your home. You establish what is honored, what is holy and what is permissible.**

***Every situation is different. If you are called to stay at home with your children for a season and you've heard from God, then your duty is to listen to God's voice.**

The Weight (Not just a great song by, The Band)

You might be saying to yourself right now, "Wow, I didn't know that my role at home was so heavy or difficult." I'm glad that you're seeing that it isn't light and easy, but Jesus modeled the role for us, so that we have a guide. We don't have to plow the field on our own, Jesus said in Matthew 11:30, "My yoke is easy, my burden is light." He doesn't put anything on you that you can't manage, and the verse implies that He's carrying the weight along with you. The weight isn't too heavy when we manage it with Christ, but it

is very heavy if we try pull it with our own ability. Our modeled example is to look at Christ and how he modeled the Royal Priesthood with His bride, the Church.

Christ Loved the Church

Ephesians 5:25

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,

Q: How did Jesus treat His church?

Giving Ourselves

What does that mean, “and gave himself up for her”? I believe Paul is referring to the cross. Jesus loved the Church so much that He went to the cross for her. Why did Jesus go to the cross? So that we may be reconciled to Him. Jesus made the initiative in reconciliation even though man was first sinful. Romans 5:8 says, “***But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.***”

This is difficult to do in a relationship. **This means that we’re the initiators of reconciliation.** When there’s an argument—and there’s sure to be arguments... We should be the first to initiate making up.

Q: What does Giving Yourself mean to you?

Four Easy Rules for Arguing

1. **Never Bring Up Past Arguments.** *Once a disagreement is behind you, don’t bring it up again. There’s no keeping score. Let the past be the past. (That also means to watch your tongue and make sure you don’t say something that could be damaging to your wife.)*
2. **Don’t sleep on it.** *Don’t give the devil a foothold into your marriage. If you’re angry, stay up and fight angry until one of you gets tired and decides to make up. Make a commitment to pray before you go to bed every night. It’s difficult to sincerely pray for someone while you’re angry.*
3. **The “D” Word is off limits.** *If you have an old dictionary on the shelf, take a Sharpie and blot out two words that should be out of your vocabulary. Impossible—because nothing is impossible with God. Divorce—because no matter what, you’re making it through. Don’t let divorce be an option. If you have divorce in your family, break the curse of divorce by making a covenant with your wife. (Technically, if she’s your wife, you are already in covenant.)*

4. **Listen.** *Stop arguing and listen to what your wife is saying. Many arguments continue when one person doesn't feel like they're respected or heard. Stop defending yourself for a moment and really listen to what she's saying. Also, put yourself in her shoes for a moment. Try to really understand what she's saying by viewing the argument from her perspective. She will respect you and honor you more if you do this, even if you agree to disagree.*

"We teach what we know, we duplicate what we are."

-John Maxwell

Guide Her Spiritually

John 17:20-23

20 "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— 23 I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

Your marriage is a light to others. The family really is the first church. If the outside world were peering into your family, would they see unity? Who is responsible for that unity? Who is responsible for unity within a church? The congregation or the priest? Again, who is responsible for unity in a kingdom, the king, or his subjects? Jesus talks about unity within the church and there's no unity within the church if our marriages are fractured. As men, we must fight for our marriages by having the courage to step out there, be vulnerable to our wives, be humble with them, love them—even more than they love us if necessary, and pray over them. Our role is difficult and probably impossible by worldly standards. It is not the easiest role. Many will quote that our wives are supposed to submit to us and that may be true, but a wife will not follow someone who is not spiritually in line with Christ for long. God placed the desire for justice and a right royal priesthood within your wife. She is looking to honor righteousness. She even desires to serve it, but it must be modeled for her to naturally follow her royal priest. **If the royal priest is corrupt, she will rebel.**

"Man has long studied the form of a woman, but has neglected her soul."

-Robert Bly

Serve with Humility

Philippians 2:8 says, *“And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!”*

Humility isn't just a good idea, it's a command. After Jesus washed his disciples feet, Jesus said this in John 13:12-17: **“12 When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. *“Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. 13 “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. 14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. 15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.”*”**

When you put your family's needs before yours, honor and love them, they will follow your lead. We defeat the enemy with the opposing spirit. When we see pride, we demonstrate humility. When we see greed, we are generous. When we see anger, we demonstrate peace. Adopt this practice in your home and watch the change occur!

Give Her Your Body

Our bodies aren't our own. 1 Corinthians 7:4 says, ***“The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife.”*** This isn't just about sex, men. It's about the way we take care of ourselves, as well.

- How we eat.
- How we sleep.
- How we keep our health
- How we honor the Sabbath.

Your body is hers and vice versa. Do you eat like your body is hers? Are you grooming yourself or taking care of yourself the way she would want? Are you living in a way that you'll be able to take care of her when you're 85 and not just when you're 55? Jesus freely gave His body to the Church. If we are to love our wives as Christ loved the Church, then we are also to give our bodies to our wives as Christ gave His body for the Church. 1 Corinthians 11:24 says, “and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you” (KJV).

Q: Jesus gave us His physical body. What does that mean for us?

The Practical Game Plan

Do you know your wife's love languages? Years ago, Gary Chapman wrote a powerful little book called “The Five Love Languages” and it outlined the different ways we receive love. The book is profound and has

had a huge impact on marriages across the world. The author submits that we all receive love in five different ways and there is one way that makes us feel more loved than others. That is our personal love language. Here are the five:

- **Physical Touch**
- **Time**
- **Gifts**
- **Acts of Service**
- **Words of Affirmation**

If you'd like to take the quiz together with your wife, here is a link below:

<https://5lovelanguages.com>

Chapman submits that we all have one or two of the Love Languages that are dominant. If you don't know your wife's love language, ask her! If she doesn't know, take the test together. It will be a great bonding experience and I highly recommend you read the book together as a couple. It has helped Sara and me get in tune with each other and we've laughed a lot about each other's love languages over the years. If we are to love our wives as Christ loved the Church, let's be intentional about that love. If you were playing defense against a football team that liked to run the ball between the tackles a lot, you'd stack the box and walk those linebackers up closer so that you could win the game! That's a winning strategy for a game; we need a winning strategy for our wife's heart!

Physical Touch

Physical touch is probably easier for most guys than some of the others on this list because it's usually a predominant love language for men. However, there is physical touch that is intimate but doesn't have to be sexual. If your wife's love language is physical touch, initiate contact with her that is non-sexual, at first.

Time

Go on a date with your wife! I have the hardest time putting my phone down sometimes, but lately, we've decided on a **digital sunset**. That means, after 9pm, I put my phone down, look over at Sara and say, "this is your time now". I'm guilty of being so lost in the day, answering calls, texts and emails that I hardly ever concentrate on just one thing at a time. We try to say we are multitasking, but science has proven that we can only focus on one thing at a time. When you spend time with your family, be intentional. Be there in the moment. Don't let distractions invade your space. That's why

having a digital sunset or a box to place phones on the table is a healthy way to say to your family, "You're important.". Carve out your time and push away the rest of the world for a little while. Having a meal together is another great way to spend quality time with our wife and family. The table was modeled by Jesus. There is power in breaking bread together and just enjoying each other's company. No matter your family dynamic, be intentional enough with time that you may even put it on the family calendar. Do this consistently. Not just with your wife, but also with your children. Psalm 90:12 says, "***Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.***" No one wishes they had spent more time on the golf course when they're on their death bed. Spend more time with the ones you love! (Michael Scott of "The Office" would say, "Who would buy a death bed?" How morbid is that?)

Gifts

Ephesians 4 says that Christ gave gifts to the Church. He gave freely and abundantly. There is nothing lacking in God's economy. Even if your wife's love language isn't gifts, I encourage you to take good notes about the things that your wife likes and surprise her as often as your budget allows. Investing in your relationship in this way will demonstrate to your wife that you love her and put her above your own needs.

Don't come home with a new set of golf clubs, but then complain when your wife buys a new pair of shoes or has a spa day. When you put your wife above your own wants or desires, your marriage will begin to thrive.

Acts of Service

One of the most beautiful things you can do is to demonstrate to your family how to serve them. Jesus washed the feet of His disciples. How can you wash the feet of those in your family? Pray about ways that you may demonstrate Acts of Service to your family. You'll be teaching them more than you know when you submit to this principle. You'll also place inside of them a sense of honor for you.

Simple Acts of Service

- *Wash the dishes*
- *Fill up her car with gas*
- *Make her favorite dinner*
- *Fold her clothes*
- *Lighten her load.*

Words of Affirmation

Everyone needs encouragement. Your wife longs to hear that she is beautiful. She desires to be desired by you. She has a longing to feel wanted and needed by her husband. This is one reason why pornography is so detrimental to a marriage. When you satisfy your lusts with the images of other women, it diminishes the gift of a wife that you have.

1 Peter 3:7

Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

Public Service Announcement

If you have a problem with pornography, please ask for help. There is no condemnation for those of us who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1) Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. (James 5:16) God can heal you of this brokenness.

Please text **HELP** to this number: **251.648.7580**

We will pray for you and help you through the process of healing.

Wife Love Litmus Test: Do I love what my wife loves?

- Her children
- Her family
- Her dreams
- Her faith
- Her hobbies

Boundaries Litmus Test

- Do I have one-on-one lunch with other women?
- Do I wear my ring?
- Do I have any of my Ex's on social media?
- Do I have phone numbers in my phone of anyone I shouldn't?
- Does my wife have all my passwords?
- Do I have an Accountability Partner (NOT YOUR WIFE)?

Homework

Write a letter to your dad. Even if your dad has passed away, even if you and your dad never speak, even if you haven't heard from your dad in years, write the letter.

What to Say to Your Dad

- **What do you need to forgive?**
- **What needs to be forgiven?**
- **What's been left unsaid?**
- **What would you say to him if this were your last conversation?**
- **How can you honor him?**

M2 Week 8: Our Father and Our father.

Recap

As Millennium Men, we are beginning to understand our makeup better. God made us with unique talents and gifts. Our spiritual design, our personality, our parents and our genetic makeup wasn't an accident. God made them all and nothing that has happened to you is a surprise to God. Jeremiah 1:5 says, ***"Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, before you were born, I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."***

God wasn't surprised that you were born into your family. No matter how functional or dysfunctional your family was, God placed you in them for a reason. It could be that you were made to bring salvation to them. You might be the light in a very dark place. Perhaps you were born into godly, loving parents who modeled Christ in all that they did. What a blessing if that is the case. Unfortunately, today, many families are fractured and the relationships within them are strained. This seems to be especially true when it comes to the relationships we have with our biological fathers. The American society has eschewed the practice of a Rite of Passage. I believe that practice leaves men searching for significance in unhealthy ways. We long to receive the blessing and approval of our biological fathers because he is the symbol to us of our Heavenly Father. **Every personality trait of God found in Psalm 23, every name of God is the foundational viewpoint of what a father should be for his children.** Many men are broken today because they have a longing to belong, to be loved and to be accepted by their biological fathers.

Part I: Our Approach to God:

“I had approached God, or my idea of God, without love, without awe, even without fear. He was, in my mental picture of this miracle, to appear neither as Savior nor as Judge, but merely as a magician; and when He had done what was required on Him I supposed He would simply -well, go away. -C.S. Lewis

Our View of God is Crucial. Do you View God as:

- **Magician**
- **Judge**
- **Savior**

Magician

What do you think of when you think of God? What is God’s personality like? Are you like Lewis and approach Him as a magician? Someone who should perform at your bequest and then slink away after He has obeyed you? Do you pray to God only when you need Him for a small miracle? Perhaps you pray when you receive an unexpected bill or when your child becomes sick? Do you expect God to jump at the sound of your voice when in need? This is approaching God as a Magician. This viewpoint of God is one of idolatry. It places sovereignty in our hands, rather than God’s. Jesus said we should pray like this in Matthew 6:10, *“your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven”*. Every prayer we pray should honor the sovereignty of God and the probability that His will may be different from ours. Jesus went to the cross even though He didn’t want to. The Christian walk is not an easy one. It is not for the faint of heart, it is for real men. We are called to carry a cross of our own.

Judge

Do you approach God as a mighty judge who is waiting for you to get out of line? This was my approach to God for many years. I felt like the woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. I felt surrounded by my accusers with no way out. I knew that I was a sinner, and I know that I am one now. However, today, I know that God’s mercy never fails and that He has provided Jesus as my sacrificial Lamb that has paid for my sins, past, present and future. There will be a time when God will judge everyone, but at this time, I am like the woman caught in my sin, but with a loving Savior. **John 8:10-11** says, *“ Straightening up, Jesus said to her, “Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?” She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more.”*

Savior

Do you see Him as your Savior? Do you see Him as the only One who could pay the price for your sin? John 3:16 says, *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life.”* Just as the Israelites did in the desert, we look to the cross for our salvation. Jesus paid the price for our sins. He said it all when He said, *“It is finished.”*, (John 19:30) then hung His head and gave up His spirit. There is no sin that cannot be forgiven. There is nothing in your past that cannot be redeemed. When we view God as our Savior, we accept with humility that our own goodness cannot bring salvation. There is nothing we can DO to get to God. Ephesians 2:8 says, *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—”*. God’s grace is a gift that you must receive. There is nothing we can do to earn it. The greatest and most righteous man is still far from God, lost and destined for an eternity apart from Him. Romans 3:10 says, *“There is no one righteous, not even one.”*

If every man, woman and child that had ever lived was standing on the sand at South Mission Beach in San Diego, and asked to swim to Hawaii, how far would the greatest athlete that ever lived get before he drowned? I don’t know, but whoever that is would still drown. None of us can swim to Hawaii from San Diego. Only Jesus made the bridge between us and God. John 14:6 says, ***“Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*** Everyone needs a Savior. And the only Savior is Jesus.

Why Do Bad Things Happen to Good People?

God is not the source of our pain. We have an enemy that is bent on destroying us. He hates everything that God loves, and He hates you because you bear your Father’s image. Unfortunately, many times our suffering comes from those we love and trust the most. *“Hurt people, hurt people.”* is a famous phrase, today. We all come from a long lineage of brokenness. Every person has a story of soul crushing pain, of love, of loss and of hope. God’s love is interwoven into all our stories if we look closely enough. No matter how broken, no matter how painful, God provides comfort, and He reveals Himself through our most trying moments. He was there in the fiery furnace for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He was in the Lion’s Den with Daniel. He was in the belly of the whale with Jonah, and He was with you at your darkest hour. Psalm 56:8 says, *“You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book.”*

We understand that we live in a fallen world. God doesn’t plan mass shootings or wars. Those senseless acts are inspired by the enemy. They weren’t and aren’t God’s plan. All injustice is contrary to God’s Holy nature. Every injustice that has ever happened to you or your family isn’t from God,

nor was it sanctioned by God. God gave mankind free will and unfortunately, that free will can lead to human actions resulting in tragedy. There is no racism or discrimination that is from God. God made every man in His image. He made different culture and races because He is creative and loves diversity, just as we see in nature that not every beach or tree is the same. God is creative and His creative nature is found in His most precious creation—His people.

Q: Is there any Pain in My Past that I've Used to Define Myself?

Q: Does my Past Pain influence how I see God?

Who is God?

The Israelites had to completely rely on God and His power to defeat the Egyptians and then eventually take the Promised Land. They learned to call on God in their darkest hour and God never failed to deliver them as long as they were following Him. Knowing and understanding the Hebrew terms for God can really help us get to know our Heavenly Father.

Psalm 23 contains what is called a Remez in Scripture. A Remez in hermeneutics is a "hidden treasure, or a glorious find below the surface or behind the words." Read in the original Hebrew, Psalm 23 becomes a deep introspection into the personality and traits of our Father.

Definition: Remez—A hidden treasure or glorious find below the surface, behind the Words

Read Psalm 23 aloud, using and defining the names of God that King David uses. Feel the names of God resonate with your spirit, as you speak them aloud. Own the names of God by saying, "My" and then His specific name. Psalm 46:1 says, *"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble."* If we view God through His names and allow these names to be our "Bat-Signal" to God, He will listen, heal, comfort, and lead us when we cry out to Him. God is NOT trying to distance Himself from you, judge you or make your life harder. He loves you. He sent His own Son to die in your place. What kind of love is that? That is not love with boundaries; that is total and complete Love. That is the love of a Father who inspired Paul to write these words in Romans 8:38, ***"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."***

Proverbs 18:10

The name of the LORD is a fortified tower; the righteous run to it and are safe. We can call on the names of our God in times of trouble. David ran for his life from Saul for years. His own men turned on him and

his sons betrayed him. Through the Psalms, we can see him battle almost every human emotion, but consistently turn back to God for grace, redemption, and strength. His love for God never wavered, and I believe that attribute was why God called him, "A man after my own heart." (1 Samuel 13:14)

The Names of God in Psalm 23

Vs 1 The LORD is my shepherd

(He is Jehovah-Raah—The Lord, my Shepherd!)

I shall not want.

(He is Jehovah-Jireh—The Lord, my Provider!)

2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

(He is Jehovah-Shalom—The Lord, my Peace!)

3 He restoreth my soul

(He is Jehovah-Rophe—The Lord, my Healer!)

He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

(He is Jehovah-Tsidkeneau—The Lord of Righteousness!)

Vs 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;

(He is Jehovah-Shama—The Lord is Present!)

Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

(He is Jehovah-Ezer—The Lord, my Help!)

Vs 5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:

(He is Jehovah-Nissi—The Lord, my Standard of Victory!)

Thou anointest my head with oil;

(He is Jehovah-InKaddesh— The Lord, my Holiness, my Sanctification!)

My cup runneth over.

(He is Jehovah-Manah—The Lord my Portion!)

Vs 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:

and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

(He is Jehovah-Cheleq—The Lord my Inheritance!)

