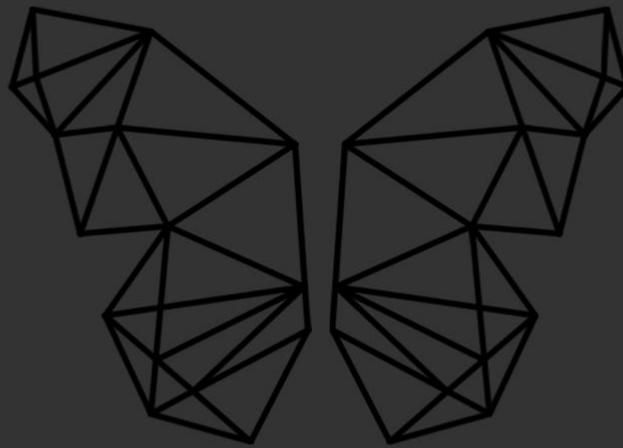




THE

VERB

STUDY MANUAL



365

CODY A. WALLACE



STUDY MANUAL

CODY A. WALLACE



The Bible

The Verb: Pant C.A. Wallace

2 Timothy 2:15 “15 Be diligent (move quickly) to present yourself approved to God as a workman (a laborer, working to strengthen those wings) who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.”

Spoudazo, **spoudazo**, diligent – make haste, exert one’s self.¹

Strengthen your faith and knowledge with the Word of God, so if there is an argument you do not look like a fool. So when someone preaches something or quotes something wrong you know the truth. So when someone teaches something not true to the word you can fight it! You wont be ashamed for your lack of knowledge because yu can handle God’s Word when needed.

I know you have questions about life, the Bible or you just need guidance in a certain area. Pick up the Bible and gain wisdom! Find your inspiration in the Word of God!

Psalm 42:1 “As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for You, O God.”

Do you thirst for the Word of God? Do you fill up daily on His Word or are you running on empty?

We find the answer to our questions here! The Bible is God’s word, it is powerful and brings life! When you read it, quote it or hear it, the Bible has the power to touch you and change you. It is the only thing written that gives knowledge, wisdom, and can change your life!

Why is the Bible so convicting? Why can it change a person’s life? Why can you find the answers to your problems in this book?

Because as **2 Timothy 3:16 says**, “16 All Scripture is inspired by God. . .”

Ispired- qeopneusto?, Theopneustos – God breathed.

The Bible was God breathed! It was said through God the Holy Spirit and written by man.

2 Peter 1:20,21 “20 But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, 21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”

The Bible is not man’s words or opinion, but God’s words!

The word moved here is **fero, phero**– it literally means to carry someone along, produce.

God produced it or carried it along and man wrote it. God is the only one that can change people! That is why the Bible changes people because it is God’s Word!

The Bible, God’s Word, is hope for the hopeless, healing and life changing. The Bible is energy for the Soul.

¹ Thayer and Smith. "Greek Lexicon entry for Spoudazo". "The NAS New Testament Greek Lexicon". . 1999.

Matthew 4:4 “4 But He answered and said, 'It is written, `MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.' ””

Keep God’s Word coming in, keep feeding your Soul, so there is power to change you within.

Pant for God’s Word thirst for it, drink it in, live by it, study it!

Discussion:

What stuck out to you the most?

Are you searching the Bible to answers to your questions? Why or why not?

What do you think it means to pant for the Word of God?

Why is it so important to study the Bible and read it?

Challenge:

This week study one word, one phrase or one area of the Bible you want to know more about.

The Verb: Deluded

C. A. Wallace

Just recently my keyboard wasn't working properly on my computer. After ten or fifteen minutes of use every other letter typed would not appear on the screen. This had happened before so it seemed like an easy fix, replace the batteries. I flipped the keyboard over and put in the new batteries and set away to typing...no response. I turned on and off the word doc I had been working on figuring something would trigger a response and...no response. I restarted my computer and...no response. Then I realized I forgot to press the reset button on the keypad...sometimes that needs to be done, so I pushed it and ...no response. My key pad was obviously broken. I had worked so hard and done so many obvious solutions to fix the problem, but still...no response.

I sat back and thought how similar our spiritual lives can be when God is trying to connect to us but we just have no response to what He is trying to say.

“Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. 22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror ; 24 for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. 25 But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does” (James 1:21-25, NSB).

When you sit and read the Bible, hear a message or see something that convicts or moves you to take action but don't do it you are deluded. When you hear what you should do, see how you should act, but remain the same you are deluded. You are like the keyboard...no response. You hear a message or read the Word and there is no response. When you fail to respond to the Word of God by action there is a bad connection. You have to do a soul check because something isn't right if you hear God's Word, see an area in your life you need to change and let it remain the same. You are not connecting to the Word of God. . . no response. The Bible is your guide in life. It's how you act, live, love and how to be free. It gives, joy wisdom and life...but if you are not acting out what it teaches. . . no response. . . you've lost connection.

The Bible says you have deluded yourself into a state of no response. Deluded means you have a false understanding. How did this happen? Well if you read the passage you see it spelled out. Hearer not doer. You sit and take in God's Word but never do anything with it. Your hearing God's Word but not listening to it. Hearing happens even when you don't want to, my kids hate to hear the vacuum run. When the vacuum is on they turn the tv up really loud. Now does the tv being up block out the noise of the vacuum? No...it just allows them to listen to the message of the tv. Listening is when you take in and act. In this passage God's trying to get our attention, He's saying your not listening to me because if you were I would see action. Instead your just hearing and forgetting.

Let me ask you why do we eat? What is the scientific reason why all things eat? Plants, animals and people eat to make power, energy or fuel for action. We put gas in our cars not so we can park it, but so we can go...God's Word is our food, our energy our fuel not so we can park and set still, but so we can get going, so we can have action!

Discussion:

What stuck out to you the most?

Do you forget your convictions after the Bible closes or after the sermon or Bible lesson is finished?

Why do you think it is important to act on what you read, hear and study?

Challenge:

Read a Proverb a day for an entire month! There are 31 Proverbs and most months have 31 days, read the Proverb that fits the day.

The Verb: GROW

C. A. Wallace

Today the word is grow. The Bible tells us we are to grow! Why is it important to grow? What type of growth do you think this is talking about?

“As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming ; 15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.” (Ephesians 4:14-16, NASB).

In order not to get confused, in order to stop people from tricking you or teaching you wrong, you must grow. This is growing in your relationship with Jesus.

We have talked before about how our goal is to be like Jesus. We should try to act like Him, speak like Him and think like Him. But, how do we do that? Growing! It's only through growing that we can change and become more like Him.

Think about it! In order for an egg to become a butterfly what needs to happen? A tiny caterpillar must hatch...it has to eat and grow, eat and grow, eat and grow.....it has to eat so much that it can't eat anymore than it cocoons and becomes a butterfly.

This is what we are being told to do. To become the Transformed person we need to eat God's Word to grow!

About a month ago I was looking at the small butterfly garden we have here. We had about 12 monarch butterflies dancing around it. A few days later I looked out again and saw one a few of the plants were covered with tiny caterpillars and they were eating away. The next day the plants were just sticks and the caterpillars were wiggling around frantically looking for something to eat. Why? Because They can't get to the point of change without eating and growing. They can't become a butterfly without it. I had to run to the store and buy 4 more of those plants so the caterpillars could eat.

You see you cannot change without eating and growing.

“But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.' " (Matthew 4:4).

You cannot grow without taking in God's Word, you cannot become like Jesus without listening to what He has to say! Look...just like the caterpillars can't eat every plant around them to grow, neither can we. Caterpillars have to eat certain plants in order to grow and change into a beautiful butterfly. In order to change you need to be taking in the Word of God.

“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness ; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

In other words the Word of God is for you to eat and grow. It's the perfect food for your spiritual appetite and the perfect solution to your problems. It's the perfect recipe to help you become Christ like.

Discussion:

What stuck out to you the most?

Do you think you are reading enough Scripture to produce growth in your life? Why or why not?

How often do you read the Bible? How often do you study it

Challenge:

Read the Bible as a family every night before bed.

The Verb: Prepare Yourself

C. A. Wallace

Why do you read the Bible? Maybe I should ask the question: Why should you read the Bible?

“like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,” (1 Peter 2:2, NASB).

The Bible is for growth! It's water in dry land; it's honey to a bee. But how do we grow through the Word of God?

It's said people only remember 10% of what they read, 20% of what they see and 30% of what they hear. So how can we grow from God's Word by just studying it? When I was in school I studied for tests so I could pass the test and usually when the test was done it was like an eraser went through my brain because I wouldn't remember anything!

But our God is amazing and knew when He designed us we would have Bible ADD, because His Word is full of Verbs! A Verb is word that conveys, or shows, action. In other words its doing something.

“Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

God is saying get ready to do something, get ready to apply my Word, I'm teaching you how to do something, so get ready to try it and learn it! Because it's through living it, through acting it and trying it, you learn about Jesus.

When I use to swim competitively we would all get on the dive blocks, in a crouched position with feet staggered and fingers gripping the edge of the dive board. That was the 'Get Set', just before the go or gunshot. This is actually an important time in the race, even though it seems mundane, tedious and annoying. Being in the set position prepares you for the dive in the water and with the right set you can get a great 'jump' into the water and start ahead of the competition. But for some they can't sit still and get a false start. There was a kid on my team that was the fastest freestyle swimmer around, but he had lousy starts. In fact, even though he usually lapped the competition, he was disqualified from half of our competitions and wasn't able to swim in states because of it. In all my competitions, finals and heats I never have seen someone get in the set position and when it was time to go just sit there frozen.

This is true for us. We need to 'get set' get prepared, get ready on the springboard because we are going to leap into action. Some though don't ever get set and there false start gasses them out and they never finish what God wants them to do. Others stay at the start position never jumping into what God wants them to apply to there lives.

“14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, 15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior;” (1 Peter 1:13-15, NASB).

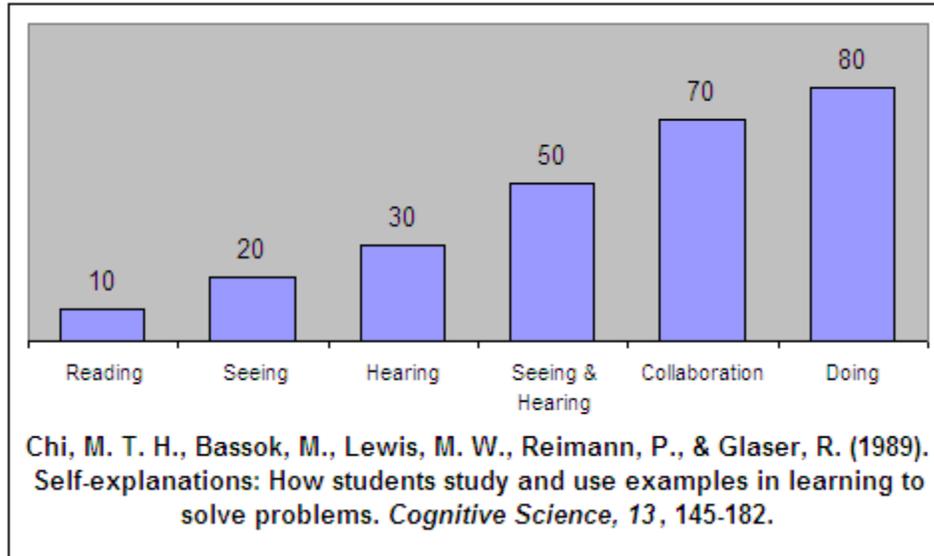
The Bible says God doesn't want you to live like the world. So don't just read about how Jesus is holy, apply, do, act, live out because that's how you learn. Before you use to have an excuse. It's okay to say I didn't know, sorry my mistake. But when you hear it, when you see it lived out in others and when you read it, you are no longer ignorant, meaning you now know the truth. It's okay to be ignorant, but don't be stubborn!

Live God's Word. Apply it to your life. Don't just read it, how does that help? Don't just hear it, how does that help? Don't just see it, how does that help? Live it, it's only then you understand Jesus, it's only then you understand His Word. It's only then you grow.

The same study says people remember 80% of what they do.