Healthy View = Healthy Relationships

To have healthy human relationships, we must have a right view and relationship with God. I'll go even further and say that to have a healthy self-worth, we need to know God and know His nature. To know God, we must study His nature. **We can discover God's nature through His creation through His Word, and through His Nature.**

Through Creation

Romans 1:20 says, "*For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse."* When we think of the vastness, beauty, detail, artistry, and precision of the Universe, we can begin to understand—in its limited mind, the created could possibly understand, its Creator. My mind cannot conceive the wonderful being and nature of God, but it can conceive enough of God to know that He is faithful, righteous, Holy and true. I liken my understanding of God to my dog's understanding of the combustion engine. My dog sees me get into my car and drive away almost every day. He understands that a vehicle takes me away and brings me home. But I could never get him to look at the schematics of the engine of my car with any comprehension. He would never understand it, no matter how great the teacher or extensive the class. Likewise, I cannot understand the mind of my Creator. But in my limited capacity, I can understand enough to know that He is for me, that He loves me, and that He made me to worship Him.

God Still Speaks Through Creation

Psalm 19:1-4 says, *"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. Without speech or language, without a sound to be heard, their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.* This is how the Magi found Jesus lying in a manger and this is how those who have never heard the name of Jesus find God, today. God has not forgotten the lowly or those in the darkest jungles. God speaks to them through His nature because He loves everyone. He has made a path of salvation to all. There are missionaries who have gone to tribes and told them about Jesus, and they have responded, "So that is His name? We knew Him all along, but we never knew His name."

Through His Word

God's Word has been studied for centuries. It is a comfort to me that so many men have studied the Word of God and believe in it. The Bible was written by at least 35 different authors on three separate continents, across at least fifteen centuries. There are many scholars who have tried to find errors and refute the Word of God, but none have been successful. In 1980 Lee Strobel was a writer for the Chicago Sun. His wife had recently converted to Christianity and as an Atheist, he set out to disprove

Christianity. He concluded that Jesus was either a liar, a lunatic or He was Lord. Through his research, He converted to Christianity and wrote the book, "The Case for Christ".

When we read the Word of God it penetrates our soul. Hebrews 4:12 says, ***"For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."*** God's Word is unchanging and unfailing because God's nature is unchanging and unfailing. Mark 13:31 says, ***"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my Word will never pass away."*** (NIV) God doesn't change with the times, nor is He old fashioned. The times and culture may change, the New York Times might have a headline that says, "God is Dead", but God is very much alive, and He has revealed Himself to us through His Word. If we want to understand more of who our Father is, we just need to study His Word.

Through His Nature

God's nature is love. When Adam broke the law, he was removed from the Garden of Eden and therefore, removed from God's presence. The Bible tells the story of God's desire to reconcile with the sons of Adam. He proved to the Israelites that He would forgive them over and over and over, even after they continually grumbled and pursued other gods. In the same way, God desires reconciliation with you. **Romans 5:8 says, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."** This is not the nature of a God who wants to play Whack-A-Mole with His creation! This is the nature of a loving God who pursued His people and forgave them, even as they sent Him to the cross. **Jesus demonstrated his nature while he was being tortured to death: Luke 23:24 "Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots."**

Knowing and understanding the nature of God, His boundless love, His Holiness and the fact that He desires a true, intimate relationship with YOU is the key to healthy self-worth and healthy relationships. And the same God that loves you, REQUIRES you to forgive others, as He has forgiven you. Matthew 5:43-44 says "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

We can begin by forgiving our fathers.

Part II: The Rite of Passage

Honor Your Father and Mother

The only command we have with a promise is the fifth commandment found in Exodus 20:12, "***Honor your father and mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.***"

There are no contingencies of honoring our father and mother. Whether they are just and righteous, or unjust and wicked, God says that we must honor our father and mother. This is a command, not a suggestion. We must honor our father and mother, no matter the circumstance.

How do we honor our parents?

Definition: Honor—to regard or treat with admiration or respect.

You may find it difficult to honor your parents, but you must. If you don't know how to do that specifically, start by praying for God to show you how you should honor them. If they have passed away, honor them by forgiving them and try to remember their good qualities instead of focusing on their mistakes. **Forgiving is not reconciliation.** It takes two to reconcile and you should pray about whether you should do so if there is a breach in your relationship. However, you must forgive your father as God has forgiven you. He may have been wrong, but **you are going to be responsible for your response to injustice one day before God.**

Focus instead on the positive things your biological father gave you. When we shift our focus to gratitude, it helps us forgive.

Write down three things that you admire or are grateful for, about your biological father:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Many of us did not get affirmed by our biological fathers. We are like a loose wire looking for a connection. When we connect with Christ, He replaces our old self with a new creation. We become His children. We are not orphans or fatherless; we belong to Him. However, there remains a longing to hear affirming words from our biological dads. I don't believe this longing ever leaves us. The only way to replace it is to define our lives through the eyes of God, rather than the eyes of man. Jesus renamed Simon to Peter. He gave Peter the name which means "rock", rather than "reed". It was a father that bestowed a name within their culture. Jesus, in a sense, was taking a fatherly role of Peter. Peter is the foundation of the Church and an example of how God forgives and restores. Jesus, as an act of His Father, while fully God and man, also takes ownership of each one of us. God is now our Father. We no longer have to seek the affirmation of broken, sinful men; we can live for the One who created us. This is fulfillment.

Sonship of our Heavenly Father brings peace, puts our spirits and souls in proper order and restores us to Him.

Obedience is the Answer

Just as in a relationship with our parents, we are reconciled to God through obedience. God knows we love Him through our obedience. We love therefore we obey. John 14:15 says, "***If you love me, you will keep my commandments.***" (ESV) We emphasize the word, "love" over keep, because it precedes the keeping. We cannot keep the commandments without first loving God. Loving God is the key. When we love God and keep His commandments, we have our longing for affirmation fulfilled. God modeled the kind of affirmation He gives to His children by affirming Jesus at his baptism.

Jesus was affirmed by God in this famous passage:

"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:17)
ESV

I believe that every man longs to hear these words from his dad.

Unfortunately, many of us did not hear these words and worse, we heard words that were not life-giving. I am sorry if you did not hear the life-giving words that God wanted you to hear from your earthly father. That is why we must forgive and understand that hurt people, hurt people. The good news is that the cycle of hurt can end with you! You can start by **forgiving** your earthly father if there is anything you've held against him.

Bar Mitzvah

The Jewish tradition takes a boy at 13 and has his elders speak blessings over him, lay hands on him and endow him with manhood. Westerners do not understand that the Hebrew words "Bar" and "Mitzvah" literally means "**Son under the Law**". A man is no longer lawless, but responsible for God's law on his own accord. There were 613 laws in the first five books of the Bible, most of them found in Deuteronomy and Leviticus. The boy studied the law from childhood, so that he knew what he was responsible for when he became a man.

This is the Rite of Passage that we all must confer onto our sons and daughters. There is a deep desire for each of us to belong, as God modeled by saying, "This is my Son.". There is a deep desire for each of us to be loved, wholly and completely, as God said to Jesus, "whom I love". And we all desire to be honored by our parents, especially our fathers, as God modeled to Jesus when He said, "with whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:17) Without this endowment ceremony, boys will search for manhood in unhealthy places for much of their lives. They will follow those flawed men and flawed masculinity, seeking something that only God and their father can fulfill.

Teach your sons and daughters the law of God and bless them. Be careful what you speak over them. Pray often over them and draw out of them their God-given giftings. We can decide, right now, to raise up a generation of men under the banner of our Father, with healthy hearts, healthy masculinity and a sense of belonging, being loved and that we are proud of them.

Should we bring a Bar Mitzvah to the Christian Community? I believe we should. I believe it would help us all heal and confer a sense of direction upon us.

M2 Week 9: Achilles Heel

Achilles Heel

Britannica defines an Achilles Heel as a **fault or flaw that causes or could cause something or someone to fail**. If we're honest, we all have an Achilles Heel. If all the world's temptation was on a table before us, none of us would be able to walk away without the tentacles of temptation wrapping around us. All of us have or had an "Achilles Heel". **Drugs, alcohol, food, lust, pornography, pride, greed, anger, unforgiveness, cowardice, gossip...** Everyone has sinned. None of us can boast in his own righteousness. Our righteousness comes through grace from Him and Him alone. (Ephesians 2:8-9) Since we all have sinned and none of us are immune to temptation, we should all be sober and aware that there is a threat in the world today that is destroying men and families. Today, many men I know are enslaved to sin and believe there is no hope to change. Men, this is not true! There is a way out. Jean Jacques Rousseau famously said, "**Man is born free, but everywhere, he is in chains.**" Rousseau was talking about the lack of a social contract through governance, but he had no idea how right he was, spiritually. Hallelujah! Jesus has paid the price for all of us to be free and yet, everywhere, man is in the bondage of sin and what many call "addiction".

Temptation is not addiction. The term "addiction" implies a powerlessness to change. However, if ISIS had a knife to their throat, would they pick up the bottle and drink it? Would they click on the image? Would they light up and smoke it? Would they pop it? We know people aren't powerless because they can control their sinfulness SOMETIMES. We don't often see people lighting up on an airplane because there are fines and other repercussions. They may have a proclivity to nicotine. They may really like it a lot. Are they powerless? I don't believe so. I personally have struggled with alcohol and other temptations in my life, and I succumbed to them over and over until God set me free. I want that freedom for you, but the first step in your freedom is to admit this:

I'm not powerless. I have a choice.

My Body, My Choice

God has made us caretakers of our earthly body. The body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit and should be cared for like we would take care of a physical church building. We wouldn't allow vandals to come in and spray paint the sanctuary, turn over the pews and desecrate the altar, so why would we allow ourselves to do the same thing to our own bodies. This isn't about being legalistic; it's about being good stewards of what God has given us charge over.

Many are slaves to sin, transgression, and iniquity. **Sin, transgressions, and iniquities rob us of blessing, separates us from God and keeps us from living our best lives.** Isaiah 59:2 says, "***But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.***" The Hebrew word for transgressions and iniquities are deeper, habitual, and willful sins. Isaiah 53:5 says that "***He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities.***" Wounds and bruises are deeper than the surface. Iniquities especially are deeper than common sin because they are a paradigm of living a law that's twisted from God's law. Transgressions or wounds may require surgery, but iniquities must be healed from within. The Good News is that Jesus was wounded for all of them; He paid the price and has given us the gift of healing.

Sin, Transgression, and Iniquity

Sin/Chattah—To Miss the Mark

Transgression/Pesha—Willful Sin

Iniquity/Awon—Twisting and Perversion of the Law

Jesus Won the Battle

Hebrews 4:15 says, "***For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.***" When Jesus was tempted to turn the stones into bread, His flesh was tempted with very real, physical hunger. **He used the Word of God to overcome the temptation.** When Jesus was tempted to bow before Satan so that He would be given dominion over all the earth, His soul was tempted and again, Jesus used the Word of God to overcome the temptation. And when Satan tempted Jesus to test God's love for Him by throwing Himself off the Temple, His Spirit was tempted. Jesus answered the temptation with the Word. We see the triune being of Jesus being tempted after He had fasted for 40 days: Body, Soul, Spirit. Jesus overcame each of them and He knows how difficult they are. I believe they were very real temptations for Christ, but I also believe that Jesus knew where and when the enemy would attack and was ready for the attack. Jesus modeled to us how to overcome the

enemy. Use the Word of God to refute the attack of the enemy. (**Interesting point: The enemy waited to attack Jesus when Jesus was likely at one of His weakest moments.**)

The Problem:

I don't believe we have a problem with temptation; I believe we have a problem loving God. Remember **John 14:15**, ***"If you love me, you will keep my commandments."*** Putting the emphasis on loving God, we automatically begin to desire to obey Him. Instead, our viewpoint of God is distorted (which is technically iniquity) and we believe that God's nature isn't loving or caring or merciful or holy or mighty or any of the wonderful, awesome and indescribable attributes of God that encompass all that He is. When Moses asked Him what His name is, He simply said, "I AM.". He is. Everything you need. Everything you've longed for. If you have a sin problem, I just wish you knew Him the way I know Him. He is better than a best friend. His love and grace and mercy are complete and make me whole. I pray that His love rains down on you so that it can reign in your life.

Part of the common iniquity temptation holds is a pervasive belief **that what God has for us isn't better than what the temptation offers.** I'll pick on those who smoke for a moment: We know people that smoke, yet scientists began studying the correlation between smoking and cancer in the 1920s (NIH.gov). The American Cancer Society (ACS) has a litany of studies proving that cancer is directly correlated to smoking cigarettes. So, unless you're over 100 years old and you started smoking when you were around three, you've always known that the first cigarette could lead to habitual smoking, which could lead to health problems, cancer and even death. Yet, young people today still light up their first cigarette—even though the risks are well documented. Why? I believe it's for one of three reasons. First, people may not really believe that it's bad for them. Second, it's because they would rather trade future health for short-term pleasure. Third, because they believe they'll escape the consequences. I'm not saying that smoking is sinful per se, and I don't believe that it is any more wrong than binge eating, but the behavior is interesting to me because I believe it correlates to how and why Christians knowingly sin. Addressing the reasons we sin can help us address the root of our issues.

1. **Do we believe it's really sin?**
2. **We trade our future for the NOW.**
3. **We believe we will escape the consequences.**

Porn Statistics

Pornography Usage Christian Men Ages 18-30 (Barna 2018)

- 77% Look at pornography at least ONCE per month.
- 36% View pornography daily.
- 32% Admit to being addicted to porn.

Pornography Usage Christian Men Ages 31-49

- 77% Looked at porn at least once in 3 months while at work.
- 64% View porn at least once monthly.
- 18% Admit being addicted to porn. (Another 8% think they may be)

Married Christian Men

- 55% Look at pornography at least once monthly.
- 35% Had an extramarital affair.

According to RelevantMagazine.com (“How Porn is Rewiring the Brains of a Generation”) **Married couples who watch porn are 318 percent more likely to have an affair than the porn-free couples.**

Do We Believe it’s Sin?

I’m going to focus on one particular sin for this lesson, but these principles apply to almost every type of sins of the flesh. Pornography usage has grown to epidemic proportions in the US. It is hard to believe that three fourths of Christian Men actively engage in pornography usage, but those are the stark statistics, as of 2023.

What do we believe about the sin of lust, pornography, and masturbation? Is looking at pornography wrong? Is masturbation really wrong? What is the harm in it? This is what the Bible says about it. Jesus said this about lust in Matthew 5:28, **“But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”** The Bible provides a clear answer. If you’re looking at pornography, there’s probably lust nearby.

Romans 13:14 says, **“Instead, clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. And don’t let yourself think about ways to indulge your evil desires.”** (NIV, emphasis added) Masturbation requires thoughts that indulge lustful desires. This scripture answers the question of whether masturbation is “right” or “wrong”.

Jordan Peterson says that we know intrinsically that an action is wrong when we hide the behavior. Proverbs 9:17-18 says, *“Stolen water is sweet; and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.” But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.*” (NIV) It’s no mistake

that Proverbs, also known as the book of Wisdom, dedicates almost three full chapters to sexual sin and each time states that the fruit of sexual sin is death. We are to judge something by its fruit. **The fruit of pornography leads to neural pathways created in a person's brain that are dangerous and detrimental to the soul.**

The Future vs. The Now

Psalm 65:5 says, *“By awesome and wonderful things You answer us in righteousness, O God of our salvation, You who are the **trust and hope** of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest sea.”* (NIV, Emphasis Added)

God is our trust and our hope. He is our inheritance. God has designated for you a good inheritance. The inheritance from God cannot rust or fade or be destroyed by moths. (Matthew 6:19-21) Romans 9:13 says that God hated Esau but loved Jacob. Esau despised and sold his birthright to satiate the flesh while Jacob wrestled with the angel all night! God despises the part of man that will sell his birthright for a bowl of soup, but God blesses those who will wrestle with Him! **God has a wonderful gift and future for you.** Don't compromise an abundant life for a fleeting temptation of the flesh. The word **compromise** has two roots: **Comp**—which means to give something away for free and **Promise**—which means to guarantee or validate something as true and to uphold it. When we compromise our fleshly urges, we whittle away our promised inheritance.

Will We Escape the Consequences?

Numbers 32:23 says, *“But if you fail to do this, you will be sinning against the LORD; and you may **be sure that your sin will find you out.**”* (NIV, emphasis added) You cannot hide from God. His Word is forevermore true and unwavering. Either we believe the Word of God or we don't. When we believe it, we apply it, or we reject it. Ask yourself, **“Do I really believe the Word of God?”** This is the quintessential question. Every believer begins by trusting God for salvation in Jesus Christ and placing Him in the authority position over their life. We cannot call Him Savior unless we call Him Lord. Either He is Lord of your life or someone else is. God will not share lordship with anyone or anything else.

Truth

Sexual Gratification Outside of Marriage is Sin. **1 Peter 2:11** says, *“Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul.”* (NIV) Pornography, lust and masturbation satiate a hunger while attempting to circumvent the covenant through which sex was given to us from God. These actions objectify women as objects of pleasure rather than the helpmates of a covenant relationship that God designed them to be for man. **Before 1960, the divorce rate in America was 2.2 per thousand couples.** Today, the divorce rate is between 35-50% for first-time marriages, 60% for second marriages and

above 70% after the second. (CDC.gov) The enemy hates marriage because it represents the church. **Children growing up in a home with a Christian father are four times more likely to get saved than those who are raised by a Christian mother.** (Barna.org)

Your mantle as a father, husband, leader, and man are under attack. Many men have compromised themselves through sin, transgression and iniquity. These only lead to bondage and eventually death. If you, or a man you know are in bondage, please take these seven steps to freedom.

Seven Steps to Freedom

Step 1: Confession

The enemy will try to make you ashamed of confessing your sin. He knows that keeping it secret means he keeps you in bondage. It is time to break the cycle of recurring sin. You can't white-knuckle your freedom. James 5:16 says, ***"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."*** The verse doesn't say "could" be healed or "might" be healed. The verse also indicates that the person to whom we confess our sin should be righteous. Now, none of us are righteous, but if you're saved, you are made righteous through the blood of Jesus. We take on His righteousness. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, ***"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."*** Therefore, your friend who is walking with God is made righteous. We need one another to get through this life. We need accountability brothers.

Step 2: Engage in Battle.

1 Peter 5:8 says, ***"Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."*** Recognize your role as a warrior in the battle against the enemy. God has already defeated the enemy, so the enemy has taken his battle against YOU. Today, men are bombarded with the images of beautiful women. Why? Because the enemy knows that when you succumb to these lusts, he neutralizes you as a warrior in the Kingdom. You have no idea how important you are. You have no idea how powerful you are. The enemy does and he's trying to take you out of the battle.

If we were all warriors, sitting around a campfire with our swords, spears and shields and our enemy had surrounded our camp, we would all be focused on a strategy for victory. We would look one another in the eye and accept our positions of responsibility. We would do so with a sober mind and a steady hand, knowing that the alternative is death.

- **Warriors do not leave their post.**

- **Warriors don't wreck their families.**
- **Warriors don't let the enemy into the camp.**

Step 3: Desire your freedom.

King David wrote Psalm 51 after Nathan the prophet revealed the weight of his sin to David. Psalm 51 gives us a rubric for repentance. Clearly, **David had sorrow for his sin** and asked for mercy from the only One who can forgive. He asked God to cleanse him and to create a clean heart within him. Afterwards, he tells God that he will teach others not to sin, as he himself did. Then he tells God he will worship Him. David outlines the steps for our repentance:

1. Ask for forgiveness and mercy from God (v.1)
2. Ask God to cleanse you from all unrighteousness. (v. 2-5, 10)
3. Acknowledge that God has something better for you. (v.6-9)
4. Ask God to turn your sin into a service. (v. 12-13)
5. Worship God. (v. 14-19)

Psalm 51

1Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your loving devotion; according to Your great compassion, blot out my transgressions.

2Wash me clean of my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

3For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.

4Against You, You only, have I sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You may be proved right when You speak and blameless when You judge.

5Surely I was brought forth in iniquity; I was sinful when my mother conceived me.

6Surely You desire truth in the inmost being; You teach me wisdom in the inmost place.

7Purify me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.**8**Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones You have crushed rejoice.**9**Hide Your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities.

10Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. **11**Cast me not away from Your presence; take not Your Holy Spirit from me.

12Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and sustain me with a willing spirit. **13**Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners will return to You. **14**Deliver me from bloodguilt, O God, the God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing of Your righteousness. **15**O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare Your praise. **16**For You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; You take no pleasure in burnt offerings. **17**The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. **18**In Your good pleasure, cause Zion to prosper; build up the walls of Jerusalem. **19**Then You will delight in righteous sacrifices, in whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on Your altar.

Step 4: Guard Your Heart.

Have a battle plan. No great warrior walks into battle without a plan. Your battle plan should include letting someone know that you are in a battle. There is no shame in needing help. **Create barriers of entry to your sin.** Go get a flip phone with no internet access if you need. Put accountability software on your devices, close your social media accounts. Cut off all avenues to your sin that are possible. There is accountability software that you can download that will allow someone you trust see everything you click on or view. Give someone permission to look at your phone and your browser history. Give someone permission to check your accounts for purchases. **Armies take don't take their enemies for granted when life and death are at stake.**

Proverbs 4:23 says, "***Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.***" (NLT) Your battle plan should include **creating boundaries for yourself.** The Bible says to chop off your hand or gouge out your eye if it causes you to sin. (Matthew 5:30) That's pretty radicle... But it's clear that we should do whatever it takes to keep ourselves from sinning. Billy Graham would have someone check out his hotel room to make sure no woman was hiding in it before he would walk in because he was aware that the enemy was trying to take him out. He wouldn't even ride alone on an elevator with a woman! I encourage you to share this battle with your wife so that she knows you're willing to get radical in order to keep yourself far from temptation. **Why fight a battle tomorrow that we can eliminate today?**

Step 5: Run from Temptation.

Joseph ran from Potiphar's wife. (Genesis 39:11-12) James 4:7 says, "***Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.***" It doesn't say to stand and fight temptation. It says to resist, to flee, to run away! When you see temptation coming, don't trust in your own strength. **Philippians 3 says we should put no confidence in the flesh!**

Part of winning is understanding your own weakness against sin. Many times, the cycle of sin starts with temptation, but becomes manifest when we place confidence in our own ability to overcome it.

God has provided a pathway for your freedom and it's not just silent and solo resistance. You have a choice. 1 Corinthians 10:13 says, ***"No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it."***

Did you catch that? A way out doesn't mean the strength to fight, a way out means to run! No matter how strong you are, realize that the physically strongest man in the Bible was Samson, and he fell because of sexual sin. No matter how smart you are, the wisest man in the Bible was Solomon, and he fell because of sexual sin. No matter how holy you are, the man after God's own heart was David, and he fell because of sexual sin. These three men should serve as a warning to us that we cannot resist on our own. We must flee from temptation. You aren't going to outwit Satan by yourself.

Step 6: Do Your Part. In 2 Chronicles chapter 20, **Jehoshaphat, the King of Israel**, was informed that there were several armies assembled and ready to attack. These armies were enormous and there was no way that Israel could defeat them on their own. Jehoshaphat called for a fast and the nation fasted. Then they worshipped as they went into battle and the Lord brought confusion upon the opposing armies so that they killed each other and fled. God defeated the opposing armies before they even stepped on the battlefield. 2 Chronicles 20:15 says, ***"He said: "Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the Lord says to you: 'Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's."*** God will fight your battle for you, but you must do your part. Put on the whole armor of God and prepare for battle but know that the battle is His!

Step 7: Accountability. Ecclesiastes 4:12 says, ***"Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."*** We need each other. We need each other without judgment or the religious spirit of guilt and shame. We need each other to embrace our weaknesses, for where you are weak, another has strength. God will place men in your path that can help you along your journey.

We Need Each Other

In August of 2021, I had quite a bout with COVID-19 and almost died. About 10 days into it, my friend Kelly called me and said that he felt like the enemy was really going after me. He told me he was going to fast until I was healed and more than that, he was going to call his small group and have them fast for me, as well.

That night I took a turn for the worse. About 2am, my wife reached over and couldn't feel a pulse, but she could tell I was breathing. She called the ambulance. When I got to the hospital, my blood pressure was 55/37. I believe that I'm alive today because my friend Kelly prayed and fasted for me. Men, we need friends like that. We need accountability brothers that will catch us when we stumble and pick us up when we fall.

M2 Week 10: Stewards of Blessing

The blessing of the Lord makes one rich, And He adds no sorrow with it.—Proverbs 10:22

Money is a tool, a trial and a test. If you want to expose a man's true character, give him access to large sums of money. Money reveals the heart of a man and the quality of his character. The great King Solomon said, "Money answers all things." In essence, money explains everything. The poor want it, the rich hoard it. It will control those who do not control it and destroys those who love it. Yet, it is necessary for life and required for living effectively. The average man works for it, but the wise man makes it work for him.

The subject of money is almost taboo for the religious, yet the Bible speaks more about money than prayer and fasting. -Dr. Myles Munroe.

Summary

Last week we learned how deliberate sin and lusts of the flesh can deeply affect our walk with God. Like no other, these can put our destiny on hold and rob us of our purpose. Another obstacle we must overcome is how we approach and handle money. How we approach and handle money will greatly impact our lives. **59% of divorcees say that money played a significant role in their divorce.** Money is a blessing, but it can also be dangerous. If the condition of our hearts is right, God will bless us with more, but if money becomes an idol, it can keep us from receiving the fullness that God has in store for us. In this study, we will dive into the paradigms of money, how to break the poverty mindset and how to live an abundant, prosperous life.

Blessing 1: There is Plenty to Go Around

You may have heard the phrase, "I've got to get my piece of the pie.", but the pie is ever expanding. The more money an economy generates, the more people are blessed because of it. Below are some interesting statistics about the US economy today verses what many consider to be "America's Golden Age", the postwar boom of the 1950's.

- According to statista.com, there are approximately 6.98 million individuals in America that are considered millionaires, not including

the value of their real estate. (2020). 8.8% of Americans are millionaires.

- In 2008: There were 2.67 million, that was less than 1% of the total population of the US.
- America has more millionaires than all these countries combined: **China, Japan, Germany, United Kingdom, France, Australia, Canada, and Italy.**
- America has more billionaires than any country in the world.
- From 1959 to 2021, based on dollar cost averaging for inflation, the average salary of a person in 1959 went from **\$13,971 to \$59,916 in 2021. 293%** increase in actual income, adjusted for inflation.
- Average home size in 1955: Adjusted for inflation (2016): Average cost was \$82,098 and 983 square feet with 3.37 people living in them.
- 2010's: Square Footage: 2392sf/Average Cost: \$292,700 (2.59 people)
- Only 20% of wealth in America is inherited.

God has blessed America and the numbers are clear; we are currently in an age of incredible prosperity. Why has God blessed the US? Genesis 12:3 says, ***"I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."*** The US has been a blessing to Israel since its re-inception as a country in 1948. Furthermore, the US sends out more long-term missionaries (about 135,000 per year) than most of the top ten countries, combined. The US has also been number one in giving per capita for many decades. (worldpopulationreview.com) God has blessed the US financially because our nation has followed these three principles: We have blessed Israel, we have sent missionaries around the world to spread the Gospel, and we have been the most generous country in modern history.

A common phrase in the world economy says, "When the US sneezes, the whole world gets a cold." The economies around the world are blessed because of the US. The more the US economy grows, the more the world economy grows with us. There is not a single economic pie that we are all sharing. There is an infinite amount of wealth that can be created, and that wealth generates more and more wealth.

Blessing 2: God's Part and Your Part

Example: Jesus died for all mankind but not all mankind is saved.

God's Part

John 10:10 says, "*I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.*" (NIV, emphasis added) God wants you to have a full, abundant life. God blessed Abraham by giving him a land that was beautiful and thriving. Abraham never asked for a blessing. God offered it to him due to his obedience to move out of his homeland.

God put expansion and legacy in our hearts. We desire it. **Proverbs 13:22** says, "**A good man leaves an inheritance for his children's children.**" The only way we can leave an inheritance for our children's children is if we have an abundance. When we first become fathers, we begin to understand the desire to leave a legacy for our children. Our focus shifts from our own centric wants and desires to that of our children. God places that desire in our hearts to bless the generations that come behind us. In Genesis 12, God told Abraham that "*he would be blessed so that he could be a blessing.*" Likewise, we are blessed so that we may bless others, particularly our own future generations.

Psalm 35:27 says, "*Let the Lord be magnified, Who has pleasure in the prosperity of His servant.*" (NKJV, emphasis added) **God takes pleasure in our prosperity.** He wants YOU to prosper. Ephesians 3:20 says, "**He is capable of infinitely more than we ask or dream.**" The God who died for you on the cross wants to give you more! He wants to bless you and He isn't out to get you. His desire is to prosper you and He can give you more than you've ever dreamed.

God brought Abraham outside and said, "*Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.*" And He said to him, "*So shall your descendants be.*" (Genesis 15:5 NKJV) God gave a blessing that was more than Abraham had ever imagined! This blessing is part of the Abrahamic Covenant the Israelites still remember, today.

The Abrahamic Covenant

1. Genesis 17:4-I will make you the father of many nations
2. Genesis 12:2-I will greatly bless you. (Genesis 13:2 says Abraham was VERY rich)
3. Genesis 12:2-I will make you a blessing to others.

God fulfilled His part of the Abrahamic Covenant. Abraham did father many nations. After Sarah died, Abraham remarried and had 7 other sons! (Genesis 25) The Messiah came directly from the lineage of Abraham. Truly, all nations are blessed because of the Abrahamic Covenant. Romans 8:32 asks, "**He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?**" (NKJV)

Your Part

“And you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

(Deuteronomy 8:18 NKJV) Notice that God doesn't give wealth but gives you the power to get wealth. God desires to give you all things, but there is a part for us to do: REMEMBER the Lord your God. **James 4:2-3** says, “*You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.*”

1. We do not have because we do not ask.

2. We ask with wrong motives.

I'd hate to think of all the blessings I've missed because I failed to ask for them. Asking is the easy part and easily remedied. How do we make sure that our motives are pure? The only way is to examine the source of our desire. If our desire is pure, then His Word is clear. Ask! Make sure your values align with God's. God wants us to have nice things. Heaven uses gold for pavement! God values people more than pavement and so should we. His will is that “none should perish.” (2 Peter 3:9) When we are seeking His will, then God wants to bless you so that the two of you can work together. There is an implication that you are working together when He says in Luke 11, “See, my yoke is easy, my burden is light.” The metaphor is that you are both oxen plowing the same field. When you're yoked together, it's impossible to separate your load. The two carry it together, plowing the same furrow and sowing the same seed. (God is so gracious that He uses the ox as a way for us to relate to Him. The ox could plow a field, then be led to the altar later as a sacrifice for sin.)

We must do our part to receive His blessings. **Ephesians 5:17** says, “*Therefore, do not be thoughtless and foolish, but understanding and firmly grasping what **the will of the Lord is.***” (NIV, emphasis added) According to the Lord's prayer in Matthew 6:9-13, Jesus asked us to pray that “**His will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.**” There is no poverty or lack in Heaven. There is no sickness, disease, or death in Heaven. God's will is for you to not only prosper in your finances, but in every aspect of your life. Jesus wouldn't have asked you to pray a prayer if it couldn't be answered. His paramount will is for the lost to be saved. **Our part is to align our will with the will of God.** When asking for a blessing, examine your motive. It's healthy to finish every prayer with the phrase, “May Your will be done.”

Q: Who Puts the Desire for Prosperity in Our Hearts?

Paradigm 3: Gain a Healthy Mindset Towards Money and Work

Beliefs determine feelings. What you believe about your circumstances will play a huge role in determining your future. Proverbs 23:7 says, *“As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.”* **Are you an Eeyore or a Tigger?** Tigger couldn't have a bad day if he tried, but Eeyore found the gray cloud in every silver lining. When your car needs repairs do you grumble and complain? Do you say things like, “Bad things come in threes... I wonder what's next?” These statements are powerful and can determine the blessing you receive. Proverbs 18:21 says, *“The power of life and death are in the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.”* What fruit are you going to be eating based on your words? What is your mindset towards your finances and money? Below are some dangerous mindsets that Christians should avoid:

- Comparison: *Be satisfied/grateful for what God has given you.*
- Cutting Corners: *Jesus commanded us to carry the stone 2 miles!*
- Lack of Persistence: *How can we be conquerors when we quit the fight?*
- Complaining: *Caused the Israelites to wander in the desert for 40 years!*
- “The Deck is Stacked”: *This gives authority to other entities other than God.*
- Lack of Ambition: *Sign of hopelessness, which is not from God*
- Procrastination: *God said to number our days.*
- Lack of Self-Discipline: *He who does not labor is akin to one who destroys*
- Negative Self-Talk: *There are only 2 kingdoms. Which do your words serve?*
- Wanting something for nothing: *A man who doesn't work doesn't deserve to eat.*
- Grass is Greener: *Be a good steward where you are.*
- Overspending: *Several factors here: Fear, lack of patience, want... .*
- Inability to Cooperate with others: *Rooted in pride. God gives us the spirit of collaboration.*
- Intentional Dishonesty: *Who was the first deceiver? Whose native tongue is lies?*
- Paying Bills Late: *Proverbs says to pay the bill immediately, when you have the means..*

- Borrowing and not repaying: *This is stealing.*
- Get Rich Quick, Gambling and Lottery. *Money earned like this will not last!*

The Money Rules:

Rule 1: Tithe

Some say that tithing is Old Testament, and we don't have to do it any longer. I'm not so sure that's true. Jesus said to the Pharisees, "***Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and give to God what is God's.***" (Mark 12:17) This indicates that God still has some ownership in our finances. Jesus wasn't specific, so I'll let you decide what and how much that is, however, tithe is the Hebrew word for "tenth". My personal testimony has been that tithing has brought me tremendous blessing throughout my life. This is what Malachi says:

Malachi 3:6-12 says, "I the Lord do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. 7 Ever since the time of your ancestors you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you," says the Lord Almighty. "But you ask, 'How are we to return?' 8 "Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me.

"But you ask, 'How are we robbing you?'

*"In tithes and offerings. 9 You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me. 10 **Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,**" says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. 11 I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe," says the Lord Almighty. 12 "Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land," says the Lord Almighty. (NIV, emphasis added)*

Rule 2: Where You Tithe Matters

Where you sow your tithe matters. Think of the tithe as the seed and the soil is where you sow your seed. Malachi 3:10 says to "*Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in MY house.*" I believe He is talking about spiritual food, here. Therefore, give your tithes and offerings to houses that offer good, pure, wholesome spiritual food. The kind of food that is life-giving and nurturing. When babies eat, they grow. When teenagers eat, they grow. When we eat good food, we thrive. Without it, we are unhealthy and sick. So, be careful WHERE you are sowing your seed. Is the food in that house healthy? Is the congregation thriving or are they

sick? Are new converts coming to Christ or has the genealogy tree of that church become a straight line!?!)

Like a good farmer, God wants a good harvest. He doesn't just throw His seed on any ground, hoping some of it will grow! No, God is a good steward of His possessions. Nothing in nature is wasted! He is going to prepare the soil properly for a good harvest. He is going to pull out all the weeds, hoe out the rocks and till the soil until it's soft and cultivated, ready for the seed so it can produce a good harvest. Where you sow your seed matters. It may even be your part to cultivate the soil!

Rule 3: Give Your First Fruits

The very first murder in the Bible stems from Cain's jealousy of Abel. (Genesis 4) Abel was blessed by God because he gave God the tithe. He gladly, freely, gave his first fruits and God blessed Him. Cain was jealous of the blessing and killed Abel. Cain gave a tithe, but it wasn't his best and it wasn't his first fruits. If you want the blessings of God, don't adopt the spirit of Cain; give your first fruits generously, freely and without attachment or expectation. First fruit giving is essential in receiving the blessings of God. What does that look like today? Most of us aren't harvesting crops or herds, so first fruits giving is setting aside and giving your tithe first. Whatever method you use for giving, whether analog or digital, make sure that the tithe is of the highest priority. When you give your tithe, pray that it goes to build the Kingdom, that it is fruitful and ask God to bless it. God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Corinthians 9:7)

Rule 4: Save

I once saw a bumper sticker that said, "Jesus Saves; My Wife Spends!". That's a funny way to say that there is a biblical principle to putting some away for a rainy day. Proverbs 20:21 says, "***The wise store up choice food and olive oil, but fools gulp theirs down.***" (NIV) Spending every penny we have is foolish. We must be wise, saving for rainy days and living for tomorrow, not just today.