“But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.” (James 1:22, NASB).

Don't just listen, don't just read – live it and learn it. That's what the Bible means by prepare yourself. Getting ready to jump in, don't stay frozen.



Discussion:

What stuck out to you the most?

Why do you think action is so important to learning?

Do you think God just wants us to study His Word or make action of it?

How are you going to act on His Word this week?

Challenge:

Find a verse!!! I often challenge people to find a verse that sticks out to them and make it their own. Apply it throughout the day, the week, month and year. Make it a habit to recite it through the day and before bed at night. Apply the verse every chance you get. If you can live out one verse, the implications and effects are HUGE!



Christian Walk

The Verb: Walk

C.A. Wallace

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” (Galatians 5:22-24, NASB).

This is the result of choices we make in our life. These are decisions to actively pursue, dwell and act this way.

“If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.” (Galatians 5:25, NASB).

If you have eternal life in Jesus, or as Paul says here “live in the Spirit”. You believe in Him and the Holy Spirit lives in you, your alive through Jesus....than act that way!

Like I said before you chose how your going to act. The fruit of the Spirit are a choice! This is the result of choices we make in our life. These are decisions to actively pursue, dwell and act this way.

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.” (Galatians 5:16, NASB).

The term "**walk**" *peripateó*, describes direction, conduct, and denotes manner of life. Profession and practice, talk and walk should be in agreement. Only then can you live an effective Christian life.

In other words I am choosing this direction deliberately, I have thought it out and am now acting it out.

Choose to walk in the Spirit with joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Discussion:

What stuck out to you the most?
Are you actively trying to pursue the Fruit of the Spirit?
Would people say you display the Fruits in your life?

Challenge:

Look up each of the fruit and define what they are!

Fight, Flight or Christ

Rev C.A. Wallace

When you are in a difficult situation what do you do to get out of it? Human wisdom says there are two human instincts that can be triggered in a sticky situation: Fight or Flight. Fight literally means you attack the problem and flight means you run from it. But today we are going to see there is an unnatural way to handle these situations. Ways of handling things that always turns out for the best and to be honest leaves us out of it, which is a good thing considering we like to mess things up.

One of the missionaries the church supports in India was in town for a few weeks to give a report at his headquarters as well as give and gain some incites. Now, I wish I could tell you his name but it is one of the longest and hardest names to pronounce that we simply call him Manny Supermanian. In India it is legal to be a Christian, but it is illegal to share your faith with Hindi's and Muslims. It is very hard to get a license for a church and many times when you have one it is burnt down and your people are attacked, stoned, beaten or beheaded, by the local mosque or Hindu temple leaders. Bibles and tracks many times are confiscated or burned because they are seen as anti-political. This is even worse in the remote areas in India where villages are not run by the Indian government but the Imam, the Muslim religious leader, runs the village and Christians are actively hunted and killed. Many told us a story about how when him and a pastor he was training went to one of these villages everything was going great. A local invited them in for tea and she trusted Christ, within an hour and a half the house was full of people and 16 of them trusted Christ! But soon the Imam heard there was a commotion going on in the village and came with men with machine guns and told them to stop but they kept on. When they saw these two preachers were converting Muslims they took them into the streets at gun point and led them out to the village entrance where they had them kneel down. Manny asked if they were be given some time to pray before they were killed and the men said okay. He said he never prayed so hard or so long in his life, he remembered every person, praise and request. When they finished they sat their ready to receive their death sentence a bullet in the head, they sat and sat, but nothing happened. Finally they opened their eyes and there was no one around. So, they ran back to their own homes. About a month later, they felt a heavy conviction they needed to return to the village. When they came back they found the people all eager to hear about Jesus based on what the guards had told them about the two men praying a brilliant white light. Even the Imam listened.

You see many times our conventional wisdom tells us we need to react a certain way. When some one hits us we say hit him back, but harder. But look what the Lord told Isaiah when the world made no sense, when his people were being stolen from their homes, killed, plundered and his own started rejecting God as a way to prosper in new lands,

“Do you not know ? Have you not heard ? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth Does not become weary or tired. His

understanding is inscrutable *. 29 He gives strength to the weary, And to him who lacks might He increases power. 30 Though youths grow weary and tired, And vigorous young men stumble badly, 31 Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength ; They will mount up with wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary.” (Isaiah 40:28-31, NASB).

Its saying God understands, He has insight to how everything works together. Even the most painful hour, week, month and year, works together for good in the end.

“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” (Romans 8:28).

And even though you feel like giving up, even though your body says throw in a towel, run away, God says don't look to yourself for answers, strength or energy. You're weary because you count on yourself, your tired because you really on yourself, stop looking to you for answers. It would have been easy for the pastors to make a deal, it would have been smart to runaway, but they prayed! That's from God. It would have been smart never to return to the village but they did. God causes the end result of what is taking place to be a benefit for your growth.

There was a young guy, with red hair that stood up for the little guy once. He really felt he needed to stop the bullying and name calling that was taking place, so he faced the bully. Well, the bully didn't like being put in his place and did one of the, “today meet me here, your gonna' pay”. In other words I'm gonna beat you like a red headed step child. Well everyone tried to talk the red headed kid outa facing the bully, but when it wouldn't work they decided they would try and help him. By the way....did I fail to mention the young red head was only about 15, a shepherd from Israel named David and the bully was about 35 a 9'8” tall. A Philistine that its said he could rip fully grown trees out of the ground roots and all?

“Then Saul clothed David with his garments and put a bronze helmet on his head, and he clothed him with armor. 39 David girded his sword over his armor and tried to walk, for he had not tested them. So David said to Saul, "I cannot go with these, for I have not tested them." And David took them off . 40 He took his stick in his hand and chose for himself five smooth stones from the brook, and put them in the shepherd's bag which he had, even in his pouch, and his sling was in his hand ; and he approached the Philistine. 41 Then the Philistine came on and approached David, with the shield-bearer in front of him. 42 When the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him; for he was but a youth, and ruddy, with a handsome appearance. 43 The Philistine said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks ?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. 44 The Philistine also said to David, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the sky and the beasts of the field." 45 Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted. 46 "This day the LORD will deliver you up into my hands, and I will strike you down and remove your head from you. And I will give the dead bodies of the

army of the Philistines this day to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, 47 and that all this assembly may know that the LORD does not deliver by sword or by spear ; for the battle is the LORD'S and He will give you into our hands." 48 Then it happened when the Philistine rose and came and drew near to meet David, that David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. 49 And David put his hand into his bag and took from it a stone and slung it, and struck the Philistine on his forehead. And the stone sank into his forehead, so that he fell on his face to the ground." (1 Samuel 17:38-49).

David did not rely on himself. He did not do what people recommended. He didn't allow instincts to take over. He let God take over. Instincts and people said get the sword and armor, God said grab that rock. Seriously do you really think a rock about the size of a wallet could kill a giant? Never, but David relied on God to get him through. He relied on God's power to guide the stone and as Scripture says the stone sank into his head. It was as if God or an angel was pushing it in themselves.

When odds are stacked against you, when you feel finished, when conventional wisdom says there's no way or do this....what are you relying on?

Small Group Questions:

What stuck out to you the most?

When you're faced with a tough moment what do you do? Who do you rely on?

What would you have done in David or Pastor Manny's shoes?

Challenge:

Rely on God this week. Whatever your circumstance or task, when a situation arises pray and ask God to be the answer!

The Verb: Act Free

C. A. Wallace

Do you know what the hardest thing for freed slaves after the Civil War to do was? It was hard for freed slaves to act, think, live and just in general be free. Although, on January 1, 1863, *Emancipation Proclamation* was signed into law by Abraham Lincoln freeing the slaves, a war was fought and won to save them from a life of slavery, when the time came to leave the masters they stayed. They were still chained in their minds, they were still chained in their routines and they were still chained in their broken spirits.

“It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.” (Galatians 5:1, NASB).

Why would Paul tell us that we who have been saved by Jesus need to stand up to slavery? Because Christians let themselves be chained to sin. Instead of standing against it they fall into the habits and routines of it. Instead of standing against it they let their head say, “you can’t win...you will keep on failing”. After a while of falling for the same thing, failing and making the same mistake, we tell ourselves we are chained to it and it is stuck with us our entire life and our spirit is broken.

Do you know how people tame young elephants? Elephants have a strong will when they are young and from what I understand will try their hardest to be free. What they do to an elephant they want to train is they chain its back foot to a wall or post. So as the elephant tries to run off it gets yanked back by the chained leg. They watch the young elephant to see how long it takes to break it’s will to get free. The elephant struggles for a long time, till finally they can release the elephant and it stays the exact distance the chain used to be. Elephants have a fantastic memory and they remember the pain the chain caused during the struggle to be free of it, so the elephant to avoid the pain no longer struggles against a chain that is no longer there.

We as Christians do the same thing. We are free from the chains, but remember the pain, struggle and anguish to get free and stay under the influence of the chain of sin. But Scripture tells us we must act, we have to make the deliberate actions of being free, living free, thinking free and acting free.

“Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God.” (1 Peter 2:16, NASB).

But how can we act free. What is the process of rewriting our thinking? How can we step away from the chain?

“If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (John 8:31-32).

First let’s break this down, if you continue in my word you are my disciples. The word disciple, μαθητής, mathetas, means learner. So in essence what Jesus was saying is, “if you hear what I teach and act upon it, you have been learning from me and you are truly following.” By learning from Jesus and practicing what He says an amazing thing happens...you are set free. Sin and how it has had its grip on you loosens.

So as we study and apply, as we listen and learn from God's Word we live free. As we realize sin and temptation are not our master the chain slips off. As we learn and apply God's word like, **"No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man ; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it."** (1 Corinthians 10:13, NASB). We start to walk away from the chain realizing it's not stuck to us, we don't have to fail and fall and be labeled.

Your failures do not have to be you, your faults do not have to be you. You are a child of God's.

"Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. 35 "The slave does not remain in the house forever ; the son does remain forever. 36 "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed." (John 8:34-36, NASB).

Small Group Questions:

What stuck out to you the most?

What sin are you not being freed of? Let's pray right now and hand it to the Lord.

The Verb: Be At Peace

C. A. Wallace

When you think of the most peaceful scene what do you think of? Rolling meadows of grass, trees full of changing leaves. A bubbling brook beside a log cabin with smoke bellowing from the chimney. Peace of mind, and escape from the everyday hustle and grind. We just planted a big garden with lots of beautiful flowers and it gets visited by butterflies and birds and everyday walking through it is peaceful.

Maybe you think of peace in the sense of an end to war, like the day the United States and Great Britain signed the treaty of Paris in September 3, 1783 putting an end to the Revolutionary War. Peace from an enemy now become friend.

How do we find this peace? Where does it come from and how can we have it? Well when we look at Scripture the answer may surprise you.

**“Salt is good ; but if the salt becomes unsalty, with what will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”
(Mark 9:50, NASB).**

Why would Jesus tell us to be salty and then be at peace? How do the two have ties? What is salt good for?

It adds flavor, it's a preserver, it's anti microbial and parasitic, we mentioned once that salt was at one time almost as valuable as gold. But salt was also a symbol of peace, agreement and compacts. It was to show that just as salt never loses it's flavor the two countries or peoples would never lose their agreement. Jesus is telling us never lose our peacefulness, be salty, be peace!

**“If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.”
(Romans 12:18).**

Peace solely depends on you.

Translating this passage from the Greek it would be better to say: If the person cooperates, you are responsible to be peace for all. Peace is up to you to make and up to you to keep. Your enemy can say and do what they please but YOU, keep the peace. Eireneuo, to make peace, cultivate harmony, to leave in peace. This is what we are being told, keep harmony, leave without having done harm. Do you know what it means to cultivate something? Cultivation is a process. The word is almost always used with farming.

To farm you first must ready a field, take out over growth and weeds. Loosen the soil, put in the seed, water it and fertilize it. Keep bugs and weeds away and after a few months enjoy the fruit.

What we are being told is plant peace in the lives of others, take care of it and make sure it grows.

A funny thing happens when you start living this way. A amazing thing happens when you try to be peace and bring peace, when you try to cultivate and grow peace.....you find peace with God.

“Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace ; and the God of love and peace will be with you.” (2 Corinthians 13:11).

Be like minded meaning though you may argue over what is better music or who should get a grammy, realize you worship the same God, have the same Father and that you should want to share Him and honor and love Him, that is what being like minded means. If you act in this way, the God that created love and peace and gives it will be with you, shine through you and give you His love and peace.

Think of it this way.....Be PeaceGet Peace!

Small Group Questions:

What stuck out to you the most?

Why do you think it is hard for us to be like-minded?

Challenge:

Take control this week and let God’s peace rule!

The Verb: Be Good

C. A. Wallace

What is one of the last things a parent tells their kid when they drop them to school, hang with friends, to a sleep over or really any kind of meeting? They usually say love you , remember be good. Kids are constantly reminded of the acceptable behavior when out in public. Why? Is it that parents believe the kids will have a lapse of memory as they enter the store and start throwing cereal across the aisle? Do they think 'Be Good' prevents their kid from throwing food during lunch? I think the term is more of a reminder of an every day and every moment decision.

“Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God ; the one who does evil has not seen God.” (3 John 1:11).

Beloved is another way of saying my kids. 'Kids don't do what the bad kids are doing, be good.' Choose to do right. Don't do the bad things you see, do the good that you have seen and been taught. That is what John is thinking. This is also what a parent is thinking, 'Kids I have shown you how to act in public...now do it yourself'

In the life of believers we have been given the examples to follow. It is our objective to live out these 'Good Things' as an example of our family and an example of Jesus.

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:10).

We were created to bring God glory, Romans says all creation speaks of creator, our purpose is to represent Jesus. The biggest way we do that is not through lip service, but action. You were created to do good, so do it!!!

But it is not as if we do not know what we should be doing or how to be good or how to act. Some times a parent expects their kid to behave in public but they don't give the greatest example themselves.

I was at target recently and saw a cute little guy maybe 4years old running around the store laughing. His mom came running into the spot he was grabbed him by the arm put him into the cart smacked him in the back of the head and said, “don't act crazy. Don't you know we're in a store?” A little later she was in the middle of an aisle trying on clothing about 20 feet from the fitting rooms. When an employee asked if she could please try clothes on in the fitting rooms she went on a loud rant, “I can try on clothes where I want. America is a free place.” It got very loud and the employee walked away embarrassed as the mother kept on, “little girl coming here and telling me what to do.”

The example the mom gave her child was the wrong one after disciplining him on his bad behavior. But God's example in Scripture is always the right one. In Matthew 5:1-10 Jesus gives us some examples of how to live in what is called the be attitudes. “Be gentle v.5, be righteous v.6, be merciful v.7, be pure hearted v.8, be a peacemaker v.9 and be a leader for Christ v.10. These are just attitudes we should have towards things, the Bible is full of actions we should take, scenarios we should act out and principles we should live by.

“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness ; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16, 17).

The Bible teaches you how to live, act, think and live good. The Bible teaches you how to be good. The Bible is our reminder from dad, “I love you...be good”.

As a dad when my kids are good when we are out, my wife and I will give them little candies as a reward. It’s our way to say you did good so you get good.

“knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.” (Ephesians 6:8).

Our heavenly Father is doing the same for us.

Small Group Questions:

What stuck out to you the most?

What example are you showing other believers is acceptable?

What do you show as acceptable to listen to or watch?

Are there changes you need to make after this study?

Challenge:

Make a HUGE effort to live your faith this week.

The Verb: Fellowship

C. A. Wallace

How is your relationship with the Lord right now? Does it feel like He is way up there and you are way down here? Does it feel like when you pray you are speaking to a wall, or when you read your Bible nothing stays?

“Behold, the LORD'S hand is not so short That it cannot save; Nor is His ear so dull That it cannot hear.2 But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.” (Isaiah 59:1,2, NASB).

We are struggling our relationship with Jesus. You are doing what you shouldn't and still expecting a great relationship.

It's like the couple that cheats on one another. . . they will always suspect they are being cheated on until the relationship is fixed. It's the old saying fool me once shame on you fool me twice shame on me. Meaning I am going to be looking out for you because I do not trust you!

What is the problem? You are living like the world!

“Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, 21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” (Galatians 5:19-21, NASB).

We must fix the trust with Jesus! We have to start walking with Him everyday, living with Him and growing our relationship with Him. We want a walking talking relationship with Him and He wants it with us but it takes effort and work. And we must start the repairs with the same way the relationship started....forgiveness. We build the relationship by walking with Him, talking with Him and asking forgiveness when we do wrong.

“If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; 7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:6-9, NASB).

We are fooling ourselves when we think we can do wrong and act like it's not there, when we sin and act as if it is okay. But if we want to be heard, if we want a strong relationship with our Savior, ask forgiveness and walk in His ways.

Discussion:

What stood out to you the most tonight?

Have you ever considered how your actions affect your relationship with Christ?

The Verb: Grow In Grace

C. A. Wallace

“but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.” (2 Peter 3:18, NASB).

What does it mean to grow in grace and knowledge? To answer this lets see what is grace? Grace is getting what you do not deserve. It is defined in the Greek as joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, loveliness: grace of speech good will, loving-kindness, favor. Knowledge is the word Gnosis, meaning a moral knowledge God has of what is right and wrong, meaning you are guided by a moral or ethical compass.

We are being called to grow in the joy, delight and pleasure of knowing God. Allow grace to penetrate our speech, conduct and very life style.

The more you learn about grace, the more you learn about what Jesus did for us, the more you want to let grace take over your life.

“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. 11 Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," which is performed in the flesh by human hands - 12 remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, 16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. 17 AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR; 18 for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.” (Ephesians 2:8-18, NASB).

Grace of Jesus brought peace for you with God, it brought eternal life in heaven, it brought freedom from sin, it brought the ability to love at no cost, it brought God's promises into your life. . .

“For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.” (John 1:16, NASB).

God pours grace upon grace on our life. We don't deserve these things but they are given because of Jesus.

Our knowledge of this grace and our understanding of how we should live and react to it being given should shake us to want to live it out.

“Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! 8 Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. 9 And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.” (2 Corinthians 12:7-10, NASB).

Grace gives us the ability to work past life’s struggles and hardships. We need nothing else when we have God’s grace. When we start living it and letting it be our source of joy, peace, happiness and excitement we can overcome the darkest day. When we start living it seeing we have God’s unlimited favor, we are free! Let it take over our peach and actions. And let it take over our knowledge of how to make decisions.

We can have grace in how we live
Ho we spend money
Make money
Give money
How we relate to people
Talk
Think
React to others
Treat others
How we view life
How we view death

This is what it means to grow in grace and knowledge...view it all from God’s view and as a chance to shine for Jesus.

“Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, today is a gift of God, which is why we call it the present.” – Bill Keane

Live in this gift of today with grace and knowledge as your guide as you unwrap.

Small Group Questions:

What stuck out to you the most?
How do we grow our knowledge of GRACE?

Challenge:

Look up every verse that has the word Grace in it this week.

The Verb: Soak In the Light

C. A. Wallace

Have you ever watched sunflowers throughout the day? If you plant Sunflowers in a central location like we did in our Sunflower garden, something very neat happens. At the start of the day the flowers and plat will be pointing east with the rising of the sun, by mid day they will be pointing straight because the sun it straight over head and by sunset they look west with the sunset. Why? Because sunflowers realize to grow they need to soak in the Sun. The way to make leafs, the way to get tall and the way to grow flowers and seeds, is to soak in the sun. The sun provides the life giving qualities to the seed, to the plant...to the flower.

“In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. 5 The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. 9 There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.” (John 1:4, 5 &9).

Jesus the Son of God is our light. He is the Son that gives us the life giving qualities to grow and produce. It's spending time with Jesus that helps us to grow, it helps us to live right, to speak right, to think right and encourages us to share with others.

“Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world ; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.” (John 8:12).

Jesus is our Son to follow. He is what keeps us from staying in the shadows of unproductive darkness. Why? Well let's go back to the sunflower. Why does the sunflower follow the sun? The plant follows the sun to maximize its growth in life. Sunflowers are considered annuals, meaning they are only around a few times a year, they don't live all year because winter kills them. So in order for this tiny seed to grow any were from 6-20 feet tall and produce beautiful flowers and seeds they need to work a lot harder than a plant that lives all year and grows very slow. Think about it trees grow 6-12 inches a year, but a sunflower grows 6-20 feet in 180 days! Why? Because life is short. Because life is short it absorbs the light, it follows the source of light the Sun.

“For who knows what is good for a man during his lifetime, during the few years of his futile life? He will spend them like a shadow. For who can tell a man what will be after him under the sun?” (Ecclesiastes 6:12).

Like the sunflower our life is short. Most trees in the ground will have longer lives than us. So while we live here on earth we need to be like a sunflower and follow the Son, take in His Light, so we can grow.

When a sunflower dies in the winter it's not the end. It has already put life back in the ground, by dropping it's seed and its death puts nutrients back in the soil. You can do the same. Living for Jesus is an example for others and sharing Jesus is dropping your seed.

Small Group Questions:

What stuck out to you the most?

Are you growing the way you would like in Christ? What is helping or hindering the growth?

Challenge:

Share what you know as true with one person this week.

Anger **C.A. Wallace**

Why do people get angry? A few years ago I saw a country as a whole turn against a 26 year old in his 'Decision'. Why this hate? Ultimately it stemmed from the fact that he had decided not to play for their basketball team. The city he went to turned on him because of a poor performance in 4 of 21 games in the post season, and thus people are bestowing on him the name 'the most hated man in sports'. Why so much anger?

A couple years ago, January 11th, a man was shot in the back because he cut off someone at 151st st and us-1. Why is there so much anger?

Why is it we hinge so easily between love and hate for our teams and safe driver to road raging lunatic?

Let me start by saying not all anger is bad. Anger is an attribute we get from the Father, god made us in His image and God get's angry! God got angry with Israel and none of the original enslaved people were allowed to enter the promised land . . . Jesus got angry in the temple and flipped tables and whipped people.

Anger is a reaction to circumstance and sometimes people react how they shouldn't. We get angry to easily or when we get angry we let it escalate quickly into something else. . . usually that something else is irrational thinking of payback.

Ephesians 4:26,27 "BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN ; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and do not give the devil an opportunity."

We are told we can get angry be can get mad but DO NOT let it escalate. What does that mean? It means don't let anger, revenge and evil take over your thinking.

Romans 12:17-19 "Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. 19 Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord."

Don't let the focus of your mind shift from the Lord to payback, don't let your heart think about what happened to you and not the forgiveness you have in Christ. In other words, don't let your anger take control! You can get angry but don't allow anger to take over, keep the Holy Spirit in charge of your thoughts and actions.

Ephesians 4:30-32 "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."

Grieve, **lupeo**, lupeo, means to cause distress, pain or sorrow. When you live an angry life, meaning, your bitter, your thinking about the situation all the time, you cause the Holy Spirit to fall into sadness. Because if Christ can forgive you of everything forever, why can't you forgive a friend or a brother?

Mark 11:25,26 ““Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions. 26 [“But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions.”]”

Anger and bitterness against someone only affects the one holding the grudge, not the other person. It affects your spiritual health:

1. It causes the Holy Spirit to get depressed
2. It separates you from God because He turns a deaf ear to your prayers
3. Your relationship with that person suffers
4. you can't focus on anything but the anger and bitterness (reading the Bible and praying without focus is pointless)

Holding a grudge is like taking poison hoping the other person will die! The only person it hurts is you!!!

Discussion:

What stood out to you the most tonight?

Why do you think we get angry so easily?

Why do you think anger can have such negative effects on us, our relationship with others and Christ?

Challenge:

Who do you need to forgive? DO IT!

Forget

Rev C.A. Wallace

Have you ever thought about what could have been? If I had only done _____, than maybe _____ would have happened! Or if I had not done _____ than _____ would not have happened. You see we all have regrets in our life, things in our past we are not proud of. Sometimes we beat ourselves up over mistakes and failures. We label ourselves as a lost cause because we have fallen for the same mistake too many times. But as we have talked about before Christ does not label you as a failure or sinner, He labels you as loved and His child.