Rule 5: Diligence

He who has a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes rich. (Proverbs 10:4 NKJV) There are no get rich schemes with God. There is wisdom, hard work, and diligence. Zachariah 4:10 says, "***Do not despise these small beginnings, for the LORD rejoices to see the work begin,***". No matter where you are, begin and keep going. Your bank account might be humble today but keep it growing. When we give up, we lose. There is no room for laziness in the Kingdom of God. Proverbs 24:23-24 says, "***A little sleep a little slumber, a little folding of the hands, and poverty will come on you like a thief and scarcity like an armed man.***" When God welcomes us

into Heaven, we hope He says, “Well done, my good and faithful servant.” There is no substitute for faithfulness. Faithfulness is a lifelong journey.

Diligence in our faith is also key to the blessing. As Christians, we live by a separate set of rules than the rest of the world. The world may be able to fudge a little here, take a little there, but we can't. As a child of God, we belong to Him. Hebrews 12:6 says, “***because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.***” We can no longer live by the rules of the world and prosper. We have to honor God in our dealings. Proverbs 11:1 says, “*The LORD detests dishonest scales, but accurate weights find favor with him.*” God wants your business dealings to be honorable and above board because you're His son and you represent His household.

Conversely, lack of diligence, or sin stops the flow of financial blessings. 2 Chronicles 26:5 says, “**As long as he sought the Lord, God made him prosper.**” (NIV, emphasis added) However, sin removes us from the flow of blessing in our lives. Haggai 1:6 says, “***You have sown much, and bring in little; You eat, but do not have enough; You drink, but you are not filled with drink; You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; And he who earns wages, earns wages to put into a bag with holes.***” A healthy fear of the Lord is important when we seek out the favor and prosperity that God desires for us.

Psalm 1:1-5

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, or set foot on the path of sinners, or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the Law of the LORD, and on His law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, yielding its fruit in season, whose leaf does not wither, and who prospers in all he does.

Rule 6: The Laws of Sowing and Reaping

“While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease.” (Genesis 8:22 NKJV) Farmers live by the principles of sowing and reaping. They know that when they plant soybeans, they get soybeans. How ludicrous would it be if they planted peanuts and reaped a harvest of kudzu! Farmers couldn't stay in business for long if that were the case. What happens in the natural world, happens in the spiritual world, also. Whatever we sow, we reap.

Jesus made this statement to his disciples right after he told the parable of the Sower to a crowd. Matthew 13:11 “*Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.*” There's no mistake that He said this right after this parable. God is the Sower. **The currency of the His Kingdom is seed.** If we are to follow in His footsteps, then He is telling us to be Sowers.

If **Elon Musk** told you, "Look, I have a secret I want to tell you. I want to teach you how to get rich." Would you listen? God is richer than Elon Musk and He's giving you a principle... Sow.

That seems so simple. Ask any farmer if it works. They'll tell you, "If I sow seed into the ground, I get a crop." To receive a substantial financial harvest, we must become Sowers.

What is a Sower? A Sower is someone who plants seed as a lifestyle. A Sower can't help but sow because it's his profession. Not every now and then. Sowers sow faithfully. When you have an alignment with God's will, you'll realize that there's nothing you can't give away that God can't replace with better and more.

2 Corinthians 9:10 (NKJV) says, "Now may He who supplies seed to the Sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness".

Notice He doesn't supply seed to Christians or Disciples. He provides seed to Sowers! If you are out of seeds, maybe you're eating your supply!

God's abundance on your life isn't for your benefit, it's for the Kingdom. It's for others. God is looking for channels, not dams. He needs the Kingdom financed and He is looking for people who will do it! If you seize the concept of sowing and reaping, God will use you. God's blessings are ceaseless because we have an Infinite God!

A seed can only multiply when planted. John 12:24 says *"I assure you and most solemnly say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone just one grain, never more. But if it dies, it produces much grain and yields a harvest."* (AMP)

A kernel of corn

If you eat the kernel, can you get full? No. But if you plant it, a stalk of corn will produce, on average, 2 ears of corn. Each ear, produces, on average, 452 kernels of corn at harvest. You could eat them and be satisfied for a day, or you could sow them all again and reap a harvest of 817,216 kernels of corn. Sow that again, and you reap a harvest of over 700 Million kernels!

1 kernel sown (\$.00036) becomes 904 kernels reaped (\$0.33)

904 sown (\$0.33) becomes 817,216 reaped (\$298.32)

817,216 sown (\$298.32) = 738,763,264 reaped (\$269,681.28)

Rule 7: Our Soul to Prosper

The key to prosperity isn't a secret: It's a matter of the heart. ***Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your***

soul prospers. (3 John 1:2 NKJV) **Was Mother Theresa prosperous?** I submit that she was. She stood before presidents and influenced kings, yet she had little or no possessions of her own. **A prosperous soul is amazing to see.** The whole world will pause to watch in amazement as a man is using the full capacity of his gifts from God. However, if He's miserable, all the treasures and trophies are worthless. In Ecclesiastes chapters 5 and 6, Solomon reflected on his life and concluded that all his wealth was meaningless.

How can our soul prosper? The only way is through seeking Him first. Matthew 6:33 says, "***Seek ye first, the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you.***" What are all these things? Prosperity of mind, body, soul and spirit.

Rule 8: Gratitude

David said that God placed his boundary stones in pleasant places. (Psalm 16:6) He was, quite literally, pleased with his lot. James 4:6 says, "*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*" God knows what you need before you need it. Just because you're living a prosperous life doesn't mean you won't have moments of need or want. We are able to ask for anything from a good Father, who gives good gifts. He loves giving to His children, (Matthew 7:11) but he hates grumbling and complaining. 1 Corinthians 10:10 says, "*And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel.*"

M2 Week 11: The Power of Authority

Summary

Last week, we discussed the principles of sowing and reaping, specifically how those principles apply to money and finances. We learned that God is looking for Sowers, but not all Christians are Sowers—many are eating all their seed! We also learned that the laws of sowing and reaping are immutable. Even secular farmers know that if you plant a seed, you will receive a harvest in kind, and that the harvest is much greater than the single seed that was sown. There's one principle that flows into this week's lesson—the truth that unless a seed dies, it cannot reproduce. The same is true with our walk in Christ. We must die to self, for God to use us, in order to achieve all that He has for us and for us to walk in our purpose.

Everyone is under authority, and all of us wield authority. How we submit to authority affects our effectiveness as Ambassadors and Sons of the King.

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by

him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. (1 Peter 2:13-14 NIV)

What is Success?

Let me tell you a story about a man I know quite well. The man went to church in his mid-20's and gave his life to Christ. He met a girl at church, fell in love and got married. He got a good job, tithed and was faithful in church. He got a promotion. He and his wife had their first child. He got another promotion. He started a 401k and a 529 plan, bought a bigger house and a nicer car. The man's wife called him one day and let him know they were pregnant again. This time with twins. Work became more demanding. Life became more demanding. Pretty soon, the man was spending much of his time at work. He'd come home tired and grill out in the backyard on the weekends, drink a few beers and watch the game with friends. There were dance recitals and play dates. Country club and Rotary Club. Family vacations and speaking engagements. Life, on the outside, seemed pretty good for the man. But it wasn't. In his heart, he was empty. He was searching for something more. He felt incomplete. He had everything, yet... He was empty. I know this man pretty well, because he was me.

I was headed for a crash, but I didn't see it coming.

Many men live their lives with a worldly definition of success. For years, I thought that being a good provider was "success". I was respected at my job, at church and among friends. I was putting roots down in my community. I cut my neighbor's yard when he went through a tough time, and I was always ready with a few extra dollars when I met someone in need. Everything seemed just right, but it wasn't. I defined success by two things that were very dangerous:

- 1. What I had or what I accomplished.**
- 2. What others thought of me.**

Neither of those things were lasting. I was living for myself, with my own pre-defined version of what being successful was. Unfortunately, that definition was an ever-moving target. There was always someone that made more money than me, there was always someone with a nicer vacation, bigger boat, or better Facebook life. I was the ruler of my life—chasing the American Dream. Many would say that I had found it, but inside, I was empty and broken because I was my ruler, I was my own authority. I did what I wanted to do and justified everything else.

Eventually, I sought out what was missing in an inappropriate relationship with a girl at work. My marriage eventually ended, and I was broken. Everything I had worked so hard for was demolished. My family was lost.

The bitterness and anger I felt towards myself caused a spiral of depression. I was no longer myself, trying to soak up the broken places with alcohol and even sometimes, drugs. The brokenness changed me—most of the people I called friends no longer wanted to be associated with me. I had been prideful. I had lived the way I wanted to live, and it got me absolutely nowhere.

A Turning Point

During that time of searching for answers, I remember watching “A Football Life” about the Fearsome Foursome. One of the members of that vaunted LA Rams defensive front was Merlin Olsen. He had also been an actor on the show, “Little House on the Prairie”. I used to watch that show with my girls and wish for a simpler life. The “A Football Life” episode highlighted Olsen and his success both on and off the field. It seemed like everyone that was interviewed talked about what a great man Olsen was. (He died in 2010). Olsen stated that the secret to his success was a personal mission statement that he lived by:

The focus of my life begins at home with family, loved ones and friends. I want to use my resources to create a secure environment that fosters love, learning, laughter and mutual success. I will protect and value integrity. I will admit and quickly correct my mistakes. I will be a self-starter. I will be a caring person. I will be a good listener with an open mind. I will continue to grow and learn. I will facilitate and celebrate the success of others.”

I’m not saying that his mission statement is the answer, but it was clear to me that my focus had been all wrong. I was really convicted when I read his mission statement. I realized that I was interested in my own success and not the success of others. **I was focused on my life and not the life that God wanted for me.** I was focused on what people thought of me and not what God thought of me. I realized that it was pride that motivated me, not my Father’s will. I didn’t love God or other people. I loved myself.

I didn’t know how to lay down my life before I felt so broken that I had no other choice but to reach out to God. I hope that you aren’t like I was. I hope you learn that what God wants for you is far better than anything you can imagine. He won’t take second place in your life. He will make you uncomfortable until you submit to Him. You can’t belong to Him as a son without being chastened. Hebrews 12:6 says, “***because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.***” God taught me some very important truths that I would like to share with you. These truths helped shape my life and because of these truths, I now have a peace and a joy that I cannot explain.

Truth 1: God is the Authority of my life. My life doesn’t belong to me.

I had read Matthew 6:33 often. My grandpa had a little placard with the verse on his kitchen table. It says simply, **“Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and everything else will be added unto you.”** Seeking first the Kingdom seems almost un-American. It sounds good in theory, but contrary to the “American Dream”. You may ask yourself, “What if God wants me to go to Africa, or do something radical?” If you’re asking that question, then it’s very likely that God isn’t the authority of your life. When God asks us anything, our answer should be simply, “YES!”.

The first step in coming back to a proper order is understanding that God loves you and wants what’s best for you. You have to trust Him. You have to learn to love Him and know that what He has is better than what the world has. There are no accolades, riches or power that the world has that can compare with Him! His yoke is better than the worlds. John 8:34 says, **“Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.”** You may think, “I’m not in sin. I am a good Christian and that may be true. But if you aren’t willing to say, “YES!” to EVERYTHING that God asks, then you aren’t in Him. 1 John 2:15 says, **“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. (NIV)** Your overarching desire should be to build the Kingdom. If that’s not your main focus, you have a serious AUTHORITY problem. The First Commandment cannot be kept if you have any other God’s before Him.

Now is a good time to take inventory. Do you have anything that you place in front of God? There are many healthy things that can become unhealthy when we place them before our desire to serve God. Even your wife, your children, your parents, the travel baseball schedule, your favorite team or show, your hobbies, your music, your money, your poker night... If any of these things gets out of balance, they will become an idol. At that point, God will pursue you and correct you because He loves you. He will make you feel dissatisfied if there is any authority in your life that has jockeyed past Him!

Is there anything that might be in front of God in your life?

You are His. You belong to Him. He died for YOU, and if you accepted Him as my Savior, you MUST accept Him as Lord. There is a beautiful freedom in submission. Matthew 11:28-30 says, **“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”**

Jeremiah 29:11 says this clearly, *“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”* We have to trust Him. I had to give Him the reigns of my life and stop trying so hard, and when I did, **things started happening and a peace came over my life that I can’t explain.** His

burden is easy and light. Every Word He ever spoke is true. **When I decided that I would live under His authority. My life began to take shape. I felt fulfilled. I felt like I had purpose.**

What does it mean to live under God's authority? That means that I abide by His Word and what His Holy Spirit teaches me. I know there is much debate on whether or not the Old Testament laws still apply or not, and I'm not here to challenge your theology, I'm only here to tell you what worked for me. I started believing God's Word like I was a child. When I was a little boy, my mom would say that dinner was ready. I'd come out of my room and there it was, on the kitchen table. She never said that dinner was ready, and I went to the table to find there was no food! My mom loved me, and she did little things for me so that I would know that she loved me. She wouldn't lie and tell me there was food on the table when there wasn't. I started believing that my Father in Heaven is the same. He loves me and He wants what's best for me. He made me for a reason, and the price He paid for me was very high. When we accept Him as our Lord and Savior, that means that our will is set aside, our old self is dead and that His will reigns supreme in our lives. I believe that and I trust God because He sent His Son to die for me. If He asks me to do something, then I'll do it. My answer is, "YES!".

Truth 2: God's Has Called Me to Honor Authority

I admit, I can be prideful at times. Every now and then, I like to exceed the speed limit. I used to think speed limits were really just *speed suggestions*. That may sound kind of funny, but those thoughts are symptoms of a pretty serious spiritual problem. There were other rules I didn't like, so I just wouldn't follow them. I thought that if a rule was dumb or even unfair, then it wasn't for me. I was that way about a few of my supervisors in my life, as well. If I thought that one of my superiors wasn't going to give me the answer I wanted, I would ask the other one or worse yet, I would do what I wanted and then ask for forgiveness later. I hope this doesn't sound familiar, but if it does, God is calling you to repent. Let's look at what God says about the authority that has been placed over us:

Romans 13:1-2 "Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. 2 Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves."

Notice there are no footnotes or asterisks at the end of the verse. We are supposed to honor those in authority, even if we disagree with them. There is a limit to the authority over us and that is God's authority. **Any time a law is in direct contradiction with the Word of God or God's law,**

then we do not obey it and we live with the consequences. The Bible is clear in Revelation that the world will turn on Christians. We shouldn't be surprised by this, but we should be prepared for persecution. We should decide now whom we will serve. It's not going to be easy in the Last Days.

God will promote you when He can trust you. He loves you and wants what's best for you. But can He trust that you'll honor those in authority over you? Are you a good steward of those relationships? As we are the Ambassadors for His Kingdom, God is looking for good and true Ambassadors that represent Him well. We can't have all that God wants to give to us if we're not good stewards of the position and placement we currently have.

James 4:6

But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble."

Truth 3: I Will Never Ascend Higher than the Authority I Place Over Myself

One of the most important decisions you will make in your life is what spiritual authority you place over yourself. Be careful in this decision. Be aware of what and who you are placing yourself under. Jesus said in **Luke 6:40**, "***The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher.***"

- Is the Bible their Authority?
- Do they walk in Integrity?
- Are they fulfilling the Great Commission?
- Do you have a place to serve?
- Are you growing?

Being under the spiritual authority is essential to a thriving Christian life. Hebrews 10:25 says, "*And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near. (NLT)*" That verse means that we should meet regularly with other believers. I know that these days, you can listen to a podcast or watch church from the comfort of your own home, but that's not assembling with others. You may not need the church, but your church needs you! You are called to do good works and it's difficult to do those good works from your own sofa! There was a time in my life that I stopped going to church because I disagreed with some small, petty thing that each church I attended did. I would find petty little things that I disagreed with

about nearly every church I attended. (Boy, was I arrogant!) Finally, I felt like God told me that until I was perfect, I needed to attend an imperfect church! There are no perfect churches because there are no perfect people! I found the right church for me at that time. God placed me under the authority of a great pastor, teacher and mentor.

Q: Who is your spiritual authority?

Truth 4: God Gave Me Authority

Matthew 16:18:

“And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

I know you're not Peter, but this passage of Scripture is for all of us that are in Christ. You have authority to bind and loosen. You are the Church. You are Sons of God. You may boldly go before the throne of God and ask Him for anything, and He will be faithful to give to you because you've asked with good motives. (John 16:23) You have the power to bind and to loosen. You have the power to cast out demons. (Mark 3:16) Proverbs 18:21 says, *“The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.”* What you say matters. Your words have impact and power. God made all of Creation with His voice and you are His son. You were made in His image. You have that authority now because Jesus gave it back to us.

Quick History Lesson

When God made Adam, He gave Adam all authority over the earth. (Genesis 1:26-28). The devil, Lucifer took dominion from Adam when Adam and Eve disobeyed God. Until Jesus took the dominion from Lucifer by dying on the cross and rising again, Lucifer most certainly ruled this world. Jesus said so in John 14:30, ***“I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me.”*** (NKJV)

You have the more authority than you think! In Mark 16:17-18, Jesus clearly says, ***“And these signs will accompany those who believe: In My name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not harm them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will be made well.”***

These are the last words that Jesus spoke to His disciples. These are the last recorded words that Jesus spoke while here on the earth. I would think that if Jesus were standing right here with us, He would reiterate these words to us. We have authority over sickness, over disease, over demons, over everything listed in Ephesians 6:12, *“For we do not wrestle against flesh*

and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”

Summary

When you place your life under His authority, then He can trust you with more. He will give to you a fulfilling life and promote you. He will give you the peace of knowing that you are doing exactly what you are called to do. Your purpose is intertwined with the authority that you place over your life. My prayer for you is that He is truly your Lord and your Savior. That His grace and peace flows through you and that you are not seeking the feeble, fleeting things of this world, but seeking Him. Furthermore, you may not agree with the laws, regulations, taxes, or rules that you are supposed to live by, but you're called to honor them. You are called to be a stickler for those rules and to honor them to the letter. God will honor those who honor their authority.

Be careful of the spiritual authority you place over your life. You'll never rise above those who are over you. Lastly, be aware that you have the power over the enemy. He has already been defeated. He can't win if you engage! Engage! Take the battle to Him and know that the One with you is greater than the one against you. 1 John 4:4 says, ***“You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.”***

Go and take the Promised Land of your life. God has a special plan He made just for you. You are so close to understanding the purpose of your life! Now that you understand authority, you can start understanding the One who is in you, which is next week's lesson!

Millennium Men Week 12: The Holy Spirit

Summary

*The past three weeks, we have been uncovering and discussing the three main areas that cause men to fall: the **lusts of the flesh, financial issues, and our approach to authority**. Although each issue stems from good gifts that God gives to us, each can be twisted and used to rob us of our destiny by the enemy. These sins will hold us captive and lead us to destruction if they aren't pulled out by the roots. It is essential for us to gain control of our lives by defeating the enemy and his stronghold in our lives. Unfortunately, many men never gain control over their issues, and they live a life of bondage. This is not the will of God. Jesus came to set the captives free. Luke 4:18 says, ***“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free,”****

This week, we will learn who the “Spirit of the Lord” is that Jesus was talking about in Luke 4:18 and what role the Spirit has in our lives.

Man’s Search

Throughout history, man has sought to better understand his world. Copernicus studied the movement of the stars in the 15th Century and later that century, Columbus sought to discover a new path to India. In the 20th Century, the US sent men to the moon, and in the 21st, a joint group of nations launched the CERN Hadron Collider to better understand antimatter and atomic energies. Each year, the US spends over \$1 Billion dollars in Oceanic Research and NASA’s budget was just under \$24 Billion in 2022. The search of the unknown is nothing new. Mankind has a hunger for knowledge and truth. I believe God placed that hunger inside of us.

God wants to be discovered by us. (Jeremiah 29:13) Just as there are discoveries about the seen, physical world yet to be made, there are spiritual discoveries that we should be diligently exploring. The Bible says that this world is passing away, but that the next one is eternal. (1 John 2:17) Friends, we should be exploring the spiritual world with the same fervor and diligence that we are peering into deep space and exploring the ocean depths. What an amazing blessing we would receive if our country had a budget line of \$24 Billion to seek God and all that He has for us!

Controversy

Most Christian denominations agree that the Holy Spirit is part of the triune God. The Holy Spirit is mentioned in the “Apostles Creed”, which was written around the 5th Century and is nearly universally adopted as foundation of doctrine established by Christian Churches to this day. Yet, there seems to be so much controversy regarding who the Holy Spirit is and what His role is in our lives. There are some that believe that miracles have ceased (Cessationists) and there are some that believe to have the Holy Spirit, you must speak in tongues to receive Him. There are some that believe that you receive all that God has for you when you get saved and there are some that believe in a second baptism. My prayer is that during this lesson, you would keep an open mind. My goal is to help you understand who the Holy Spirit is, His role in your life and my prayer for you is that you would desire to receive more of Him.

The Holy Spirit’s Role

At the Last Supper, Jesus gave implicit instructions to the Disciples about what to do after His death. He told them to go to Jerusalem and wait. John 14:16-17 says, *“And I will pray to the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the whole world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.”* Further in

the chapter, Jesus says, “*These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.*” (NIV, emphasis added)

Jesus said the Holy Spirit will:

- Be our Helper
- Abide with us Forever
- Is the Spirit of Truth
- Will Dwell *with* You
- Will Dwell *in* You
- Will Teach You All Things
- Bring to Your Remembrance the Words of Jesus

The Holy Spirit wasn't just for the early apostles, He has a role in every Christian's life. His role is to be your helper, your teacher, your truth guide and will dwell with you and in you forever. The word, “Holy Spirit” in the original Greek was “Pneuma”. Though some have translated the word pneuma as “wind”, ***Pneuma*** isn't just wind, it is more literally translated as the “**breath of life**” and is required for something to live. Just as God breathed life into Adam, He is breathing His “Life” into every newborn Christian by giving each of us His Breath, His Life—His Holy Spirit. **God gives His Holy Spirit to every new Christian.**

God gives us the Holy Spirit so that we can have the help we need, the life we are called to and the guide for our journey. Man's internal desire for truth is simply another way for God to draw all men to Him. God gave us His Word and the Holy Spirit to equip us for the life that God has for us. We cannot live our best life without the Holy Spirit. If you're still in bondage, you need more of the Holy Spirit, not less of Him.

A Tale of Two Peters

The apostle Peter, lived with Jesus—the Word (John 1:1) for three years. Peter knew Jesus; therefore, He knew The Word, yet Peter was vastly different before the day of Pentecost than he was afterwards.

The First Peter

Pretend for a moment that you are the apostle Peter who lived with Jesus for three years during His ministry. Think about the things you saw while with Jesus. You saw blind men and lepers get healed. You saw the lame walk. You saw Jesus speak to the wind and the waves and they became

calm. You took a step of faith out of the boat and walked on water and when your eyes moved from Jesus you began to sink, but He saved you. You saw Him feed 5,000 men with just a few loaves of bread and fish. You saw Him raise Lazarus from the dead.

All these things you saw, yet when they came to arrest Him, you ran. You were afraid for your own life. You had just spent three years with a man you were certain was more than a man and you couldn't stand with Him at his darkest hour. You abandoned Him. You denied him when a little girl asked you if you were with Him.

Fast forward past the crucifixion and death on the cross. Past Him being raised from the dead and the certainty that this man was/IS the Son of God. That His message was one of Truth and Hope and Assurance that God loves you and everyone so much, that the One you were with was sent on a mission to redeem you. The mission was death on a cross. From the first steps He took as a babe in Nazareth to the last ones He took on the Via Dolorosa while carrying His cross to Golgotha, He knew he was born to die the brutal tortuous Roman death of a martyr, cursed on a tree.

The comfort He knew of the Holy Spirit, the God that was with Him throughout His whole life left Him alone in the winepress of Gethsemane. The sin of the world was piled upon Him. Every sin. Every vile deed that man had ever done or would ever do, was piled upon Him while he carried that cross. Every disease. Every sickness. Every iniquity. He bore. The pain so intense that He sweat blood and cried out, "*My God, why have You forsaken me?*" (Matthew 27:46 NIV)

As His disciple, you didn't see his mother's tears flowing down her cheeks. You didn't see the Roman soldier's shake the dice in their hands as they gambled over his clothes. You didn't see them, you had to hear about his last words because you ran and hid, you saw the sun darken and felt the earth tremble under your feet. You heard about the veil in the Temple being torn and wondered what it all meant? Was He the Messiah? You had been taught all your life that the Messiah would come from the lineage of David and would establish His throne forever. Bewildered, lost, and broken, you went back to doing what you knew best—fishing. Half-hearted, half in a daze over all that had happened, you couldn't help but feel abandoned, disillusioned, and empty. Hope was gone. Death had conquered and perhaps, He was really just a man. In your heart, you had to wonder, where was this eternal Kingdom?

Then there He was on the beach. He was alive! He was who He said He was! He was the Messiah and everything that He had ever taught you was true. Not only that, but there were also so many other signs and symbols that were fulfilled that you never noticed before now.

Peter's restoration happened in an instant. Jesus broke the curses Peter spoke over himself when he denied Christ three times, by three times, asking Peter if he loved Him. When that was finished, Jesus spoke over Peter and said, "*On this rock I will build my Church.*" (Matthew 16:18).

But Peter needed a helper. He had already seen Jesus perform so many miracles and yet he still ran when Jesus was arrested. Full of doubt and fear, Peter was ineffective at leading even the ten other disciples at that moment until the Helper came.

The Second Peter

We call the day that the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples, the day of Pentecost. Pentecost just means 50. It was 50 days after the Passover. Peter and the rest of the disciples waited for the promised gift and on the fiftieth day, this happened:

Acts 2:1-5 (NIV emphasis added)

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Peter made a speech to the crowd, convincing them that Jesus was the Messiah, whom they crucified. Over 3,000 of them were convinced, received the Gospel and were baptized. In Acts 2:17, Peter quoted the book of Joel, "***In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.***" Later in verses 38 and 39, "***Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."*** (NIV, emphasis added) With this statement, **Peter verified that the gift of the Holy Spirit is for everyone.**

The same Peter that ran now stood boldly and preached the Gospel to the very same men that called for and sanctioned the crucifixion of Jesus. The only difference between the first Peter and the second Peter is the Holy Spirit. This power that came upon him, the eloquence and understanding of the scripture and all that had been fulfilled, was what the Holy Spirit imparted to Peter during those days. Remember that Peter didn't even want Jesus to go to the cross. Jesus admonished Peter, saying he had his mind on things of this world and not on things from the Father. (Matthew 16:23) But after Pentecost, the Holy Spirit taught Peter and gave him the words to say

throughout his ministry. Let's reread what Peter said in verse 39, *"The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off..."* The promise that Peter spoke of is the Holy Spirit that Jesus promised to His disciples. The very same promise that God gave to Peter and the Disciples, God freely gives to you and me. **The Holy Spirit will give you understanding and boldness.**

The Holy Spirit is Your Guide

Jesus told His Disciples that He couldn't teach them everything at that time because they couldn't handle it, but that the Holy Spirit would teach them what they needed to know. John 16:12-14 says, *"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, **He will guide you into all truth**; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you."* (NIV, emphasis added)

The Holy Spirit will guide you into all truth. How will you know what is true? You must discern His voice and verify everything that you hear and learn with the Word. We learned last week that God's Word is even greater than His Name! His Word never fails, nor changes. When we hear from the Holy Spirit, make sure that what He tells you lines up with God's Word. If it doesn't, then what you hear isn't from God, but more probably from the pizza you ate last night! There are Truths that are yet to be revealed and confirmed through Scripture. Just like the intrepid European explorers that discovered new lands as they set sail, **the Holy Pneuma of God wants to fill your sails and take you on a journey of discovery.**

The Holy Spirit Convicts

Jesus names three areas in which the Holy Spirit will "convict" the world: sin, righteousness, and judgment. What does it mean to convict? To our modern ears, the word "convict" makes us think of a trial or prosecution. However, Jesus is speaking more of the word in the sense of persuasion or the word we use for "convince". **The Holy Spirit will convince the world of God's truths concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment.** (So, let's let the Holy Spirit do His job and let's not do it for Him.) Here's what Jesus says about conviction, sin, judgment, and righteousness in John 16:8-11:

"When He comes, He will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because people do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

It's not too subtle here, that Jesus is saying that not believing in Him is sin. It is missing the mark. Jesus knew that He was the standard bearer of righteousness, but that He would no longer be here to be the example for his disciples and for us. Furthermore, the judgement that the Holy Spirit levies is on the prince of this world—Satan, not on us. John 3:17 says, "*For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*"

The role of the Holy Spirit is to convince us that we are in sin and that we should change direction. Judgement comes after we die; conviction happens to chasten us, to help us and to bring us into right relationship with Him. Since "sin" means to "miss the mark" we could make this statement: The role of the Holy Spirit is to convince us that we're not heading in the right direction. If our goal was to drive to Seattle from Atlanta and we start seeing road signs for Orlando, we need to make a turn or we're not going to get to the land of smoked salmon! The same is true for us, spiritually. Whether we realize it or not, when we are in sin, we are not heading in the right direction. Depending on the sin, we could be taking a detour, or we could be on a collision course with destruction.

The Holy Spirit's role in your life is to give you boldness, power, knowledge, lead you into truth, guide you, and convict you of your sin so that you can live the best life that God has designed for you. His ability to gently convict us of our sin and lead us to a thriving life is unmatched. You can't get free of the bondage we've discussed over the last three weeks on your own. You must have the Holy Spirit to help you get free! Sincerely ask Him for help and He will help you!

The Holy Spirit is a Person

Soul

How do we know the Holy Spirit is a person? A tree is alive, but it is hardly a person. **A person is a being with a soul. (Mind, will, and emotions).** Hebrews 10:38 says, "*Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.*" **The Word of God says that the Holy Spirit has a Soul.**

Mind

There are dozens of scriptures about the mind of God... Isaiah 55:8-9 says, "*For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways*", says the Lord. "*For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.*" **The Word of God says that God has a mind.** Does the Word say that the Holy Spirit specifically has a mind? Romans 8:27 says, "***Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes***

intercession for the saints according to the will of God.” There it is. **The Holy Spirit has a mind.** (And He prays for you!)

Will

The Holy Spirit has a will. His general will is unchanging and can be verified by what’s in the Word. Remember the verse in John 16? “*I will have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.*” (NIV, emphasis added) If He didn’t have a will, He wouldn’t have His own authority, but rather only the authority of the Father. **The Holy Spirit has His own will.**

Emotions

Most of the fruits of the Spirit are emotions. Can a tree love or be patient? Can a tree show kindness? (A pox upon all of you who quote “The Giving Tree” by Shel Silverstein!) A tree can’t love. It might be alive, but it can’t experience joy. Ephesians 4:30 says, “*And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*” The Holy Spirit can be grieved; therefore, He has emotions. **The Holy Spirit has emotions.**

The Person of the Holy Spirit

The Word is clear, the Holy Spirit is a Person and not an inanimate object. He’s not a ghost that haunts you or a wind that merely blows. The Holy Spirit is a person with a mind, will and emotions that loves, can be grieved, and should be sought for guidance, for truth, for help, for conviction, for power, authority, and boldness like the boldness of Peter. The Holy Spirit is a person, and therefore He can be our friend. He is the Emmanuel—our God with us! Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would never depart from us.

Fruit and Gifts

We deepen our relationships when we invest time in them. When we spend time with people, it’s inevitable that part of them will rub off on us. We’ll pick up their habits, their nuances, their vernacular, and parts of their personality. **We come to resemble those whom we admire.** When we admire and spend time with the Holy Spirit, we become more like Him. Paul wrote a letter to the Galatian Church, enumerating what that looks like. These are the fruits of the Holy Spirit, in other words, this is what we become when we hang out with Him:

Fruit of the Spirit

Love

Joy

Peace

Patience

Kindness

Goodness

Faithfulness

Gentleness

Self-Control

We can all use more love, more joy, more peace, more patience, more kindness, more goodness, more faithfulness, more gentleness, and more self-control. I love the line in verse 23 that says, *“against such things, there is no law.”* Mankind has never adjudicated against any of God’s personality traits! Every facet of Him is good.

Power

Galatians 5: 16 says, *“So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.”* If you are white knuckling your sin, then you aren’t walking by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives you strength to overcome all things. Romans 8:11 says, *“**The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you.**”* Jesus didn’t raise Himself from the dead, the Spirit raised Him. That Spirit lives inside of you. You have power, you have authority, you have a guide, you have everything you need to overcome, to defeat the enemy and live a victorious life! Acts 1:8 says, *“**You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.**”* You can use your own strength to walk 500 miles, or you can get into a car and drive there with almost no effort. As Christians, we have access to power in the Holy Spirit. We don’t have a car; we have a rocket ship!

Love

Romans 5:5 says the Holy Spirit makes it possible for us to walk in godly love toward others, *“Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”* (NIV, emphasis added) We receive supernatural love for those around us that God is calling us to help. Even the wicked love their families and those that are kind to them, but we are called to love our enemies? We receive that kind of love from the Holy Spirit; that kind of love doesn’t come naturally for us. Charles Finney described his encounter with the Holy Spirit in this way:

“The Holy Spirit... seemed to go through me, body and soul... I could feel the impression, like a wave of electricity, going through and through me.

Indeed, it seemed to come in waves of liquid love, for I could not express it in any other way.—**Charles Finney**

Baptism of the Holy Spirit

We all have the Holy Spirit who can say that Jesus is Lord. So, everyone that is saved has a deposit of the Holy Spirit. However, there are degrees and amounts of the Holy Spirit just as there are those that have **\$1,000** in their checking account and those that have **\$100 million** in their checking account. Both have money, but one has more than the other. One has enough to live on for a few weeks, the other has power to buy businesses, buildings, and change the world around him. How much of the Holy Spirit do you have? Do you have enough to live on for a few weeks or do you have enough to change the world around you?

The enemy has made the Baptism of the Holy Spirit into something weird, but it wasn't weird for the apostles or those in the early Church. **What about the Baptism?** What is it and how does it happen?

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is a beautiful gift that God wants you to have. You don't have to be baptized in the Holy Spirit if you're a Christian, but as Chris Hodges says, "I don't have to kiss my wife to be married, either but it sure is fun." God wants you to have this gift. I believe He gave us the example of two baptisms in the Old Testament when the Israelites crossed over the Red Sea, symbolic of the blood of Jesus and then later, crossed over the Jordan River and into the Promised Land. We are saved from the sure death of the Egyptian army by the red sea of Christ's blood, but we can't take the Promised Land unless we receive the second baptism of the Holy Spirit, as symbolized by Israelites crossing the Jordan River. We need power to fight the giants in the land. We need the Holy Spirit. I believe many Christians are stuck in the first baptism of water, the baptism of repentance, and wander around in the wilderness their entire Christian life. They aren't taking ground for the Kingdom because they lack the power, the boldness, the directive, the learning, and the vision. Many Christians are in just as much bondage as the rest of the world because they haven't received the second baptism that God wants you to receive. The early Christians baptized with water, then the elders laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. The early church was our rubric. Everything they did was very well documented.

Let's read what Paul did for the very effective evangelist, Apollos in Acts 19:1-9

Acts 19:1-9 (NIV, emphasis added)

1 While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the interior and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples *2* and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?"

“No,” they answered, “we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”

3“Into what, then, were you baptized?” Paul asked.

“The baptism of John,” they replied.

4Paul explained: “John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the One coming after him, that is, in Jesus.”

5On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. 6And when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. 7There were about twelve men in all.

Paul, the author of about two-thirds of the New Testament taught that there was a second baptism, the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is supplemental to the deposit of the Holy Spirit that you received when you became saved. Why would Paul ask them if they had the Holy Spirit if all that they needed was received upon salvation? Paul asked because they needed to receive something more that didn’t automatically happen upon salvation.

How do we receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit? It’s a gift that is received. We must want the gift and we should ask for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Remember however, that the Holy Spirit is a person that can be grieved. Don’t grieve Him by rejecting Him before you get to know Him in His fullness. The enemy of your soul wants you to think He is weird or something you don’t want. If I was your enemy, I’d do my best to keep you from picking up your weapons! I might let keep the pocketknife you have, but I’d keep you away from the fighter jets!