You see in order to move on in our growth and our life with Christ we need to move passed the past and embrace our future with Him. That means forgiving ourselves for our mistakes so we can grow, because the longer we hold on to the label the longer the struggle will remain.

We also need to let go of our successes. We need to stop hanging our hats on the brightness of the past and move towards the Light Christ wants to bring to our future. Jesus does not label people as successful, liar, cheater, porn addict, sinner or athletic, famous, pretty or popular. Those are man made labels that with Jesus they don't stick. The only label He cares about is CHILD.

“Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. 13 Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:12-14, NASB).

Paul said I forget about my failures and my successes. I do not worry about failures and times I succeeded because in Jesus I am not judged by those things.

I knew a kid in school that his mother would not accept anything but an A in school. In middle school I remember him sitting in a corner crying because he got a B in a history test. Apparently he did not understand what the teacher had asked and wrote the essay portion on a different topic and did not receive credit on it, but had gotten every question right to still get a B. I said, ‘ David you got a B why are you so upset?’ He cried as he said, “my mom isn't going to talk to me...she isn't going to accept this.” His mom based her love on how he performed, what he did. He graduated High School top honors valedictorian and was able to show the school board a mistake on the math portion of the SAT's. But he also graduated with a label.

Jesus wants us to forget all labels. They do not stick to us. We are perfect in His eyes. He wants us to focus not on labels but on living for Him. He wants us not to focus of failures but on living for Him, not on success but on living for him. That's why Paul said I look forward to what lies ahead, I look forward to seeing Jesus, I forget everything, but can't wait to see Him. It's like a child when daddy comes home. Total anticipation! I love hearing the squeals of ‘Daddies Home!!!’ When I get out of my car in the drive way. That's what Paul felt.

“But Jesus said to him, “No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9:62, NASB).

To serve Jesus, to live for Him and follow Him...you must be forgetful. Forget the things that don't matter focus on Him because He will make your path straight.

Discussion:

What stuck out to you the most?

We all have a tendency to ‘label’ ourselves based on our fears, failures, accomplishments and successes... what is a label you need to forget and move on from?

What do you need to forgive and forget in order to move on in your relationship with Jesus?

Leader Note: In prayer time spend time praying for the Lord to help us move passed our faults and failures and grow closer in dependence on Him.

Challenge:

Move past your label and into the label child of God, every morning wake up saying I am a child of God!

Forgive

Rev C.A. Wallace

How many of you have ever been hurt or offended by someone? Have you ever heard someone say I forgive you but they bring back up what you did?

Matthew 18:21-35 “21 Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times ?" 22 Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. 23 "For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. 24 "When he had begun to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. 25 "But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. 26 "So the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.' 27 "And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt.”

So, this guy owed someone a lot of money. When it came time to collect he couldn't come up with the money! During this time it was not uncommon if a debt could not be paid that the entire family either have to work it off for you or be sold as slaves to pay it off. So, the man begs for mercy and everything is forgiven to him.

28 "But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii ; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, 'Pay back what you owe.' 29 "So his fellow slave fell to the ground and began to plead with him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you.' 30 "But he was unwilling * and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed. 31 "So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. 32 "Then summoning him, his lord said to him, 'You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. 33 'Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?' 34 "And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. 35 "My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.”

Man! This guy sounds really terrible right? He is forgiven all this money and he goes and finds someone that owes him a little and has him thrown in jail! What do you think about this guy?

You see we are all like this! We have been forgiven a great deal of debt.

Romans 6:23 “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

This verse says that we have earned hell. We deserve it! A wage is something you work for. Let's say you work 4 hrs cleaning my car and I pay you \$20 well your wage, what you earned was \$20. We have earned Hell. We actually do a good job at earning it. We do terrible things, lie, cheat, steal and that is not the things we think! Bad gets you hell, but Jesus gets you heaven.

Through believing Jesus died, was buried and rose again from the dead for every bad thing we have done, we are forgiven and we get God's gift of eternal life.

“As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.” (Psalm 103:12, NASB).

Who are we to hold on to un-forgiveness when Jesus has forgiven and forgotten every mistake we have made! How dare we!!! But we still hold bitterness against people, we still get even and we still hold grudges. We have been forgiven a far greater price.

We didn't deserve forgiveness. The man in the story didn't do anything to earn forgiveness, but still it was given. You don't have to wait till someone asks you for forgiveness, just go out and forgive!

Discussion:

What stuck out to you the most?

What does it mean to you to be forgiven?

Fragrant Aroma

Rev C.A. Wallace

Have you considered your life is a fragrant aroma to God? In Leviticus 2:15 the people were to offer incense offering as a sweet smell to the Lord. It was a symbol that all we do is fowl and leaves a rotten stench, but His forgiveness is sweet like the offering. The smell of humility is beautiful; someone asking forgiveness and saying I will not do this again is a beautiful thing and should be remembered by a sweet smell.

“36 Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. 37 When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, 38 and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. 39 When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is--that she is a sinner." 40 Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you." "Tell me, teacher," he said. 41 "Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?" 43 Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said. 44 Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45 You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. 46 You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. 47 Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven--for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little." 48 Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." 49 The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" 50 Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." (Luke 7:36-50., NASB).

This women's life represented her offering. She was known as a prostitute. Her life was devoted to sin, it was her way of making money, paying bills, getting food in general providing for herself. But here in view of a loving and merciful God she lays all before Him in sorrow, grief and pain.

You see she saw her place, she entered and took what Mark 14:5 says was over 300 denarii, over a years wage, and poured it on the head of Jesus.

“Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him,15 but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? For her hair is given to her for a covering.” (1 Corinthians 11:14, 15, NASB).

She took the honor she did have, whatever glory she had left and used it to wipe the feet of Jesus.

“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!" (Isaiah 52:7, NASB).

She showered Him with tears, kisses and expensive perfume.

You see custom of that time was when an honored guest, someone you saw as important and more important than you, not a common guest, came over you would greet them with double kiss, you would take olive oil and anoint their head, you would have a servant wash their feet . But Simon had done none of these things. He saw himself as higher or equal to Christ. He saw that he was entertaining a friend.

You may be like Simon, instead of laying down everything at the feet of Jesus instead of seeing your greatest possession as His, you may be entertaining. Your not giving Him your all but just entertaining.

“and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.” (Ephesians 5:2, NASB).

Discussion:

What stood out to you the most tonight?

Are you entertaining your faith but not giving your all?

What do you need to do to embrace Christ?

Challenge:

Read the Book of John this week.

The Verb: NOTW

Rev C.A. Wallace

Do you think it is dangerous to stay in the world? Do you think there is a chance that if you don't change your surroundings, your surroundings will change you? That if you keep staying in the same situations, with the same crowd, listening to the same music, talking the same way and acting the same way. . . you will be taken over no matter how much you pray and read your Bible.

“2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2, NASB).

Stop conforming to the world. Do you know what the word conform means? When you think of conform I want you to think of Jell-O. Jell-O, becomes whatever shape of the container it is in. You can put it in a bowl let it sit a little while flip over the bowl and the Jell-O is the shape of the bowl. You can make it a heart, square, triangle, whatever you want because it becomes the shape of whatever it is in.

Maybe you do the same thing. Depending who we are with, what situation we are in, where we are, we become part of it. Assimilation to the world happens, rather than following Christ's example. It's easier to follow the crowd than Jesus, but worship is in the action of following Him, not following a crowd.

“Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 17 The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.” (1 John 2:15-17, NASB).

When you stay acting as the world, going after the world and living like the world you are saying I have nothing left for Jesus. The love of God is not in you. Or the love for God has been spent.

I know I have said it many times but we are called to Transform by the renewing of our minds, meaning let Go's Word change us, change how we think, act, speak and live. It should be each of our pursuits, but if we are not careful no matter how much church you go to, how much, study you do . . . if you remain with the world it will take you over.

Metamorphosis is what we are told to do – transform – that's what caterpillars do, but there is a threat that lives in the same garden as the caterpillar. And despite how much it eats, eats and eats to grow and change it will not occur. The thing that stops it from taking place is a wasp. A parasitoid wasp, stings a caterpillar and injects it with eggs, slowly the eggs hatch and eat the caterpillar from the inside. So while the caterpillar is growing and eating the wasp larva are slowly eating the caterpillar, making sure not to kill it until they are big enough to pop

out and over come the caterpillar. The caterpillar never gets to become a butterfly, because it is over come by the enemy.

The caterpillar never has a clue it is slowly being taken over and neither do you when the world and flesh take over. In fear of us being overcome Christ had this prayer for us.

“I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15 "I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. 16 "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 17 "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. 18 "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. 19 "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. 20 "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; 21 that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.” (John 17:14-21, NASB).

Reach the world but do not let it become you. There is a fine line of loving people, loving Christ and loving the world and accepting sin.

Discussion:

What stood out to you the most?

Why do you think it's important to separate yourself from the world?

What is the risk of being poisoned by the world?

Could the caterpillar in the story be you?

THE VERB: Salt

C.A. Wallace

What does salt do to food? Preserves, purifies and flavors.

Matthew 5: "13 "You are the salt of the earth ; but if the salt has become tasteless, how * can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men."

In a flavorless world where every blends in together, we are called the salt of the earth! To God I am sure the earth has given Him a bad taste.

Romans 3:10-12 "as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE ; 11 THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD ; 12 ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS ; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE."

We all sin, we all do evil, the world as a whole does not honor and love God. Yet, we are here! We are to bring the flavor to the earth. We are to be the honor, glory and love. We are to flavor like salt.

I went on a men's retreat a few years ago when we went up north and while there we stopped at the Alva Diner, it's the only restaurant in the entire area. This Diner is about 700sq.ft. seats about 75 and cannot take credit cards, only cash. But, this place is known for 'Broasted Chicken'. It is a chicken that they pressure roast, it is kind of like frying and roasting the chicken at the same time. The chicken comes out juicy! The problem is they do not season this chicken. . . I found this out after the first bite. Well I asked the lady why and she said the seasoning is at the table. I looked around to see a salt shaker. I tried it and was amazed! That salt brought flavor to this bland chicken.

We are to bring flavor to the bland earth. What we have preserves peoples lives, it purifies each other in accountability and flavors.

"But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves.

14 "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15 "I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. 16 "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 17 "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth." (John 17:13-17, NASB).

If our Christian message is a mirror image of the message of the world, the world yawns and goes on its way, saying, "What else is new? I've heard all that since I was born." But if the Christian lifestyle and motivation and answers are different, the world cannot help but sit up and take notice, thinking: *How come they live in the same place I live, but they are able to live a different kind of life? Why is their love so deep and lasting and ours so shallow and fickle? How is it that she can forgive and never hold a grudge? Why do these people have so much more compassion, kindness, integrity, and patience than anyone else I know?*

Do you get the message? It's the difference that makes the difference!

Let's be a difference, let's be difference makers, let's be disciples and make disciples.
Let's flavor this bland world with the faith we have in Jesus. Let's pour on mercy grace,
hope and love.

Discussion:

What stuck out to you the most?

Are you making a difference or blending in?

If you really sat back and thought about it are you flavoring life with your faith? Or is the blandness of the world coming out? Why? Explain...

Challenge:

When you have the opportunity this week...be SALTY

THE VERB: Consider It Joy
Rev. C. A. Wallace

Do you appreciate the struggles you are going through in life? Many times we sit here in life upset bad things are happening. We have pity parties, get depress or angry at God in a why me?

“for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.” (Matthew 5:45 b, NASB).

The truth is everyone on earth has the same problems, worries doubts and struggles! But not everyone has a God to get them through!!!

““Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28, NASB).

Look...Bad things happen, people, get sick, death happens, car troubles, money issues, struggles with sin and temptation and thes things hurt and can crush you! But what you do during this time will define you as a person. What you do will build you or tare you down.

Not too long ago, I was cleaning the kids Beta fish bowls out and on the very last one (Naomi's) the fish flips out of the bowl and down the kitchen sink. It took 15 minutes of digging till I was able to get him out. He was cut up from the garbage disposal blades and lost many fins. I told Naomi he probably was going to go home to the Lord, but he would at least be happy to be in water again. She put her little hands on the bowl and prayed. Well...he lived a little beat up, and received a name Gil after the fish from Finding Nemo. The scars on his scales a reminder of his struggle for life.