The Holy Spirit is your personal Friend. Your Teacher. Your Helper. Your Guide. Your Source of Strength. He is the Power that will help you take the Promised Land of your life. He’s a Gift to you, from God. Just as there was a difference between the two Peter’s, there will be a difference between you before you received the Holy Spirit, and after.

It’s not weird to want to spend time with your friend—especially when He says that’s all He wants. It’s not weird to ask a good friend for something in which He has an abundance of, right? If you had a thousand-acre apple orchard, it would be silly for your best friend to go hungry. But if he thinks your apples are weird and doesn’t want them, you wouldn’t force them on him. But if he asks, you’d say “Take all you want.” with gladness! Why? Because when we have an abundance, we naturally want to share it.

God has an abundance. If you want to hear His voice better, ask Him for clarity. If your daughter needs healing, ask Him. If you need to quit smoking or over-eating, and you need more strength, ask Him! He will give you the strength. He will give you MORE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. If you want more courage to be able to witness to a friend that’s lost, ask Him. Our God gives

good gifts. If you need more wisdom to be able to discuss a difficult situation with your son, ask Him! He's your ever-present help in a time of need.

Tongues

I'm not a scholar. I don't have a Biblical Studies degree. I never attended seminary, nor do I read a ton of religious books. My foundation is the Word. I read it and study it and everything that I take in, I verify with the Word of God before receiving it. There is no statement made in the Bible that says EVERYONE will speak in tongues. There's also no statement that says anyone shouldn't. Let's not get bogged down in this dilemma. The early Christians certainly spoke in tongues, and I know that tongues still exist because God has blessed me with the gift of a prayer language. God is the giver of good gifts. Jesus said, "***Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.***" (Matthew 7:7, NIV) If you want more power to overcome, if you want more teaching, more wisdom, more love, more boldness... Then you should ask, seek, and knock on the door. The Word is THE Word. There is nothing that supersedes it. Not church doctrine or edicts nailed to the church door. Not a brilliant three-point sermon... Nothing on earth is greater than His Word. The Word says what it says about the Holy Spirit and tongues. Seek the answer for yourself and close any predispositions. Ask God if it is good for you and He will answer you.

Tongues isn't something that's weird; it is a way to communicate directly with God that bypasses our soul (mind, will and emotions). God uses the gift of tongues to edify our spirits. 1 Corinthians 14:4 says, "*Anyone who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but the one who prophesies edifies the church.*"

Definition: Edify—Instruct, improve morally or intellectually.

Every one of us needs edification. We all need more instruction. Is it better to prophesy? I believe that is what Paul is saying, but that doesn't negate that there is a need to be edified.

The Holy Spirit edifies, convicts, cleanses, teaches, guides, corrects, loves, gives love, imparts power, and will help you take your Promised Land. I don't know if you'll speak in tongues when you get baptized in the Holy Spirit. But if we follow the example of Paul in Acts 19 and we lay hands on those that ask for and want the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, Our Friend is a good Friend. He will give freely, out of His abundance.

The Apostles Creed

***I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.***

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit

***and born of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic* Church,
the communion of the saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.***

**Catholic here means, universal church—and not what is known as the Roman Catholic Church.*

M2 Weeks 13 & 14

Personal Testimony Weeks:

Each Man Gets the Opportunity to Share His Salvation Story

M2 Bonus Teaching (Read on Your Own): The Power of Fasting

“The absence of fasting is the measure of our contentment with the absence of Christ. If we don’t feel strong desires for the manifestation of the glory of God, it is not because we have drunk deeply and are satisfied. It is because we have nibbled so long at the table of the world. Our soul is stuffed with small things, and there is no room for the great.”

—John Piper

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.

Matthew 5:6

At the end of the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln called the nation to fast four times in order to heal the nation and restore it back to health.

Here’s what happened:

- 1866: Russia sold Alaska to the US for \$.02/acre
- The US budget had a surplus for 28 years
- The US had peace for almost 20 years
- The US became a hotbed of inventions

- Cowboy hat
- Rotary Printing Press
- Urinal
- Steam Powered Motorcycle
- Paper Clip
- Barbed Wire
- Refrigerated Car
- Paper Bag
- American Football
- Clothes Hanger
- Bee Smoker
- Feather Duster
- Rowing Machine
- Silo
- Jeans
- Spork
- Jockstrap
- Phonograph
- Iron
- Induction Motor
- Ballpoint Pen
- Salisbury Steak
- Light bulb
- Telephone
- Radio
- Radio (Tesla)
- Long distance electricity

- Automobile Advancements

By the President of the United States of America.

A Proclamation.

Whereas, the Senate of the United States, devoutly recognizing the Supreme Authority and just Government of Almighty God, in all the affairs of men and of nations, has, by a resolution, requested the President to designate and set apart a day for National prayer and humiliation.

And whereas it is the duty of nations as well as of men, to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions, in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon; and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord.

And, insomuch as we know that, by His divine law, nations like individuals are subjected to punishments and chastisements in this world, may we not justly fear that the awful calamity of civil war, which now desolates the land, may be but a punishment, inflicted upon us, for our presumptuous sins, to the needful end of our national reformation as a whole People? We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven. We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us!

It behooves us then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness.

Now, therefore, in compliance with the request, and fully concurring in the views of the Senate, I do, by this my proclamation, designate and set apart Thursday, the 30th. day of April, 1863, as a day of national humiliation, fasting and prayer. And I do hereby request all the People to abstain, on that day, from their ordinary secular pursuits, and to unite, at their several places of public worship and their respective homes, in keeping the day holy to the Lord, and

devoted to the humble discharge of the religious duties proper to that solemn occasion.

All this being done, in sincerity and truth, let us then rest humbly in the hope authorized by the Divine teachings, that the united cry of the Nation will be heard on high, and answered with blessings, no less than the pardon of our national sins, and the restoration of our now divided and suffering Country, to its former happy condition of unity and peace.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington, this thirtieth day of March, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and of the Independence of the United States the eighty seventh.

**By the President: Abraham Lincoln
William H. Seward, Secretary of State**

Isaiah 58

True Fasting

58 *"Shout it aloud, do not hold back.*

Raise your voice like a trumpet.

Declare to my people their rebellion

and to the descendants of Jacob their sins.

2 *For day after day they seek me out;*

they seem eager to know my ways,

as if they were a nation that does what is right

and has not forsaken the commands of its God.

They ask me for just decisions

and seem eager for God to come near them.

3 *'Why have we fasted,' they say,*

'and you have not seen it?

Why have we humbled ourselves,

and you have not noticed?'

"Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please

and exploit all your workers.

4 *Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife,*

and in striking each other with wicked fists.

You cannot fast as you do today

and expect your voice to be heard on high.

5 *Is this the kind of fast I have chosen,*

only a day for people to humble themselves?

Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed

*and for lying in sackcloth and ashes?
Is that what you call a fast,
a day acceptable to the Lord?*

6 *“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:
to loose the chains of injustice
and untie the cords of the yoke,
to set the oppressed free
and break every yoke?*

7 *Is it not to share your food with the hungry
and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—
when you see the naked, to clothe them,
and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?*

8 ***Then your light will break forth like the dawn,
and your healing will quickly appear;
then your righteousness[a] will go before you,
and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.***

9 ***Then you will call, and the Lord will answer;
you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.***

*“If you do away with the yoke of oppression,
with the pointing finger and malicious talk,
10 and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the oppressed,
then your light will rise in the darkness,
and your night will become like the noonday.*

11 *The Lord will guide you always;
he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land
and will strengthen your frame.*

*You will be like a well-watered garden,
like a spring whose waters never fail.*

12 *Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins
and will raise up the age-old foundations;
you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls,
Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.*

13 *“If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath
and from doing as you please on my holy day,
if you call the Sabbath a delight
and the Lord’s holy day honorable,
and if you honor it by not going your own way
and not doing as you please or speaking idle words,*

14 *then you will find your joy in the Lord,
and I will cause you to ride in triumph on the heights of the land
and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob.”
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.*

What is Fasting?

- Not merely going without food for a long time
- There is no such thing as a “Social Media” fast.
- Fasting is to go without food and/or water for a period of time for a spiritual purpose.
- Psalm 42:7 “Deep calls to deep.” Fasting unclutters your spirit from the things of this earth in order to be amazingly sensitive to the things of God.
- 3 Duties of Every Christian
 - Praying
 - Giving
 - Fasting
- Jesus said, “When you fast...” Not if you should... WHEN.
 - Nothing will be impossible. Matthew 17:20
- Fasting is Spiritual Warfare:
 - This kind goes out only with prayer and fasting... Matthew 17:21
- Dethroning King Stomach.
 - The first sin came through food!
 - The blessing of Jacob and how Esau sold his birthright in order to fill his stomach!

It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” -Matthew 4:4

I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.—Job 23:12

Why do we Fast?

1. **Protection:** Ezra declared a corporate fast and prayed for a safe journey for the Israelites as they made the nine-hundred- mile trek to Jerusalem from Babylon ([Ezra 8:21-23](#)).
2. **Healing 2 Chronicles 7:14** *14 If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.*

3. **We need a breakthrough.** (Fasting will break poverty from your life.) **2 Chronicles 20** Jehoshaphat called for a fast when a vast army was coming. Read this chapter!
4. **We need a new assignment** (Every assignment has a birthplace) Jesus spent forty days and nights in the wilderness fasting and praying before He began God's work on this earth. He needed time alone to prepare for what His Father had called Him to do ([Matthew 4:1-17](#); [Mark 1:12-13](#); [Luke 4:1-14](#)).
5. **Helps us maintain sensitivity to His voice and for wisdom.** Paul and Barnabas prayed and fasted for the elders of the churches before committing them to the Lord for His service ([Acts 14:23](#)).
6. **To worship God.** Luke 2 tells the story of an eighty-four-year-old prophetess named Anna. Verse 37 says, "She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying." Anna was devoted to God, and fasting was one expression of her love for Him.
7. **To show grief.** Nehemiah mourned, fasted, and prayed when he learned Jerusalem's walls had been broken down, leaving the Israelites vulnerable and disgraced ([Nehemiah 1:1-4](#)).
8. **To repent.** After Jonah pronounced judgment against the city of Nineveh, the king covered himself with sackcloth and sat in the dust. He then ordered the people to fast and pray. [Jonah 3:10](#) says, "*When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, He relented and did not bring on them the destruction He had threatened.*"
9. **To gain victory.** After losing forty thousand men in battle in two days, the Israelites cried out to God for help. [Judges 20:26](#) says all the people went up to Bethel and "sat weeping before the Lord." They also "fasted that day until evening." The next day the Lord gave them victory over the Benjamites.
10. **Spiritual Warfare:** When the disciples couldn't cast out a demon, they asked Jesus to do it and then wondered why they couldn't cast it out. Jesus said, "However, this kind does not come out except by prayer and fasting." [Matthew 17:21](#)

*Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. **Hebrews 4:16***

What NOT to do when fasting

1. Fast just to lose weight.
2. Fast just to cleanse.

3. To go about your usual day without doing anything differently
4. To continue in sin
5. To forget those that are in need.
6. Treat fasting like a vending machine from God.
7. Forget the Sabbath. The Sabbath and fasting are linked together in Isaiah 58.
8. You cannot fast to gain merit with God or to receive forgiveness of sins. Only the blood of Jesus can forgive sins.
9. Brag about or talk about your fast. Jesus said to do everything in private in order to gain a public reward. Don't let your right hand know what your left hand is doing. (Matthew 6:3)
10. Aimlessly fast. Don't just declare a fast for no reason. Fast for a reason. Fast with purpose. Write down your fast and commit your fast to the Lord.

How do we Fast?

1. Absolute Fast

1. No Food or water.
2. Maximum of 3 days

2. Normal Fast.

1. Drink water. No food. (Below are examples)
 1. 1 Day Fast. (sunup to sundown)
 2. 3 Day Fast. (3 days no food, water only)
 3. 7 Day Fast. (7 days, no food, water only)
 4. 21 Day Fast.(21 days, no food, water and broth only)
 5. 40 Day Fast. (40 days, no food, water and broth only)

3. Partial Fast-Daniel Fast

1. 21 Days.
2. No meat. No bread or fried foods. No sugary foods.
3. No packaged or processed food

4. Mostly fresh fruits and vegetables
5. Whole grains
6. Limit your salt and sodium intake
7. No ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise
8. Healthy salad dressings only. 3-5 ingredients.
9. Fresh, healthy oils like olive oil and avocado oil.

Flies have a lifespan between one and forty days. Jesus modeled a fast of 40 days. All flies die after 40 days... Satan is known as the Lord of the flies. Coincidence? I think not!

Health Benefits of Fasting:

1. There is no better cleanse. Like spring cleaning your body.
2. Slows the process of aging.
3. First 3 days, if you have headaches it is because there are toxins leaving your body.
 1. Studies have proven that the average American takes in about four pounds of, chemical preservatives, flavorings, colorings, stabilizers and other additives.
 2. Periodic fasts are necessary to flush out the poisons.
4. After 3 days, your focus is better. Your mind is sharper.

5 Things to do before you fast and 1 to do AFTER.

Ruth was about to go to lay at her future husband's feet. When she did this, her mother-in-law told her to do the following things to make herself pleasing to her bride groom. We need to do the same when we enter into the throne room of God. We need to prepare ourselves to be seen by Him.

Ruth 3:3

Therefore wash yourself and anoint yourself, put on your best garment and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking.

1. **Cleanse Yourself:** If you want to be close to the bride groom, be freshly cleansed. (wash yourself) **2 Corinthians 7:1** *Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*
The reason our prayers aren't answered, the reason that God

doesn't bring us the breakthroughs we seek is because what God says in Isaiah 1:15-16 *When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes. Cease to do evil... Take a spiritual bath. Isaiah 52:11 (KJV)* *Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord. How do we take a spiritual bath? Ephesians 5:25 (NKJV)* *That He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word... When you read the Word of God, it washes you. It washes your hands, your eyes, your heart... Psalm 119:9* *How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your Word. 1 John 1:9* *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

Psalm 24:3-6

3Who may ascend the hill of the LORD?

Who may stand in His holy place?

*4He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
who does not lift up his soul to an idol
or swear deceitfully.*

*5He will receive blessing from the LORD
and vindication from the God of his salvation.*

*6Such is the generation of those who seek Him,
who seek Your face, O God of Jacob.c*

2. **The Anointing:** When you are freshly cleansed, you **become a candidate for the anointing**. (be fragrantly anointed). My anointing is the Holy Spirit. **1 John 2:27** *But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you. He will teach you; He will guide you. The anointing promotes you and raises you. Prepare your heart for what God has in store for you. Remember, the anointing is not just the Holy Spirit, but it is promotion. Samuel anointed David and Saul before they became king of Israel.*
3. **Put on your best clothes.** (Ruth had been a widow and probably had been wearing mourning clothes. She was just coming from a horrible famine.) God inhabits the praise of His people. **Isaiah 61:3 (NKJV)** *To console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified." Isaiah 61:10 (NKJV)*

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

4. **Commit.** Submit your complete will to the Lord. **Ruth 3:4** *Then it shall be, when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies; and you shall go in, uncover his feet, and lie down; and he will tell you what you should do.* Jewish tradition and culture, if they uncovered their feet and laid down at their feet, it was an act of submission. When you fast, you are lying at the feet of the Father, saying, I fully submit my life to you. I am withholding nothing. My will surrenders to your will. My dream submits to your dream. My desire submits to your desire. God will open up the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing upon you that you will not have room enough to receive. (Malachi 3)
5. **Act.** Actions count; mere words do not. Act out God's will for your life. **Ruth 3:5.** *And she said to her, "All that you say to me I will do."* We are not trying to demand anything from God. We are saying, "show me your will". Whether it is mountains or valleys. I will be faithfully compliant to whatever you say and I want your will. This is a matter of doing. Not saying... **Ruth 3:9** *And he said, "Who are you?" So she answered, "I am Ruth, your maidservant. Take your maidservant under your wing, for you are a close relative."* **Ruth 3:10** *Then he said, "Blessed are you of the Lord, my daughter!"* When we do these 5 things to prepare our hearts to enter His presence, God will bless us.

After the Fast.

1. **When we fast and are waiting for the voice of God... Get to the quiet place that Jesus modeled as He went to the Garden of Gethsemane. Ruth 3:18** *Then she said, "Sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will turn out; for the man will not rest until he has concluded the matter this day."*

2 Chronicles 20 It happened after this *that* the people of Moab with the people of Ammon, and *others* with them besides the Ammonites,[a] came to battle against Jehoshaphat. **2** Then some came and told Jehoshaphat, saying, "A great multitude is coming against you from beyond the sea, from [b]Syria; and they are in Hazazon Tamar" (which *is* En Gedi). **3** And Jehoshaphat feared, and set [c]himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. **4** So Judah gathered together to ask *help* from the Lord; and from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord.

5 Then Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord, before the new court, **6** and said: "O Lord God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven, and do You *not* rule over all the

kingdoms of the nations, and in Your hand *is there not* power and might, so that no one is able to withstand You? **7** *Are You not* our God, *who* drove out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel, and gave it to the descendants of Abraham Your friend forever? **8** And they dwell in it, and have built You a sanctuary in it for Your name, saying, **9** 'If disaster comes upon us—sword, judgment, pestilence, or famine—we will stand before this temple and in Your presence (for Your name *is* in this temple), and cry out to You in our affliction, and You will hear and save.' **10** And now, here are the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir—whom You would not let Israel invade when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them and did not destroy them— **11** here they are, rewarding us by coming to throw us out of Your possession which You have given us to inherit. **12** O our God, will You not judge them? **For we have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon You.**"

13 Now all Judah, with their little ones, their wives, and their children, stood before the Lord.

14 Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, in the midst of the assembly. **15** And he said, "Listen, all you of Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and you, King Jehoshaphat! Thus says the Lord to you: **Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's.** **16** Tomorrow go down against them. They will surely come up by the Ascent of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the [d]brook before the Wilderness of Jeruel. **17** You will not *need* to fight in this *battle*. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem!' **Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the Lord is with you.**"

18 And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with *his* face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem bowed before the Lord, worshiping the Lord. **19** Then the Levites of the children of the Kohathites and of the children of the Korahites stood up to praise the Lord God of Israel with voices loud and high.