You see our struggles in life do leave scars. We have memories of pains, guilt and hurt, but they can also be memories of growth and reliance. We can look at those scars and say this is when my relationship with Christ changed forever. This is the day I started living for Him, this is the day He pulled me out of the ash heap and made me something new.

“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.” (James 1:2,3, NASB).

Why should we count it joy? Because it is a chance for us to realize we are not in control of the circumstance, it's a time for us to let go and rely on God. It's a time for us to pray more, think on Him more and get into the Word more. Why? Because we are helpless to help ourselves.

“And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; 4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; 5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (Romans 5:3-5, NASB).

Through the struggle we look at the scars to see what the Lord has helped us become.

“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” (Romans 8:28, NASB).

Discussion:

What stuck out the most to you?

Why do you think it is important to rely on the Lord during struggles?

Can you think of a struggle that looking back at now you can see worked out for the best.

THE VERB: TASTED

Rev. C.A. Wallace

Let me ask you what do you do when you are hungry? You eat right? This past Sunday I preached on the Lord's Prayer: Daily Bread and what that means to a believer in relation to prayer life. We are to ask God to fill us daily with food for our soul and provide our needs. But what does it mean food for our soul?

“Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, 2 like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, 3 if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.” (1Peter 2:1-3, NASB).

You see something everyone does before they dig in is take the initial bite to test the waters. For my kids anything green they are not sure about, it becomes let me taste this. Why because after the first bite we can see if we want to commit or move on. Especially at our house because we do not allow our kids to spit things out, that's just nasty and bad manners. And I think the reason we lose the meaning of the word taste today is because we think it means to try and spit out.

In today's vernacular it suggests a nibble of food to determine if the food is palatable. It can also mean a person takes a bite and spits the food out after a bad taste experience. Many times we correlate taste with the idea of a wine tasting - one drinks, tastes and spits out. "The Writer even heaps clause upon clause, to shew that no such shallow tasting, no 'primoribus tantum labris gustasse' is intended: and the whole contextual argument is against the view, for it is the very fact of these persons having veritably entered the spiritual life."² But this is a poor translation from the Greek. Taste, *geuomai* in the Greek, means to experience the full flavor from eating. Tasting in the Biblical sense is a full consumption.

In regards to our faith, salvation is a taste. We are tasting and swallowing down the grace of God for salvation. Now we need to see if we are going to commit to the rest of this grace sandwich.

“O taste and see that the LORD is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!” (Psalm 34:8, NASB).

Taste the goodness of God, take refuge in His freedom from sin. But now you have a decision to make. As 1 Peter 2:2 says grow in respect to that salvation. It's time to take in the rest of the food and grow.

“but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.” (2 Peter 3:18, NASB).

This is what it means to eat every bite. I'm sold on this food, I like it, I want to take it in fully. I want to feast in God's Grace!

Last week we had the guys all-nighter. We had a right of passage that I don't think anyone there will ever forget. Some of the guys there became men by swallowing an entire ghost pepper. Some succeeded in this challenge but others

² Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament* Vol. IV (Chicago: Moody, 1968), 113.

bodies rejected the growth from boy to man and they purged themselves or vomited to put it frankly. They remain but boys, while others became men. Now I say that in jest but a decision must be made in the life of every believer. Once we have tasted salvation, are we going to take in the rest of God's Word and grow by it?

Discussion:

What stood out to you the most?

Once we taste salvation we have the decision of if we are going to grow or stay children.

What do you think hinders people from taking it all in and growing?

Another area we need to taste and decide what to do with it is the Word of God. We can hear a sermon, teaching, devotion or read the Bible, but we must decide if we are going to take in the message being taught and grow from it. How do you go about taking these things in to grow?

Challenge:

For the next month join one of the Weekly Bible Study Groups to take in more teaching!

Wrestling God Rev C.A. Wallace

Have you been wrestling with God? You know many of us hear a great message, read something in the Bible and it speaks to our heart, it seems as if it were written just for you. But what happened later? What did you do with the message you heard? Did you apply it? Did you try to live it out or did you eventually forget about it?

**“For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror ; 24 for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.”
James 1:23,24**

The Bible is our mirror to show the defects and blemishes we have in our life. Just like you would never leave the house without checking to see if you look okay, you need to check yourself in the mirror of the Word to see how you look. When you smile if there is spinach in your teeth you brush them! You would never leave what the mirror shows is wrong...the same with the Word of God, when we hear or read something that needs to change in our life we need to immediately act on it. If we do not act quickly it as this verse says, we will forget!

Are you going out unchecked?

“But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.” James 1:25

The one that applies God’s Word is blessed, they aren’t walking around with make up on looking like a fool!

The truth is you may want to fight God’s Word, you may want to keep the things you see as wrong in your life, but you are fighting God and the one that will lose is you.

“And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.” (NASB, Acts 26:14).

Paul was being stubborn as a ‘mule’ so to speak, when it came to the gospel. You are correct, Stephen’s sermon should have caught his ear, but Paul was stubborn. To kick against a goad, was to fight against the prodding stick. The Greek for goad, or prick in the KJV, *kentron*, means a stinger or iron used for urging beasts of burden. It is hard for the beast to avoid work when it is yoked and being prodded along, to kick is futile, it only results in pain in the rear and neck and the small poker will not get hit. “*Pro kentra mh laktize*. It is taken from an ox that being pricked with a goad kicks and receives a severer wound^[1]” (Robertson 1960, 448). God had been prodding Paul since his introduction into his former faith. Paul knew the prophesies of the coming Christ, yet refused to believe it could have been Jesus and hearing the message of Stephen, Paul turned a deaf ear, yet now with the glory of Christ before him it was futile to fight! Paul allowed Christ to change him completely. For a time of three years as Paul says in Galatians Jesus worked on him, to make him the man he needed to do his job. For three years Paul stared in the face of the mirror and removed the blemishes. He removed the pride, the worldliness, selfishness and removed the mask of fakeness...then he could see Jesus clearer in his life.

You might be wrestling God right now, but it's hard to fight the one that has control. When you look at yourself compared to the Bible do you like the image you see? What needs to change, is it sin, fakeness, pride? Strip it all away so people see Christ shine through you.

Discussion:

What stuck out to you the most?

When you look at yourself compared to the Bible do you like the image you see?

What does your image show you that needs to change?

What are you wrestling with letting go of?

Challenge:

Be a doer...chose one action to do as a family, maybe it's helping the widows and orphans, maybe it's feeding the homeless, whatever it is do it together as a family. First read about it in the Bible, 2nd make a plan of how to execute the action in the Bible and 3rd be a doer. . . go out and get it done together.



Evangelism

Bringing Others to Jesus
Rev C. A. Wallace

“Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples, 36 and he looked at Jesus as He walked, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God !" 37 The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. 38 And Jesus turned and saw them following, and said to them, "What do you seek ?" They said to Him, "Rabbi (which translated means Teacher), where are You staying ?" 39 He said to them, "Come, and you will see." So they came and saw where He was staying ; and they stayed with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. 40 One of the two who heard John speak and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. 41 He found first his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah " (which translated means Christ). 42 He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John ; you shall be called Cephas " (which is translated Peter).”John 1:35-42

Andrew is the disciple known for bringing people to Jesus. Immediately after meeting the Lord, he introduced his brother Simon to the Messiah. Another time, when a great multitude was hungry, he found a boy with five loaves and two fishes and brought him to Jesus (John 6:8-9). When some Greeks wanted to meet Christ, Andrew and Philip made the introductions (12:20-22). This disciple never lost his enthusiasm for the Savior.

Andrew's own conversion experience motivated him to let others know about the One who'd changed his life (1:36-37). How about you--have you lost the joy of your salvation? If your Christian life has become stale and musty, it's time to remember what Christ has done for you and to ask that He restore your excitement.

In addition, Andrew longed to know the Savior and spend time with Him (vv. 38-39). The disciple's example is a good reminder that sweet fellowship with the Lord isn't supposed to end with devotional times. It should also stimulate a desire to share with others the joy we find in our relationship with Christ.

Finally, Andrew was motivated by his conviction that Jesus was the Messiah (v. 41). He'd found the answer for a lost and hurting world and wanted others to know.

When Andrew answered the call to discipleship, Jesus told him he'd be "catching men" instead of fish (Luke 5:10). Since we, too, are followers of Christ, we have this same assignment. Our styles and opportunities vary, but we're each responsible to develop a lifelong habit of bringing others to Jesus.

Discussion:

What stuck out to you the most?

Are you excited to spend time with Jesus?

Are you bringing others to Christ? Why or why not?

What are you going to do to change things?

Challenge:

For the next month invite 3 people to church, youth ministry, Bible study or any other group at church. If they need a ride pick them up. Invite them to come grow with you.

Lay Aside

Rev C.A. Wallace

How often do you share your faith? How often do you tell other people about the love of Jesus, dying on the cross for you? Have you ever been singled out for something you said or did? Have you ever been made fun of for your faith? What is your reason for not sharing your faith with others, not living your faith for others to see? In other words.... Why are you scared?!

“You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin ;” (Hebrews 4:4).

We aren't putting up a fight, many times we succeeding the victory before the first round of the fight has even started. We are giving up to easily when it comes to everyday life, when it comes to living for Jesus. It's said the single greatest reason people become atheist is because of Christians. Why? Because we say we love Jesus and we follow Him, but we live a contradiction to what we claim. The reason people think the Bible is full of contradictions is because we are full of contradictions. We don't live out what we say we believe.

And what is our excuse for this? We are not being put to death, we are not being beheaded, hanged, raped, sold as slaves, our homes taken! We are not being taken to a river as a group and shot till the water turns red. What is our excuse.

“Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED.” (Romans 8:35, 36, NASB).

Paul claimed the death they were facing, the death Christians in Iraq are facing now, the death in China, Vietnam, Iran Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Philippines are facing now, is for our own benefit. It is for the benefit of you and me. For us to be bold and share.

“For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. 10 We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are without honor. 11 To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; 12 and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; 13 when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now. 14 I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children.” (1 Corinthians 15:9-13, NASB).

The word Paul used here to describe the persecution they were suffering, what we have here as spectacle means, we are on public display in an arena. The Romans would pay money to watch Christians fight gladiators, be fed to lions or be torn to pieces by dogs, their death and torture was public display. He does not write this to make us feel guilty for living free, I don't tell you about Christians around the world to make you feel guilty, but to challenge you, to build you up, to make you realize there is no excuse. We need to stand up for our faith, live it and share it.

As you entered this room we took you through a simulated catacomb. The persecution of Christians was so bad at one time they had to meet in burial caves to learn about Jesus. To grow in Jesus, they had to become outlaws. To grow they had to risk life, family and possessions. They met in tombs because Romans were superstitious and would not approach them at night, Jews would be ceremonially unclean if they entered them so they would not chase them into them. The safest place to worship was in a cave surrounded by dead people.

“Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,” (Hebrews 4:1, NASB).

The witnesses are the people being killed for Jesus. The word witness is the word martyr. Because the people watching us are those that have died for the sake of Jesus, for claiming Jesus and following Jesus, let’s step up for Him.

Meeting in a thomb is actually a symbol of how our life should be. We should die to sin, this world and our flesh and come alive to Jesus and what He wants for us.

Discussion:

What stuck out to you the most?

What is the main thing in your life stopping you from living for Jesus? What do you need to lay aside to speak out and live out your faith? ie. Pride, sin, fear

What is your reaction to what Paul said about their death, beating and persecution being for our sake? And what does that mean to you?

Leader Note: Take time to go around and pray and challenge each student to make the commitment to confess whatever is holding them back form being bold for Jesus, and make the commitment to follow Him.



Prayer

PRAY!!!
C.A. Wallace

1 Thessalonians 5:17 “pray without ceasing ;”

We know that we need to go to God in prayer when hard times come. We know that we need to thank Him when good things happen. We know we need to ask Him for answers when we are faced with a decision. We know that when temptation comes and we are attacked we win the battles on our knees in prayer. But when things seem clear, when it seems the answer is right there in front of us, that is when we are the most vulnerable. It's when we think everything is falling in order when we need to go to the Lord, because when we think we can handle it on our own is when we make a poor choice.

Joshua was Israel's leader after Moses. It was his job to claim the land that God had given to Israel, which meant fighting the armies. After winning many battles that his army should have been annihilated his enemies start getting clever and teaming up. Because of Israel's success in battle a group of people called the Hivites decided to make peace with them.

Joshua 9:9-20 “They said to him, "Your servants have come from a very far country because of the fame of the LORD your God ; for we have heard the report of Him and all that He did in Egypt, 10 and all that He did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon king of Heshbon and to Og king of Bashan who was at Ashtaroth. 11 "So our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spoke to us, saying, 'Take provisions in your hand for the journey, and go to meet them and say to them, "We are your servants ; now then, make a covenant with us.'" 12 "This our bread was warm when we took it for our provisions out of our houses on the day that we left to come to you; but now behold, it is dry and has become crumbled. 13 "These wineskins which we filled were new, and behold, they are torn ; and these our clothes and our sandals are worn out because of the very long journey." 14 So the men of Israel took some of their provisions, and did not ask for the counsel of the LORD. 15 Joshua made peace with them and made a covenant with them, to let them live ; and the leaders of the congregation swore an oath to them. 16 It came about at the end of three days after they had made a covenant with them, that they heard that they were neighbors and that they were living within their land. 17 Then the sons of Israel set out and came to their cities on the third day. Now their cities were Gibeon and Chephirah and Beeroth and Kiriath-jearim. 18 The sons of Israel did not strike them because the leaders of the congregation had sworn to them by the LORD the God of Israel. And the whole congregation grumbled against the leaders. 19 But all the leaders said to the whole congregation, "We have sworn to them by the LORD, the God of Israel, and now we cannot touch them. 20 "This we will do to them, even let them live, so that wrath will not be upon us for the oath which we swore to them.”

Before going to God the Israelites swore an oath in God's name not to fight the Hivites. But the Hivites lived on their land and God told them to get everyone out. Because they did not go to God first they missed out on His full blessing.

You see when the answer seems to stand there in front of you, when everything seems perfect. . . pray. Pray that if it is not all it seems that God will show you. Don't miss out on God's full blessing because you are too lazy to get on your knees and pray.

Pray without ceasing means pray even when everything seems perfect!

Discussion:

What stuck out to you the most?

Do you think you are praying enough?

Are you asking God for guidance even when it seems like a no brainer easy answer?

Challenge:

Pray to God even when the answer seems like it is there!

Tapping into His Power

“1 Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to mistreat them. 2 And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword. 3 When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. Now it was during the days of Unleavened Bread. 4 When he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out before the people. 5 So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God. 6 On the very night when Herod was about to bring him forward, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and guards in front of the door were watching over the prison. 7 And behold, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter’s side and woke him up, saying, “Get up quickly.” And his chains fell off his hands. 8 And the angel said to him, “Gird yourself and put on your sandals.” And he did so. And he said to him, “Wrap your cloak around you and follow me.” 9 And he went out and continued to follow, and he did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. 10 When they had passed the first and second guard, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city, which opened for them by itself; and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel departed from him. 11 When Peter came to himself, he said, “Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.” 12 And when he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. 13 When he knocked at the door of the gate, a servant-girl named Rhoda came to answer. 14 When she recognized Peter’s voice, because of her joy she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter was standing in front of the gate. 15 They said to her, “You are out of your mind!” But she kept insisting that it was so. They kept saying, “It is his angel.” 16 But Peter continued knocking; and when they had opened the door, they saw him and were amazed. 17 But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had led him out of the prison. And he said, “Report these things to James and the brethren.” Then he left and went to another place.” (Acts 12:1-17, NASB)

Peter was released through the power of prayer.

“And He said to them, "Because of the littleness of your faith ; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move ; and nothing will be impossible to you. 21 ["But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."]" (Matthew 17:20,21).

There was a lady who lived out in the country and never had electricity. Finally, her family made arrangements so a line could be run out to her house. However, after six months, she had only used one unit. Company officials decided to drive out to her house to make sure nothing was wrong. When everything checked out fine, they asked her if she was enjoying having electricity. “Oh my, yes,” she replied.

Then one of the representatives said, “Well, tell us how you are using it.” The old woman paused for a moment, and then, with a gleam in her eyes, she explained. Each evening, as the sun was setting, she turned the lights on long enough to light her kerosene lamps—and then turned them off! She was still living a kerosene existence when she could have been enjoying the comforts of having electricity.

God has given us tremendous power through the presence of His Spirit. Yet many times, we fail to use it. Instead, we settle for much less by relying solely on our human ability. There are certain things God never meant for us to handle on our own. We may be fine when it comes to choosing which shirt to wear in the morning, but when life becomes stormy and the winds begin to blow hard against us, we need an omnipotent Savior.

In Acts 12, we learn that Peter was arrested and that no amount of human effort could free him. However, the supernatural power of God did.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 “pray without ceasing ;”

The Bible tells us that the church was praying fervently. This means they were praying without ceasing, knowing that God had the power they lacked to release the one they loved.

But the funniest thing happened, they are praying but doubt is still in their heads, they are praying and Peter’s knocking at the door. They are praying with the answer waiting for them to say AMEN. Many times we act the same way, we are praying for an answer but doubt the response, we are praying for a miracle but can’t believe what we see. We are only using the power to light our weak dim lives long enough to get in bed! We are not having faith in Christ to act in our lives.

What are you wrestling with today? Have you rolled it over onto the Lord through prayer, or have you lit a room full of kerosene lamps? Stop struggling on your own and turn on God’s power through prayer and faith. Allow Him to be your strength and your everlasting peace.

Matthew 21:22 "And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."

God wants to use the problems we face to demonstrate His awesome power and ability. Are you willing to allow Him to do this? It means having a radical prayer life, a radical reading life, a radical fasting life and a radical living relationship with the God that knocks on doors!

Discussion

What stuck out to you the most?

Are you tapping into the power of prayer?

Why do you think we struggle with doubts?

Are you ready for a radical change in your spiritual life?

Take the **challenge**...and let's pray for the faith and strength to go and grow on this journey.

The Power of Prayer

Rev. C.A. Wallace

Do you pray when all seems hopeless? Do you pray when it seems that God has made up His mind? Many times we pray when we are worried, confused or happy, but when it seems like God's mind is made up we tend to give up being on our knees.

Matthew 21:22 "And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."

This verse says nothing about stopping.

Luke 11:5-9 "Then He said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and goes to him at midnight and says to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves ; 6 for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; 7 and from inside he answers and says, 'Do not bother * me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed ; I cannot * get up and give you anything.' 8 "I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs. 9 "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find ; knock, and it will be opened to you."

Jesus is saying be persistent! Keep praying keep asking!

(Story of pastor sick in the hospital)

When I was 9 I got ecoli poisoning from school. Because of the severe vomiting caused from this, it radically dropped my potassium and electrolyte levels. Because my family has potassium deficiency, means my body doesn't absorb potassium like everyone else, my body went into shock shutting down my kidneys and giving me a small stroke. The doctors told my parents there was no hope for me. . . a few times in the ER I flat line and every time I came to my dad said I kept telling him and my mom, to let me go to Jesus and it was okay Jesus was there with me. But my dad prayed, and prayed and prayed. I made it through the night. He prayed and prayed and prayed. I made it through a few more days still throwing up and not kidney function. The doctors told them if I made it through the week I would be mentally handicap. He prayed and prayed and prayed. Here I am today.

James 5:15-18 "and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. 16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. 17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. 18 Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit."

The prayer of a righteous man. . . the praying person that keeps praying.

Exodus 32:9-14 "The LORD said to Moses, 'I have seen this people, and behold, they are an obstinate * people. 10 "Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation." 11 Then Moses entreated the LORD his God, and said, "O LORD, why does Your anger burn against Your people whom You have brought out from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand ? 12 "Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, 'With evil intent He brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth '? Turn from Your burning anger and change Your mind about doing harm to Your people. 13 "Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants to whom You swore by Yourself, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.' " 14 So the LORD changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people."

Moses pleaded with God and God changed His mind. God could have whipped out Israel and still kept His promise. . . Moses was a descendant of David and Abraham! But Moses begged and God changed His mind. Changing God's mind starts with you changing your mind about God. He isn't a deal maker. . . I'll give you this if you give me that and He isn't a spare tire. . . He is the God of the universe that cares for you and wants the best for you. . . great prayer comes with great faith.

Stay on your knees, pray and pray and pray. . . God always works it out.

Sometimes we don't think we are heard, maybe it's because sometimes we don't chose to hear the answer.

Discussion:

What stuck out to you the most today?

Do you pray even when all seems hopeless??

Do you treat God like a spare tire or ask for deals when you pray?

What is going to change in your prayer life?

Challenge:

Every night take time to pray together. Thanks God for provisions, praise Him for who He is, Ask God for help and strength and Pray for others.



Christian World View

Abortion

C.A. Wallace

Topic Questions:

When does life start? When do people get a soul? When does God's Plans for your life begin? When is Abortion right or wrong?

It's good to hear what people think about this topic, but now let's find out what God thinks about this topic.

Life starts at conception! In God's eyes people have worth and an identity before they are born.

Jeremiah 1:5 "5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations."

The word born here in the Hebrew is Yatsa', יָצָא , and it means to exit, come out of be brought forth. So God is saying before you exited the womb of your mother I chose you to do great things for me.

Leviticus 17:11 "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement."

We are told by God that life is in the blood. That makes sense, without blood in our body we would all die. How about for a baby when does it get this life of the flesh? The common misconception is when the heart is formed, but that is not true. A baby forms it's own blood when it attaches to the uterus and a placenta is formed. It is then a baby starts making it's own blood and it is through blood that there is life!

God is at work in the lives of each individual even before they leave the womb. He has plans for us. God did not just place us on earth said be fruitful and multiply and that was the last He had to do with us!

We are told that God formed us! The word formed is Yatsar, יָצַר, and it means to squeeze into shape. God made you and me, He shaped us in the womb!

Psalms 139:13-16 "13 For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb. 14 I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well. 15 My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, {And} skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth; 16 Your eyes have

seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written The days that were ordained {for me,} When as yet there was not one of them.”

David here is saying you made my Beten, !tb, means organs and you put them together in my mother. David says you even knew me before I had shape, when I was Golem, ~lg, which means embryo. God had plans for all even before we were complete and still an embryo.

Abortion, kills life. No matter what stage it is performed. God created us in His image.

Genesis 1:26a “Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness;”

Being in the likeness of the Trinity we have an eternal soul and flesh. When is the soul formed? When God forms the flesh, in the womb!

We will end with this statement from Scripture:

Exodus 20:13 “13 " You shall not murder.”

Discussion:

What stuck out to you the most today?

Do you think God sees life as important?

Challenge:

Pray for people to make the decision to keep their children and see other options such as adoption rather than abortion. (Note: God does not want us to condemn anyone struggling with any sin, we are to love the individual)

The Verb: NOTHING

C. A. Wallace

Have you ever offended someone before and they never talk to you again? Have you ever lost a friend because of a fight, disagreement or argument? Have you ever had someone not like you because of a rumor?

You see as people we are rather caddy and stingy with our affections toward others.

“Treat others the same way you want them to treat you. 32 "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33 "If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.” (Luke 6:31-33, NASB).

One of the hardest things for people to do is love people that hurt us, if it were easy it would not be a command and the Bible would not have to mention it.

Let's just admit it we love people that love us. We love our dog when its sweet and cuddle and runs at our feet, but the moment it bites us....'honey I think we need to put the dog to sleep'. The cat is an indoor cat when it is rubbing against you purring, but it scratches your furniture and sprays in your face..... 'I think the cat should be an outdoor cat'.

Think of your relationship with Jesus! Why is it you love Him? Why are people willing to die for the name of Jesus?

“By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” (1 John 4:9, 10).

So what is the break down here? Why do hold out on others and only love until we are loved back? Is it fear of hurt? Maybe... but I believe the answer lies deeper than that. I believe we have a barrier in love. We think love hinges on actions. He gives me flowers he must love me and now I love him. In the mind of people love hinges on the current action and many times we believe we aren't worthy of love and find it hard too love others.