20 So they rose early in the morning and went out into the Wilderness of Tekoa; and as they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the Lord your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper." **21** And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who should sing to the Lord, and who should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army and were saying:

**“Praise the Lord,
For His mercy *endures* forever.”**

22 Now when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were defeated. **23** For the people of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir to utterly kill and destroy *them*. And when they [e]had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, they helped to destroy one another.

24 So when Judah came to a place overlooking the wilderness, they looked toward the multitude; and there *were* their dead bodies, fallen on the earth. No one had escaped.

25 When Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away their spoil, they found among them an abundance of valuables on the [f]dead bodies, and precious jewelry, which they stripped off for themselves, **more than they could carry away; and they were three days gathering the spoil because there was so much.** **26** And on the fourth day they assembled in the Valley of [g]Berachah, for there they blessed the Lord; therefore the name of that place was called The Valley of Berachah until this day. **27** Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, with Jehoshaphat in front of them, to go back to Jerusalem with joy, for the Lord had made them rejoice over their enemies. **28** So they came to Jerusalem, with stringed instruments and harps and trumpets, to the house of the Lord. **29** And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of *those* countries when they heard that the Lord had fought against the enemies of Israel. **30** Then the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet, for his God gave him rest all around.

The End of Jehoshaphat’s Reign

31 So Jehoshaphat was king over Judah. *He was* thirty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name *was* Azubah the daughter of Shilhi. **32** And he walked in the way of his father Asa, and did not turn aside from it, doing *what was* right in the sight of the Lord. **33** Nevertheless the [h]high places were not taken away, for as yet the people had not directed their hearts to the God of their fathers.

34 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, first and last, indeed they *are* written in the book of Jehu the son of Hanani, which *is* mentioned in the book of the kings of Israel.

35 After this Jehoshaphat king of Judah allied himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who acted very wickedly. **36** And he allied himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish, and they made the ships in Ezion Geber. **37** But Eliezer the son of Dodavah of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, “Because you have allied yourself with Ahaziah, the Lord has

destroyed your works." Then the ships were wrecked, so that they were not able to go to Tarshish.

Simple Steps I can Take when Fasting:

- 1. Pray about a reason for fasting. See the list on page 4-5**
- 2. Start small. If you're not used to fasting, start with a sun-up to sun-down fast.**
- 3. Choose the type of fast you want to do**
- 4. Commit to the fast. Settle in your mind these three things:**
 - 1. When you start**
 - 2. What you're believing God for**
 - 3. When you finish**
- 5. Cleanse yourself. Confess your sin to the Lord and repent. Turn around.**
- 6. Write it down! Writing down your fast will help you sustain it while you're daydreaming about pizza.**
- 7. Listen to what God has planned for you.**

M2 Week 15: Spiritual Warfare

Summary

The last two weeks, we've heard testimony's of from our brothers in Christ. We learned where God found us, how God transformed us and what God is currently doing in our lives. That's incredibly exciting and inspiring to me. For me, it's probably my favorite two weeks of Millennium Men. It's important to hear the stories of our fellow warriors. It's important because where we may be weak, we may find another that is strong in that area and of course, vice versa.

*One predominant theme that I heard through the testimonies was this: We need each other. We need one another to lean on in times of struggle and all of us, from the strongest to the weakest, will face battles. I heard a pastor once say that there are three different kinds of people: Those in the middle of a crisis, those coming out of a crisis and those poor saps who are about to go into one. James 1:2-3 says, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, when you encounter trials of many kinds, **3**because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance." Notice he doesn't say, "if you face trials". He says, "when". We will face trials and when we do, we must engage against an enemy that is at war against us.*

This is a very important lesson for Millennium Men. They must understand how to engage in Spiritual Warfare in order to live victorious lives. Pay close attention to this chapter and perhaps use it again as a reference guide. Victorious living starts here.

The Spiritual Warfare Chapter

Ephesians 6

*1*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. *2*“Honor your father and mother” (which is the first commandment with a promise), *3*“that it may go well with you and that you may have a long life on the earth.”

*4*Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath; instead, bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Serving with Honor

(Colossians 3:22-25; 1 Timothy 6:1-2)

*5*Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear and sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. *6*And do this not only to please them while they are watching, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. *7*Serve with good will, as to the Lord and not to men, *8*because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.

*9*And masters, do the same for your slaves. Give up your use of threats, because you know that He who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with Him.

The Full Armor of God

*10*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. *11*Put on the full armor of God, so that you can make your stand against the devil's schemes. *12*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this world's darkness, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

*13*Therefore take up the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you will be able to stand your ground, and having done everything, to stand. *14*Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness arrayed, *15*and with your feet fitted with the readiness of the gospel of peace. *16*In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. *17*And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

*18*Pray in the Spirit at all times, with every kind of prayer and petition. To this end, stay alert with all perseverance in your prayers for all the saints. *19*Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be

*given me so that I will boldly make known the mystery of the gospel, **20**for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it fearlessly, as I should.*

What is Spiritual Warfare?

Definition: Spiritual Warfare is any act that counters, cancels and defeats the plans and actions of the enemy.

Our enemy is very real. He is not make believe, nor is he a harmless horned devil with a pitchfork up to minor mischief. The enemy of our souls has power. How much power? Read the book of Job and you'll see what power the enemy can have if God allows. He was able to create storms that destroyed Job's children's homes. (Job 1:19) He was able to cause death and destruction all around Job. He was able to destroy his cattle, which was likely his livelihood, cause boils on Job's skin and lastly, probably inspired Job's "friends" to visit him with accusations. Also, remember what happened in Pharaoh's palace. Moses turned a staff into a snake; so did Pharaoh's magicians. (Exodus 7:11-13)

You have an enemy that is the author of disease and death. He can cause pestilence and storms to come against you. He can destroy your livelihood and bring discouragement through people you thought you could trust. That's a powerful enemy! But, you shouldn't fear him because the same spirit that raised Christ Jesus from the dead, lives inside of you! (Romans 6:10-11) Though the enemy and his angels are a well-organized kingdom who hate you, they cannot touch you unless you let them. Just as God placed a hedge of protection around Job, He has placed the blood of Jesus over you that covers your sin and makes you God's son. "***Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—***" (John 1:12) A right is something that we must choose to accept. Every person may have the right to Free Speech in the US, but you have to speak in order to exercise that right. You may have the right to assemble, but you have to assemble in order to exercise that right. How do we exercise the right to become children of God? We must look and act like our Father by leaving sin. 1 John 3:8 says, "*The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.*" It's clear that you cannot be engaged in willful sin and be a part of the Kingdom. There is no salvation without a repentant heart. We cannot be sons of God and engaged in the devil's work. There are only two Kingdoms and Switzerland isn't one of them. You are part of one of the two Kingdoms, whether you realize it or not. God won't turn His back on anyone who's heart is contrite and wants to stop sinning, though may be struggling. That's not God's heart. He loves you and only wants what's best for you. John is speaking of those who are living a willful sinful life. The first step in Spiritual Warfare is to know which Kingdom you are fighting for.

Understand that there are only two and you cannot remain ambivalent. Choose this day, whom you will serve.

2 Corinthians 9-11 says, *“9My purpose in writing you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. 10If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And if I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven it in the presence of Christ for your sake, 11in order that Satan should not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.”* There are two very interesting points that Paul makes here in his letter to the Corinthians: 1. That unforgiveness gives power to the enemy 2. Satan has a scheme or plot against us.

I would imagine, like in any competition, the opposing coach has analyzed his opponent’s weaknesses and strengths and develops a gameplan that will help his team win. The fact that Paul states the enemy has a scheme against us means just that. He is analyzing you, your weaknesses and your strengths and is bent on your destruction. Why? One reason is because you’re God’s image bearer and the other is he wants your inheritance—the earth and all that’s in it. He’s like the son that’s been left out of the will. Worse than getting nothing, Satan knows where he will spend his eternity.

Satan’s Common Schemes

- Fear. Fear is expecting the circumstance to move whereas faith is expecting God to move.
- Shame. Satan wants you to believe God is upset with you. Many people don’t pray or ask because they don’t feel worthy.
 - For Men... Shame in our finances
 - Shame through our lusts
- Weariness. Satan attacked when Jesus was weary and hungry.
- Alone. Satan attacks when we are alone.

The Sabbath

Spiritual Battles Are More Prevalent

We are spiritual creatures with a physical body. Aside from the physical pleasure and instinctual design, sex is so alluring because it is the only human activity, outside of Christ, that can produce eternal fruit. Ecclesiastes 3:11 says, *“God set eternity in the heart of mankind.”* You’re wired for eternity, whether you realize it or not. The spiritual realm is eternal; our world is passing away. Therefore, the battles that we face are more often spiritual than not. **Ephesians 6:12** says, *“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness*

in the heavenly places.” Interestingly, Paul says that we aren’t even wrestling against flesh and blood. That’s not our battlefield. Our battlefield resides in the spiritual realm, which is eternal, which contains a real enemy who wants to steal, kill, and destroy everything he can from you. Now are you ready to fight the battle? Don’t be afraid. God has defeated the enemy; the only problem is, you haven’t. Your battle still exists against Satan and it’s time to put on your armor and go to war.

How Do We Fight

Ephesians 6 is known as the Spiritual Warfare chapter. I find that interesting since the first part of the chapter deals with humility and submission. I don’t think that’s there by accident. I think the first steps to fighting a spiritual battle is to understand that your power and might is useless against the power of the enemy. The only power that we have are the weapons that Christ has given to us. I hear many Christians say, “The battle is already won.”, which is partially true. God’s with him is ongoing and will be ongoing until Jesus returns, or we die. **The first step to becoming “more than a conqueror” as Paul states that we are in Romans 8:37, is to engage in battle.** I want to repeat that because it’s so imperative: **Our battle as Christians is NOT won.** God’s battle is won. We must fight Satan diligently with the weapons that God so graciously gave to us.

Rule Number 1: Talk About Fight Club

The first rule of fighting a spiritual battle is the opposite of the First Rule of Fight Club! We need to talk about our fight with other believers. You’re more powerful when you fight alongside of other believers. Deuteronomy 32:30 says one will put a thousand to flight and two will put ten thousand to flight. That’s a pretty good return just for adding one to your team. Ecclesiastes 4:12 says, “*Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.*” The bottom line is this: We need each other. “Don’t talk about fight club”, NO! Do talk about your fight with other brothers so that they can stand firm in the faith and help you fight the battle with you.

Rule 2: Remember the Law of Sowing and Reaping

If you’re battling in an area, sow into that area. If you’ve got rebellious teenager problems, volunteer to help serve the teens at church. If you’re battling with authority problems, volunteer to help serve your local police officers. If you’re facing a financial battle, sow a financial seed where God places it on your heart! Flip the script on the enemy by delivering a blow to his schemes right where he is trying to hurt you. I was once facing a serious business battle and I began to pray for my adversary. Do you want to know what happened? A few months later, that adversary called me and asked me

for a job! This may be the most powerful thing you can do when engaging in a spiritual battle. Sow a seed!

Rule 3: Clean House

You may not remember the story of Ruth, but it's a beautiful story of redemption. Ruth needed a redeemer. She needed a man to help her and her mother-in-law or they likely wouldn't have survived. Her situation was very dire after losing her husband. There was no welfare system in those days. Ruth made a plan to go and present herself to a man, in humility, to see if he would marry her. Before she went, Naomi, her mother-in-law gave her some advice. **Ruth 3:3** *"Therefore wash yourself and anoint yourself, put on your best garment and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking."* Naomi's advice was simple: **Cleanse Yourself**. If you want to be close to the bride groom, be freshly cleansed. **2 Corinthians 7:1** says, *"Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.* We are all on a sanctification journey. Just because you want to do the right thing doesn't mean you always do it. That's part of being human. There's abundant grace for the Christian that is prayerfully walking out his sanctification. But when you sin, it is important to ask for forgiveness from God. Many times, we're seeking a promotion, earnestly asking for healing or reconciliation of a loved-one, but our prayers are bouncing off the ceiling. Why? Let's look at what the Bible says in **Isaiah 1:15-16** *When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes. Cease to do evil...* **Take a spiritual bath. Isaiah 52:11 (KJV)** *Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord.* **How do we take a spiritual bath? Ephesians 5:25 (NKJV)** *That He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word...* **When you read the Word of God, it washes you. It washes your hands, your eyes, your heart... Psalm 119:9** *How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your Word.* **1 John 1:9** *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

Confess your sins.

Read the Word of God over your situation.

Repent.

Rinse.

Repeat.

Rule 4: Ask with Pure Motives

James 4: 2-3 says, “*You crave what you do not have; you kill and covet but are unable to obtain it. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask. 3And when you do ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may squander it on your pleasures.*” I often hear verse 2 quoted in Christian circles and prosperity teachers, but verse three is equally important. How do we weigh our motives? We align our will with that of God’s. We must ask for things that are pleasing to Him to give. God loves you and is a good Father and like any good Father, He takes pleasure in your pleasure. Every parent loves to give good gifts to their children and our God is even better than the best parent! He gives gifts because He knows the future. When we ask God with pure motives, God is gracious and loving and loves to give us the gifts that will benefit us. So, be sure to ask for your gift. Then, be sure to check your motive. God knows all things. He knows what’s best for us, knows our future and our past. Trust God to give good gifts. I often pray for things, but temper the prayers with these words, “But not my will, God—may Your will be done in my life.”

Rule 5: The Law of Rest

We are human and designed to rest. God modeled it after Creation and then He built it into the Law of Moses. He made the laws for our benefit, not His. The Law was there because He loves us. The maker of the machine asks us to rest and therefore, we should gladly obey what He says about it. Music is made through rhythm and rhythm, by nature, has pauses. Without the pauses, we’d have just noise. The same is probably true with our lives. Without pauses, we aren’t as affective. We need rest and God commanded us to rest. I don’t debate about which is the true Sabbath, whether it’s Saturday or Sunday or some other day for that matter. I’m not sure it matters which day you choose to set aside as holy unto the Lord, but I believe you should choose one consistent day, whatever day that is. If you’re an NFL player and you play on Sundays, you probably won’t be able to keep the Sabbath on Sunday. If you’re a restaurateur, maybe you can close on Sunday and worship. That policy seems to have worked for Chick-Fil-A, just fine. Making a day holy just means its set apart. Do no profitable work means that you don’t make money on the Sabbath. I don’t think it means that you shouldn’t work in your garden if that’s something you truly enjoy. Pray about your Sabbath. The day was made for you, not God. Be a good steward of it and I believe that God will bless you with energy, clarity, and strength because you’ve chosen to honor Him. There are several scriptures about the Sabbath. Check out **Psalm 92** on your own, but here’s what Isaiah says about the Sabbath:

Isaiah 58:13-14

*“If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath
and from doing as you please on my holy day,
if you call the Sabbath a delight*

*and the Lord's holy day honorable,
and if you honor it by not going your own way
and not doing as you please or speaking idle words,
then you will find your joy in the Lord,
and I will cause you to ride in triumph on the heights of the land
and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob."
*For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.**

Weapons of Warfare

The Word

There are several Spiritual Warfare weapons, but none is better than the Word of God! Speak His Word over your situation and watch the enemy melt away. Your words are meaningless to the enemy, but God's Word has power and authority. The enemy can't stand against His Word, so use it! If you're sick, read Psalm 91 over your house. If you're discouraged, read Psalm 103 over your situation. If you're looking for wisdom, read the Proverbs over your situation. Luke 1:37 says, "For the word of God will NEVER fail." (NIV, emphasis added) How often does it fail? NEVER. If you need faith for a situation, Romans 10:17 says that "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." (NKJV) The Word is powerful and it is useful for every situation. There is not a human condition or problem that the Word didn't address. It is not outdated or anachronistic. It is one hundred percent reliable today, just as it was two thousand years ago.

Prayer

Get alone and go talk to God. Go for a walk with your Father. Ask Him! David wrote in Psalm 5:3, "*In the morning, LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly.*" You don't have to be the most eloquent speaker. Just open your mouth and talk to God as if He were standing right next to you because He is! He is even inside of you! Talk to God. I think it helps to have the posture of prayer with petitions on my knees, facing Jerusalem, but you can pray however you're led. Some of my best prayers come in the shower. I pray when I'm driving down a long stretch of highway. I pray before meals and before my girls go to school, I pray over them. I pray before I take long trips. I once ran into a guy that has the same condition that I was born with, Spina Bifida, but was in a wheelchair. It's only by the grace of God and maybe a millimeter of bone that I wasn't bound to a wheelchair for life, as well. I'm thankful for so many things and when I see others that aren't as blessed as I am, I make sure I tell God how grateful I am for these things. If God never did another thing for me, He's done enough! How could I be ungrateful about anything? I wasn't born in Rwanda or war-torn Lebanon in the 80's.

We'd make time if King Charles were waiting outside our door to talk to us. Well, the King of Kings is waiting for an appointment with you. Bring your

petitions to the King! Pray. Pray often. Pray out loud. Pray the Word. Pray with Thanksgiving! Pray with expectation. Remember that if you pray half-hearted prayers, you'll get nothing. God wants you to pray bold prayers. Mark Batterson says in "The Circle Maker" that if you're praying prayers that man can achieve, your prayers aren't bold enough! Pray big, audacious prayers! I believe the tailor of a man's life is the size of his prayers. Pray big, bold prayers and watch God move heaven and earth to show you just who He is!

Remember when Jesus cursed the fig tree? What did He say? Matthew 17:20 documents the words of Jesus, "*He replied, "Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."*

Pray

Pray Often

Pray Big Prayers

Pray with Expectation

Worship

I'm big on symbols in the Bible. I believe that every word of the Bible is there for a reason. I believe that it's no mistake that the first battle the Israelites fought in the Promised Land was won through worship. The walls of Jericho fell when they marched around the city and on the seventh time, they blew their horns and shouted to the Lord! (Joshua 6:1-27) When you are facing walls that are thick, an army that outnumbers you and a land full of giants... Worship the One True God and see what happens. The battle isn't yours. It's His, but you've got to do your part.