God can't love me because I am messing up too much. I can't be loved I have fallen too many times, I have made too many mistakes, I don't do what I should. But look at God's words to those feeling unworthy...

“For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38, 39, NASB).

When it says nothing, it means nothing. We can never be separated from God's love.

“Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. 19 We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our

heart before Him 20 in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things.” (1 John 3:18-20, NASB).

Love is displayed in action. The reason we know we are loved by God is His demonstration of it on the cross at Calvary, “For God so loved the world, He gave His son...” In 3:16. God demonstrated, He took action to show His love for us, so even if our heart our mind and our emotions lie to us and say we are not loveable, not worthy, we are alone and no one cares....we know nothing separates us from the love...not that we are earning, not that we deserve.... The love we have in Jesus.

Discussion:

- What stood out to you the most?
- Why is it hard for us to accept the idea of free love?
- How does it make you feel to realize NOTHING separates you from Jesus' love?

THE VERB: AWAKE!!!!

Rev C.A. Wallace

Have you ever done something but not really feel into it? Maybe your doing a project, but your favorite movie is on so you breeze through it. Later when you look at the paper you can barely understand what you were writing. Or have you ever been so tired you got to school or were ever you were headed and don't really remember how you got there?

When I was in wrestling one of the younger guys on our team had one of these days during a match. A guy he had pinned a few weeks before our guy was letting stay with him in the match. You could see he wasn't trying too, his arms dragged, he barely moved and wanted to lean on the guy rather than do any moves. After the first period my coach grabbed our guy and warned him, "Wake up...this guys a chump and your letting him stay with you!" When he went to start the next period he stayed the same sluggish person, and so my coach forfeited his match. It was a lesson to our guy to stay in the game....it was a big lesson too because the match was a district match.

You see many times we have what it takes but we are sleeping at the wheel. You can go through the motions for so long but eventually the real thing has to be there.

"For this reason it says, "Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you." 15 Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, 16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil. 17 So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is." Ephesians 5:14-17

God is telling us to wake up to what we are to do on this earth, the mission He sent us to fulfill. Stop hinging on Spiritual death and nothingness, grow your faith by stepping out. Be one of the ones that steps into the game.

I had a friend in middle school that joined chorus because there was a girl he liked in it and for the first month no one had a clue he was terrible at singing, the guy was nearly tone deaf. .But then it happened, They had the time they had to sing individually for the choir director, he couldn't blend in to everyone else then and he was kicked out....and quickly!

Are you lip sinking your faith, just blending with the others? Well, its time to do a solo and you need to perform for Jesus. You need to step out on faith.

How do we wake up from spiritual sleep? How do we make the best of the short time we have on earth? How do we fulfill God's will here on earth?

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." 2 Peter 3:9

God will is that as many people that can would trust Jesus as Savior. His will is that before the earth is no longer that people would trust Him as the only way to heaven. But how does that happen?

"for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED." 14 How then will they call on Him in whom they have not

believed ? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard ? And how will they hear without a preacher ? 15 How will they preach unless they are sent ? Just as it is written, "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS !" Romans 10:13-15

It happens when you share your faith, it happens when you live your faith and it happens when you are proud of what you believe.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always , even to the end of the age."

Matthew 28:19,20

Discussion:

What stuck out to you the most?

Are you making the best of your opportunities to share Jesus and show Jesus with your life?

Why do you think we tend to 'Fall Asleep' spiritually?

Challenge:

Become known for what you believe, wake up spiritually, Read and Pray everyday!

The Verb: Divided Mind

Rev C.A. Wallace

“Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. 39 She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His word. 40 But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me." 41 But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; 42 but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:38-42, NASB).

She chose the treasure of being at the feet of Jesus. Her sister was so distracted by life she failed to see what was of the most value. We get worried and distracted by everyday life when Jesus is saying sit at my feet spend time with Me that is your #1 priority.

Matthew 6:25-34 ““For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink ; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing ? 26 "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? 27 "And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life ? 28 "And why are you worried about clothing ? Observe how the lilies of the field grow ; they do not toil nor do they spin, 29 yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. 30 "But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith ! 31 "Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will wear for clothing?' 32 "For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things ; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. 34 "So do not worry about tomorrow ; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

The word used for worry in Matthew 6 and Luke 10, is the word marimano, it means to have a divided mind. It means your focus in life is stolen by things in life. Your too worried about tasks, position, success, food, money and the future of these things. Rather than looking to the Lord as the provider of your needs, your looking to your needs to be the provider of peace and comfort.

“For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot * take anything out of it either. 8 If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.” (1 Timothy 6:7,8, NASB).

See we get so busy in the everyday we become like Martha that we don't see what Jesus wants us to do. We get so busy with life we don't slow down to see Him!

Psalm 46:10 ““Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”

Are you taking the time to 'Be Still'?

Discussion:

What stood out to you the most?

Are you divided in your mind and life with Christ? Why? What is causing it?

Forgiveness

Rev. C.A. Wallace

Why is it so hard to forgive? Why does it seem that we want to hold on to certain emotions of pain, memories of hurt and reinvent anger when it comes to forgiveness?

I find it funny that many times when it comes to forgiveness many people are quick to receive it but slow to give it. It's like the creature Gullim from the Lord of the Rings. He knows the ring is dangerous which is why he does not wear it, he refuses to get rid of it though it is slowly eating away at his soul and ruining him, controlling him and turning him into someone he never wanted to be. We know holding on to the anger and bitterness is hurting us but the pleasure we get from holding it over someone else. It's our, "Precious".

I do not and cannot forgive you for the pain you have caused in my life. In fact the very thought you think you can be forgiven upsets me, do not take away the thing I want to hold against you, talk bad about you with and spread rumors with. How dare you!

But when we do something similar we take the reverse stance, "it was an accident, oh they are being overly sensitive....you know _____ they are just moody" It becomes, "How dare you not forgive me!, Jesus and the Bible demand you to forgive!"

This is a dangerous situation.

"For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 "But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions." (Matthew 6:14, 15, NASB).

Jesus is saying we need to forgive one another when we make a mistake, when we anger each other when we eere, the word transgression here in the Greek is *Paraptoma*, meaning to make a false step. Meaning when you get out of line, when you cross the line with your jokes, when you are too rough, not sensitive enough or when something is misunderstood. When you slip in your relationship with a brother restore the relationship, because Jesus restores you when you slip, when you don't act appropriately.

Why do we feel this way? Why do we think we can hold things against others but demand forgiveness? I can honestly say its because we have barriers, hurdles or misconceptions we must conquer. We hold onto our own faults and failures in life. The truth is many times we are not forgiving ourselves. But in order to move forward we must stop looking at the past. Unforgiveness of self is at the root of unforgiveness for others.

But to grow in our relationship with Jesus we must learn to forgive ourselves, forgive others and accept forgiveness. To do this we must overcome some barriers in our lives.

Barrier #1³: "What I have done is too bad. I know that God is forgiving, but I cannot be forgiven for this."

³ Taken from Chuck Swindoll

This barrier ensnares many sincere believers because it gives such a strong appearance of sadness over sin. It *feels* like a righteous response; we don't want to downplay the gravity of our sin.

Yet an honest look at the above statement shows that it is not really humble nor is it true. In effect, it implies that Christ's death was not enough to pay for all sin. It is as though we are saying, "Maybe His atonement covers the sins of the rest of the world. But Jesus's death cannot cover *this*." We have made our particular sin out to be uniquely bad and Christ's payment to be inadequate.

What a far cry this is from the truth! If our sin is an exception to God's forgiveness, then Scripture lies because it declares, "**Everyone who calls upon the name of the LORD will be saved**" (Acts 2:21). No exceptions!

The truth is that our sin is no worse (and no better) than the rest of humanity's. All sin is evil in the Lord's sight. Yet Christ's death is sufficient (see Colossians 1:20-21; Hebrews 7:24-25). It is more than enough—many, many times over—to cover all the wrong we've ever done and will ever do. No sin is beyond God's forgiveness.

Barrier #2: "I must punish myself for my sins in order to be forgiven."

We have a natural desire to pay for our sins. Logically, we understand that wrong actions deserve punishment, and we may feel an odd sense of satisfaction in being punished (or punishing ourselves!) for our sins. Our feelings of guilt and rejection become the penance for our sin to win back God's favor.

It is true that our sins deserve terrible punishment—which Christ endured for us. It is not true that we must add our own punishment to Christ's. Personal pain adds no atoning value to Christ's sacrifice. Our forgiveness came at a very high cost to our Lord, and this cost is quite sufficient to pay for what we have done. While we must still make reparation when we have wronged another person, we must not continually torture ourselves when the Lord has already forgiven us. Jesus has paid our penalty. We cannot add to Christ's sacrifice for our sins.

Barrier #3: "I know that God has forgiven me, but that doesn't matter. I cannot forgive myself."

Again, this seems like a very righteous response. It seems flippant to simply accept God's forgiveness and "dismiss" our sin. Intellectually, we may know that Christ's death is enough to pay for our sins, but that doesn't matter. *We* know how wrong we were—too wrong to be let off the hook so easily.

Yet as we look closely at this thought barrier, we realize this response is *not* righteous. Just the opposite. By saying that we cannot forgive ourselves, we elevate our judgment above the Lord's. We think that we know better than He does; *He* might be quick to forgive, but *we* are not so simple. Yet what right do we have to hang onto something that God released? Do we think He doesn't know every sordid detail of every sin? Are we

wiser than He? If He has forgotten it, why would we think that it is more honorable to hold on to it?

Seen in this light, the folly of this barrier is much clearer. Scripture never tells us to forgive ourselves. When we try to “forgive” ourselves, we are attempting the impossible. Forgiveness assumes an innocent party has been wronged, and it is the job of the person who has been wronged to forgive. The offending party is the one that *receives* forgiveness.

We are the offender; God is the one who has been wronged, since our sin is rebellion against Him. By focusing on forgiving ourselves, we have taken the spotlight off of God and pointed it at us—making it doubly difficult to let go of our sin! He *has* forgiven us. We must simply receive that forgiveness and rest in it. That means releasing those sins we want to hold on to, refusing to revisit them in our minds, and allowing the truth of our forgiveness to cover us with His peace. Absolution from the Lord is far more powerful than absolution from oneself.

Barrier #4: “Because I am still suffering the effects from my sin, God must not have forgiven me yet.”

It is easy to confuse natural consequences with God’s punishment; however, they are different. If you jump from a lofty ledge, you may sprain your ankle. God did not cause your ankle to twist to punish you. Gravity drew you back to the earth’s surface (and quickly!). Your pain was simply a consequence of your action.

In the same way, sins for which we have been forgiven long ago may still have consequences in our lives. An ex-spouse may be difficult to get along with. We may grieve on the due date of the baby that was aborted. We may suffer injuries from the accident that occurred while we were drinking. Yet none of these troubles represents God’s punishment. According to Romans 5:9-10, God saves us from His wrath:

Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him! For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! (NIV)

Our punishment has been paid in Christ. As believers, we are forgiven for our actions and precious to the Lord, even when consequences from those actions remain in our lives.

In short to start the process of forgiveness we must first forgive ourselves, realize all our sins are forgiven and know we do not have to beat ourselves up for our mistakes.

“As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.” (Psalm 103:12, NASB).

Next week we talk about how being forgiven gives us the power and obligation to forgive!

Discussion:

What stuck out to you the most?

Have you ever found yourself being unforgiving? What does that do to you? How did it make you feel?

Did you find yourself stuck behind any of the forgiveness barriers? Which? Explain...

Challenge:

Go through each barrier this week and jump it!

Hope

Rev. C. A. Wallace

What is your hope in? Many times when we read the Bible we associate meanings of words with what our definition is, without even trying to understand what God's definition is. Hope has a very different meaning from what we use the word for in the normal sense of the word.

When we say 'I hope it does not rain' the very sentence itself contains doubt and an expectation we cannot do anything about. Hope from the Bible's point of view is much more powerful. Hope is one of the three essentials.

“But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.” (1 Corinthians 13:13, NASB)

Faith, hope and love are what we are told to live in and let be the main drive of our lives. Faith is a driving force. We may not entirely understand all that God does but we can still put our faith in Him. Faith drives us to keep on because it is power for now.