Furthermore, we worship with more than just singing. We worship by doing a great job at work and doing our work as if unto the Lord. We worship by honoring our elders, loving our wives and disciplining our children in a loving way.

Fasting

This one may be last on the list, but it is not least. This is by far, the most powerful weapon you have against the enemy. It's so important, so powerful that I wrote a special lesson on it. Please read it. It will explain the different kinds of fasts, how to fast, why to fast, and what to do before you fast. It's a good guide and most of my material comes from one of my heroes in the faith, Jentezen Franklin. I often do summer 4 week lesson on fasting, where we break down the "Fasting" book by Jentezen Franklin. I highly recommend the book. This is what the cover looks like:

M2 Week 16: Your Purpose

Summary

In Week 1, we established that there is an attack on manhood, masculinity and especially the called Spiritual Leader of the home—the husband and father. We established that without godly men, the world looks much different. The Incarceration rates, poverty rates, teenage pregnancy rates, high school drop-out rates..., and several other factors are much higher when children are fatherless. Men are important and the enemy is trying to neutralize our influence.

In Week 2, we discovered that our design reveals destiny. We are made in God's image, which means we have an eternal makeup, designed for a purpose with unique talents and gifts. We also discovered that like God, we have a strong desire to receive healthy honor. Our yearning for honor can lead us to unhealthy places if we aren't careful.

In Weeks 3 &4, we learned about our SHAPE, which is our Spiritual Gifts, our Heart, our Abilities, our Personality type and our Experiences. We learned that God will give us a Heart for a certain people or need. That is the beginning of discovering our Purpose.

In Week 5, we discovered that we are designed to live in our Zeitgeist, which is the pervasive culture and belief systems of the day. The culture and belief of our world is contrary to the Word of God. It places man at the center of things and reaches outward rather than placing God at the head. Our current culture, called Postmodernism tells us that we can create our own truth, and that truth is relative. We reject the culture of the day and believe what the Word of God says about our purpose and about who God is.

In Week 6, we learned that we must grieve for the consequences of our sin, which is death. We must forgive in order to be forgiven and in order to love our fellow man, we must receive the love that God has lavished upon us. That love is unconditional, it's who God is and there's nothing we can do to earn it and there's nothing we can do to lose it. We must receive love in order to give it.

In Week 7, we discovered that our purpose is tied to our responsibility as the Royal Priesthood of our homes. We are both royal, grafted into God's family as Sons, and we are also Priests, who are responsible for the spiritual development, guidance, and vision casting of our homes. Embracing our responsibility helps us achieve our purpose. Our first calling is to our home.

In Week 8, we try to remove the lens of our earthly father, as we view our heavenly Father. Our earthly fathers are human and made mistakes. We are to forgive them and honor them. We wouldn't want to be remembered or

held accountable for our worst moments, nor should we do that to our earthly fathers. No matter what, God says to honor our father and mothers. So, we honor our fathers, so that we can honor our Heavenly Father. We view God as who He is: Holy, Awesome, Loving, Fierce, Jealous, Benevolent, Merciful, Mighty, Capable, Willing, Unrivaled, and so much more. Our view of God will determine the depth of our faith and how effective we are at accomplishing our purpose.

In Week 9, we learned that our Achilles Heel, which is the thing that can readily destroy us is our lusts of the flesh. We must run from such temptation. We must give our temptations to God and trust Him to take them from us. We have a choice in every situation and our job isn't to fight, our job is to flee! He will do the rest.

In Week 10, we discovered that God desires to bless us, but we have the duty to trust Him with our finances. Malachi 3 says that we should tithe and Jesus reaffirmed that by saying, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." This implies that God very much is owed something, which is likely the tithe. A tithe is a tenth. When we trust God with the first fruits of our finances, then our sustenance is His responsibility, and we can rest in His abundant mercy to provide for us.

In Week 11, we discussed the last of the three primary issues that often plague men: our view of authority. God has asked us to honor the authority over our lives because He placed it there. No matter your view of your government, boss or authority, we honor those that God has placed over us—even those that aren't just. The only time we break away from our authority is when our authority asks us to do something that is contrary to His Word. We must humble ourselves in order to be raised up by God. We trust that He will do just that in His timing.

In Week 12, we learned that the Holy Spirit is a person, not an it or an entity and that He desires a friendship with us. He loves us, lives within us and gives us help, instruction, and power. The Holy Spirit is essential to us living out our purpose. You can ask for and receive more of the Holy Spirit if you are willing, and if you are willing, God is faithful to give.

In Weeks 13 & 14, we discovered the power of testimony. The Bible says that we overcame them by the Blood of the Lamb—which is Jesus, and the power of our testimony. We should be about the business of telling others the good news of what God has done in our lives. When we accepted Jesus as our Savior, we were given an assignment. That assignment is to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth. Our testimony is powerful and affective. We shouldn't be shy in sharing it.

In Week 15, we discovered what Spiritual Warfare is, which is taking the fight to the enemy. We have power to defeat the enemy through prayer,

worship, fasting and the Word of God. These are the tools with which we fight our enemy, and they are effective.

Your Purpose

If we are disciples of Jesus, then our lives should look like Jesus's life looked. Jesus had 12 disciples. In other words, Jesus had 12 men that he poured His life into. He taught them the Word. He explained the Word to them. He answered their questions, He calmed their fears and their storms. He taught them how to go out and do the things that He did. He was faithful to them, patient with them and loved them. When Peter denied Him, He restored Him. Jesus was a good steward of 12 men.

Who are your disciples?

How do we know that we should do the same: Jesus commanded us so in Matthew 28:19. *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

Jesus Commands Us to Make Disciples

How Do We Make Disciples?

Remember that your SHAPE will help determine what that looks like. Your Spiritual Gifts, your Heart, your Abilities, your Personality, your Experiences will help determine who you are called to make Disciples.

Disciple Makers...

1. **Seek Disciples.** In every situation, Jesus saw Peter and James in a boat and asked them, "Follow me." (Matthew 4:18-32, Luke 5:1-11).
2. **No Matter Where They Are.** Jesus asked Matthew, a tax collector to follow Him. A Jewish tax collector was an outcast, unable to attend the temple of the Lord. Though Matthew might have had money, he was not accepted by his own society. It's likely that even his own parents had nothing to do with him. (Matthew 9:9-13)
3. **Even After Betrayal.** Making disciples isn't easy. When Jesus went to the cross, only one disciple remained faithful—John. The rest abandoned Him for fear of persecution or the cross itself. Yet, after the resurrection, Jesus sought them out to remind them of their mission.
4. **Keep Eternity in Mind.** The Kingdom the disciples were looking for looked much different than the one Jesus was trying to establish. Their mindset was that of an earthly King, but earthly kingdoms are only shadows of what God is going to do. His Kingdom is eternal. Our

job isn't to judge those we disciple. Our job is to love them and let the Holy Spirit do His job. I heard an old pastor say, "My job is to catch the fish, it's His job to clean them."

5. **Run their own Race.** We aren't called to run someone else's race. You are called to do what God has asked you to do. When you operate in your giftings, it's beautiful because no one can do the job that you've been made to do. No one. You're the only one. Without you, there would be a hole in eternity. God knew exactly what He was doing when He made you. There are other parts of the body of Christ and each has their own function. Do what God has called you to do and be satisfied in it. The pay is the same. Our eternal reward is the same as the others who put their hands to the plow and are determined to fulfill their Kingdom purpose. It's the only purpose that matters. When you try to operate outside of your gifts, you'll only get frustrated.
6. **Stay Sharp.** Jesus often went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. He sought alone time with God because He knew that was His source of strength. Today, over 1700 US pastors are leaving their posts every month. They're walking away from the ministry. God has asked you to be faithful. He even says that when we get to Heaven, we will be greeted with one greeting, "Well done, my good and faithful servant." (Matthew 25:21) God will reward you for your faithfulness. There are no rock stars in the Kingdom. There are only faithful servants of our King.
7. **Are Obedient.** Your witness is crucial as you make disciples. We're not perfect; we're all on a journey, but that road narrows when you accept the duty of disciple-making. James 3:1 says, "*Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.*" Don't let this Scripture fool you—we're all called to teach. Every parent teaches his children. We all teach, so we should all be on our guard. We are all held to a higher standard because we are the salt and light of the world. The world is watching. We must remain faithful and diligent in our Christian walk, putting aside the things of this world for the better things, for eternal things, which we cannot see, but take hold of with fervor.

God's purpose is to advance His Kingdom and His Kingdom is people. It is His will that none should perish. (2 Peter 3:9) *Matthew 9:36-38 says, "When He saw the crowds, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest."*

The purpose of your life as a disciple of Jesus is to join in the work of the harvest. You don't have to go to a foreign country to find the harvest, it's not far outside of your front door. There are so many people that are hurting, broken, and need the healing salve that only Jesus offers for their broken souls. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. No one can have a relationship with God without accepting Jesus as their Lord and Savior. (John 14:6) You don't have the cure for their problems, but you know the One who does. We can't walk past the hurting and broken anymore without pointing them to the Great Physician. That's your job and for most of us, it happens one relationship at a time.

Who Do You Know?

Make a list of people that you know are far from God or have even confided with you that they're going through a trial. Pray for them and pray that God gives you the wisdom and knowledge to help them. **Become a worker of the harvest by inviting them into your circle.** Invite them to coffee or lunch. Ask them how they're really doing. Tell them a little about what God has done for you. Ask them how you can pray for them.

1. **Pray for opportunity**
2. **Invite them into your circle**
3. **Tell what God has done for you**
4. **Pray with them.**

Take a Mentor

If you're not comfortable sharing your story, invite a mentor to go with you to meet with your friend in need. Introduce your friend and allow them to share their testimony. Once you see it practiced a few times, you'll be ready to do it on your own.

Mentor Model

1. Model how it's done
2. Encourage
3. Go with them and observe
4. Coach the things that need to be improved
5. Repeat as often as needed.

Thank you for completing the Millennium Men Curriculum. My prayer is that it has encouraged you to live a life with eternal purpose. My hope is that this curriculum has encouraged you to live as Christ lived—making

disciples of Him. I believe that your life will be full when you fully embrace your purpose of disciple-making. God needs you to get into the game. God made you to be “more than a conqueror”! He loves you.

I also pray that you would consider joining our movement. Millennium Men is more than a curriculum, it’s a Movement of Men that have eternity in mind. We know that God has made us for such a time as this! (Esther 4:14) God has called you to Disciple-Making. We can’t do it alone. We need each other. If we are going to change our world, forge a course of history that has eternal impacts, we need to band together and live our lives with purpose, for His purpose, and on purpose. No one gets to their destination without charting their course.

Here is the vision of Millennium Men:

We purposefully create three circles of engagement for men:

- Outer Circle Events—Where men can come together to fellowship, break bread and enjoy one another under the umbrella of building Kingdom relationships.
- Middle Circle Forums—These are the Millennium Men Bible Studies just like the one you’ve just completed. We need to be equipped and trained to fight in battle. Make no mistake, what we are doing is battle and it takes real men to engage.
- Inner Circle Outreach—Where men serve others through varying acts of service such as: evangelism, teaching, equipping, prison ministry, helping the poor, widows and orphans, and those in need.

Join our Movement: M2Disciples.com

M2 Week 17: Endowment Ceremony

“The Two Greatest Days in a Man’s Life are the Day He is Born and the Day He finds out Why?” -Mark Twain

There is a Term in Society Today: Toxic Masculinity

“As if strength and competency have become synonymous with dangerous.”

- Jordan Peterson

Why Millennium Men?

- Men and manhood are under attack. You can see it in Hollywood and commercials. You can see it in broken homes that fathers have abandoned their calling. You can see the propulsion of society away from what God deemed to be good,

- Many men lack direction and knowledge of what they are here to accomplish.
- Men have failed to step up as the spiritual leaders of our homes
- We do not understand spiritual warfare or even that we're under attack. "They are like a sheep without a shepherd." (Matthew 9:36)

Importance of Men in the Home

- **82% of Prison Inmates in America today grew up without a father in the home**
- **1 in 5 Children Growing Up where the Mom is the Spiritual Leader in the Home will Get Saved**
- **4 out of 5 Children Growing Up where the Father is the Spiritual Leader in the Home will Get Saved.**
- **Fatherlessness Causes:**
 - **7x More Likely to Have a Teenage Pregnancy**
 - **4x Greater Risk of Growing Up in Poverty**
 - **4x Greater Risk in Behavioral Problems**
 - **More Likely to Face Abuse or Neglect**
 - **More Likely to Abuse Drugs and Alcohol**
 - **More Likely to go to Prison**

Men Matter. It's Time to Build Up

How did the name, "Millennium Men", derive?

- The year is 5782 since Adam. We are 218 years from the end of the 6th millennium.
- 2033 will mark the end of the second millennium since Christ was crucified. We are a 11 years and 5 months from the end of the second millennium.
- I believe that God is raising up men for "such a time as this". We need to build His Kingdom with a sense of urgency. We make no claims on when Christ will return but we do know that the time is shorter today than it was yesterday. We should work with a sense of urgency.

Where are men called to fulfill their purpose?

- First, men are called to be godly husbands, to love our wives and to honor them. We honor them with our eyes, not looking or lusting after other women. We honor them with our deeds, placing them above our children in the home. We honor them with our words, speaking life over them. We are quick to forgive and slow to anger. We hold no record of wrongs. We are patient and kind. We always protect, always hope and always persevere. (1 Corinthians 13:4-8)
- We are called to raise our children in the Word and with the Word of God. We are called not to frustrate our children but to be fair and demonstrate the goodness of God in how we manage our homes.
- We are called to pray and fast for our family.
- We are called to disciple others. Matthew 28:19 states clearly that we are called to disciple. We should always be looking for opportunities to disciple others. This is our higher calling.

What are we doing here, today?

- 1 Timothy 6 says that Paul laid hands on Timothy to release a gift in him.
- Every man has gifts that God wants to use in order to help build His Kingdom and fulfill our purpose.

What we've learned in Millennium Men

1. We've learned that everything about us is on purpose for a purpose. **We all have gifts that can be used for the glory of God.**
2. That we are not to be afraid of the times. **We are born for such a time as this.** (Esther 4:14)
3. We are to be the **spiritual leaders of our homes.**
4. We are to **exhibit Christ in the workplace and submit to all** authorities placed over us.
5. We learned that everything that happened in **our past can be used for God's glory.** Nothing will be wasted. We choose to forgive others so that God can forgive us, and we are grateful for any pain we've suffered if it can be used for His glory.
6. We know that **our bodies are the Temple of the Holy Spirit.**
7. We learned that **we are engaged in spiritual warfare** against a very real enemy.
8. We learned about the **power of fasting** as a tool for spiritual warfare.

9. **Our testimony is powerful.** We need to be eager to share it with others. Not all of us are called to evangelism, but all of us have people we love that are lost. Hell is real and we are responsible to share the Gospel with those in whom we are in relationship.
10. We know that we are under the authority and covering of our church. The church has elders over us that are willing to come and lay their hands on us to release our giftings so that we may go take ground for the Kingdom. When we were saved, we crossed over the blood of Christ and now we are leaving the wilderness, crossing over the Jordan River through the Holy Spirit, and now we are prepared to take ground for His Kingdom.

What is an endowment?

God has already given us spiritual gifts. They are inside of us. God made us for a specific purpose within His Kingdom. Endowing is the process of releasing or allowing those gifts to manifest, grow and allow them to become what God intended them to become. ***Merriam-Webster definitions: 2: something that is endowed specifically: 3: natural capacity, power, or ability a person of great intellectual endowment***

What are the Spiritual Gifts?

- Administration
- Being an apostle
- Discernment
- Evangelism
- Exhortation
- Faith
- Giving
- Healing
- Helps
- Hospitality
- Knowledge
- Leadership
- Mercy
- Prophecy

- Serving
- Speaking in tongues
- Teaching (sometimes known as shepherding)
- Wisdom

Laying on of Hands Scriptures:

2 Timothy 1:6

For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. 7 For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.

Numbers 8:10

and present the Levites before the Lord; and the sons of Israel shall lay their hands on the Levites.

Numbers 27:18

So the Lord said to Moses, "Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him;

Numbers 27:23

Then he laid his hands on him and commissioned him, just as the Lord had spoken through Moses.

Acts 6:6

And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them.

1 Timothy 4:14

Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery.

1 Timothy 5:22

Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thereby share responsibility for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin.

Acts 13:3

Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

Millennium Men Statements of Faith

*That Jesus of Nazareth was fully man and fully God. He lived and was crucified by the Romans under the authority of Pontius Pilate. He rose to life on the third day, and He is Lord. There is no other God before Him. **We Believe.***

We Believe the Bible is the inherent Word of God. Every word is flawless and true.

We Believe.

*Everything that we have, every talent, every ability, our parents, our background, our race, our heritage, everything, has been given to us by God. We are made for a purpose. **We Believe.***

*We have been through trials in our lives. But God is faithful to finish every good work that He has begun in me. **We Believe.***

*We are not victims of our past or our circumstances. We are more than conquerors. **We Are.***

*We have surrendered our lives to God, to Jesus and to the Holy Spirit. It is not I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. **We Do.***

*We are forgiven by God as we forgive others. Therefore, we hold no one captive through unforgiveness. For as we have been given freely, freely also, we forgive. **We Do.***

*Every man, woman and child is the image bearer of the Almighty God. We hold no prejudice against any person based on their color, creed, or heritage. **We Do.***

*Every leader and authority is placed above me by God. We honor our leaders, even when we do not agree with them. **We Do.***

*We seek the Kingdom of God, first, even above our own comfort. **We Do.***

*We know that God has placed us as the Spiritual Leaders of our Homes. We honor this responsibility and place it on our shoulders. **We Do.***

*We engage in the Spiritual Battle over our wives, our children, and our world. We fast, we pray, we unify with fellow believers and take ground for the Kingdom of God. **We Do.***

*We are part of our local church, and we serve in it. **We Do.***

*The Purpose of My Life is to be a Disciple Maker. We Make Disciples. **We Do.***