Hope on the other hand our thoughts and mind. Hope keeps us going, it gives us reason. In a Biblical sense it is the understanding of the end. Meaning, 'I don't have to worry because I know how it all ends.'

How does it end?

**"But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope."
1 Thessalonians 4:13**

We live in eternal hope. Eternal hope isn't I hope I go to heaven, it's I know I am going to heaven...I am just anticipating it! I am excited for it I am hoping it is any day when Jesus comes back or calls my name.

It's because our salvation in Jesus we can have this hope. People often ask what heaven is like. The truth is it's because many people are afraid of what they don't know. Or it's because they learned about heaven through looney tunes. When Wile E. Coyote dies he sits on a cloud in a white robe, playing a harp. We think that's gonna be us. But it's not, the joys and excitements of Earth cannot compare to what awaits us in heaven. Think of the excitement of Christmas morning as a kid opening presents and multiply it by 100! This is the joy and hope we have. Because, when you trust Jesus as Savior death is not the end....it's the beginning of life in heaven.

"we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord." 2 Corinthians 5:8

When you breath your last breath on earth, your next is in heaven.



The Bible tells us we cannot get to heaven when we die. Why? Because heaven is perfect and we are not. We lie and cheat, we make lots of mistakes, we have too many skeletons in our closets. To get to heaven you must be perfect, never having done anything wrong. Seeing that we were hopeless, Jesus stepped in. The Bible tells us that Jesus died on a cross for every bad thing we have ever done and ever will do and He rose again. By believing He died for you so you can go to heaven you have eternal life. Jesus gives us hope in a hopeless situation. We were hopeless to save ourselves, we were hopeless not being able to get to heaven, but hope stepped in when Jesus died for us.

Jesus gave us hope in a hopeless situation, He gave us the hope of eternal life when on our own there was only doom.

"AND IN HIS NAME THE NATIONS WILL HOPE." Matthew 12:21

How about you? Do you have hope?

Discussion:

What stuck out to you the most?

Why do you think it is important to know what hope is?

What does having the right definition and perspective of Hope do for you?

Why is it so important to have hope?

Selfie

Rev C.A. Wallace

Have you noticed we are a people obsessed with self? Think about it, we look after our self-interest, our self-esteem, self-image, and care about self-help. We are self-ish, self-assuring, and self-aware. The truth is I think we are too aware of ourselves, take a look at facebook and insta-gram, the overwhelming info on these sites are pictures of one individual doing duck lipped selfies or posting about their day! We are addicted to the drug of self. Be honest why do you check social media constantly? Is it really to see what friends are doing or to see if they commented on your pic, tweet or update? It's all self-interest. We are too self-centered.

We are addicted to the drug of self.

If you don't believe me think back to the reason why you trusted Jesus as your savior. Was it because you wanted a meaningful relationship with the creator of the world? Or was it because you didn't want to go to hell when you die?

But to mature in Jesus we need to take the focus off of ourselves and place it were it needs to be, on Jesus.

“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. 5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,” (Philippians 2:3,4, NASB).

The definition of empty conceit, means you are blind to others being to focused on self. It means vain glory, were your goal is to bring yourself a pat on the back. The world is a sad place to live it is all about YOU or if it's all about ME. So then what is it all about?

““You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; 15 nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:14-16, NASB).

We are here to bring glory to God through our lives. We are not here to glorify ourselves, to send out the message of me, my and I . We are here to represent the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. That is with our thoughts, actions, and speech. We bring glory to God when we shine for Him. Instead of magnifying our-self and shining our pride, when we represent Christ in all we do, say, and how we live.

We need to start removing the selfishness by looking outward with the gospel. Not saying Jesus died for me, but Jesus died for us.

““For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. 17 "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.” (John 3:16, 17, NASB).

This means you are responsible for sharing your knowledge of Jesus with others, it means Jesus loves the entire world so we need to share that love.

Second to get away from the poison of self-centered ness, put Jesus as the center. And seek Him.

“For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 33 "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”(Matthew 6:25 & 33, NASB).

What Jesus is saying here is you are too worried, distracted and preoccupied worrying about yourself to realize I have it in control, focus on what matters which is me. We need to focus on Jesus and building our relationship with Him above being, self-centered, self interest, selfish.....we need Savior.

“Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.” (Colossians 3:1,2, NASB).

Discussion:

What stood out to you the most?

What do you think is our obsession with self?

Challenge:

PUT THE PHONE DOWN! This week don't take a single picture with you in it, don't post about your emotions, instead use the entire week to encourage others!

Counter Culture

Rev C.A. Wallace

Today's verb is Counter-Culture. When you hear this word what does it make you think? Do you know as people that follow Jesus we are called to live 'counter-culture'? We are called to go against the grain of this world and live for something better than what this world can offer.

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Romans 12:2, NASB).

Today everyone wants to fit in. No one wants to be original, I wear skinny jeans not because I like them, but because everyone else wears them. By the way no one really likes skinny jeans, they are uncomfortable. I see people tattoo their face, pierce their eyes, nose, cheeks, lips, chest and it is not for the sake of originality it is the sake of fitting in with the crowd they are in. When we are told do not conform we are being told do not change to someone else's pattern. Don't pattern yourself off the world, don't talk, dress, and act like the rest of the world.

You see we are not to pattern ourselves off other people or a culture, because God wants to be the one molding you developing you changing you or as this verse says transforming you. He wants your life to be an example for Him, of uniqueness.

“Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.” (1 Peter 2:11, NASB).

Peter says we should feel like strangers, foreigners, aliens to this world. Meaning the language is not ours, the dress is not ours and the way others act is not like us.

You know there is a fish I think God gave us as an example of this very idea of counter culture. Fish follow current when they are swimming to save energy, they swim in schools to provide safety and also saves energy. One fish moves they all move with it. But the salmon is different than other fish. It swims against the stream, against the current. It lives it's life apart from the schools. The salmon's entire goal is to live it's life to give life. It swims against the current to get to it's place to lay it's eggs. Other fish their goal in life is to not be eaten. But not the salmon it faces the bears, wolves, jagged rocks, fishermen and raging waters so it can bring life to another.

Your life here is to bring life. We face dangers in life through temptation, sin, doing the wrong thing, making bad choices or just bad things happen in life to try to keep us from swimming up stream, a friend or family member dies, cancer, the bears, fisherman, jagged rocks and wolves will be there, you need to swim through. Your life is to swim against the current, to live as an alien, not conform. Everyone else is living for themselves, let me not be eaten, I don't want to do something to stand out and be made fun of or become an outcast, I don't want to be swallowed up.

The rest of Romans 12 tells us how we live counter culture and I will tell you it has to do less with you and more with others. It has to do less with you and more with Jesus. Less with you and more with love.

So how will you chose to live? Following the school of the same fish, the same problems, the same look, the same speech, just trying not to be swallowed? Or jumping the waves, dodging the bears and wolves to bring life for others?

Discussion:

What stuck out to you the most?

What has been the thing that derails you the most in your struggle to swim up stream? In other words what are your bears, wolves, jagged rocks?

Why do you find yourself following the culture as opposed to following Christ? Ie., Is it fear of rejection, comfort or you just don't know how to start?

Leaders Note: This group is here to help you swim upstream with a group swimming up stream also.

The Verb: I Qui Es Veritas?

Rev. C.A. Wallace

What is truth?

“Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."38 Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?" (John 18:37,38a, NASB).

I Que es la veritat?

These are the words that would haunt Pontius Pilate for the rest of his life. It's a question that people are still searching to answer today. What is truth? For people today truth is relative. Truth depends on what you perceive as true. What may be true for you may not be true for me. What works for me doesn't work for you. Have you ever heard that? Do you believe that? According to that, there is no truth that governs everyone, because what I see as true may not be what you see as true.

But there always has to be a source of truth, there has to be a black and white, something solid to base all beliefs, understanding and morals from. There must be a source for what guides and governs.

What is truth? If there was no truth and if what works for you is okay...

What Hitler did was okay because it was truth in his eyes. . . You see there has to be an absolute truth. They look for the answers, but they cannot be found because they are only looking amongst themselves.

The truth cannot be found in ourselves and the world. It cannot be found in money, power and books. Truth cannot be found in religion or being religious. Truth can only be found in Jesus Christ.

John 14:6 “6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”

Here Jesus is saying you want truth? I Am Truth! I Am all that is good, I Am the Perfect, I Am the standard to judge all things, I do not change and my promises are true.

"Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.” (John 17:17, NASB).

The beginning of us learning truth, having absolutes, standing for something in our lives is when we stand for the Word of God. When we read it study it, know it and let it guide and direct our lives. When it becomes the end all in our life.

Test all areas to God's word and find “Veritas”. Because absolute truth comes from God!

Discussion:

What stood out to you the most?

What does it mean to let the Bible be your truth?

How can you start living the truth of God's Word in your life?

Why do you think it was so hard for Pilate to understand?

Challenge:

Read and study the Christians truth the Bible, everyday!

Where Does Your Soul Go When You Die?

C. A. Wallace

What happens to a person, when they die? Do they go straight to heaven or hell? Do they remain sleeping till the rapture occurs? Where does your soul go when you die? Does it stay here or go to eternity?

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 “But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.”

According to this passage, now, what do you think?

First, this passage tells us that Jesus rose from the dead. Because of this, we know we will be raised from the dead, if Jesus could not raise Himself from the dead than He could not raise us. Then we see in the Rapture, when Jesus comes to get the believers, the living will not precede the dead, they will not get to Jesus before the dead.

koimao, koimao, = sleep, a figurative term meaning death.

The key is, Jesus will bring down people with Him. Did y’all catch that? These are the souls of dead believers. The souls of believers will come down with Jesus to rapture the church and Jesus will raise their bodies to reunite soul and spirit.

2 Corinthians 5:6-8 “ Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord - 7 for we walk by faith, not by sight - 8 we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.”

We are told the moment a believer dies they are in God’s presence. Our last breath on earth in this body is our first breath in eternity. Just make sure you are in the right place!

There are two resurrections and each are for judgment. The first resurrection has three parts. Have you ever heard of Abraham’s Bosom? It is found in Luke 16. This was the place believers went before the death of Jesus. As you see in the chapter un-believers still went to Hell, no in-between place. Why did they have to wait?

Hebrews 10:4 “For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.”

The death of the animal covered sin, it did not take it away. No man can enter heaven without forgiveness of sin.

Hebrews 10:11-18 “[Every priest stands daily * ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins ; 12 but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, 13 waiting from that time onward UNTIL HIS](#)

ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET. 14 For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. 15 And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after saying, 16 "THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD : I WILL PUT MY LAWS UPON THEIR HEART, AND ON THEIR MIND I WILL WRITE THEM," He then says, 17 "AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS I WILL REMEMBER NO * MORE." 18 Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin."

Jesus' death covered sin for all men. It was not till Jesus died on the cross that man could be in God's presence. So, all the Old Testament saints, believers, waited in Abraham's Bosom till Jesus died to go to heaven.

1 Corinthians 15:20-23 "But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. 21 For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. 23 But each in his own order : Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming,"

The first fruits are the O.T. believers, Ephesians 4:8-10 tells us Jesus before He went to heaven, He first went down. He went down to get the people in Abraham's Bosom and bring them to heaven.

Ephesians 4:8-10 "8 Therefore it says, "WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN." 9 (Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth ? 10 He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.)"

That is the first part of the resurrection. The next is at the rapture He will collect all living believers and the bodies of dead believers. This we saw in 1 Thessalonians 4. After we are gone the tribulation starts, after the tribulation Jesus will return to rule for 1000 years at that time the dead and living believers from the tribulation will be resurrected. That is three parts to the resurrection of Believers.

Un-Believers will be resurrected as well. Revelation 20:11-14 talks about this. The soul will come from hell and the body from the ground to be judged.

There are two options for our life on earth believe or not. These two options effect our eternity forever, heaven or hell. You are responsible for your choice! Have you made the right decision? You are also responsible for the knowledge you have about Jesus. Have you been sharing it?

Discussion:

What stood out to you the most?

How should we use this understanding in our life?