

THE WORD

Wakes us, Warns us, Wins us

David Hertweck

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Chapter One

“The B-I-B-L-E...yes, that’s the book for me...”

My earliest memories of learning about the Bible involve singing that well-known song in Sunday school. We’d go on to sing about how we “stand alone on the Word of God” and then we’d spell the word “Bible” again...for some reason. Apparently, spelling out words makes them more I-M-P-O-R-T-A-N-T.

I would hear Bible stories like the one about Jonah being swallowed by a big fish, or the time when little David killed a giant warrior named Goliath, or that night when Daniel was saved from some hungry lions. As a kid, I believed these stories were true and I knew that I was supposed to learn important lessons from them.

The lesson from Jonah?

Don’t run from God unless you’re a fan of deadly storms and cool with spending 3 nights in the belly of a fish.

The lesson from David?

Be brave and carry a slingshot with you everywhere you go.

The lesson from Daniel?

Pray even if it kills you...or something like that.

As I got older, I learned that the Bible wasn't just amazing stories that could be nicely illustrated on a felt board (you may need to Google "felt board"!). The Bible also had much to say about the things I was supposed to do, but mostly the things I was NOT supposed to do.

Do:

Obey your parents.

Go to church.

Read your Bible and pray.

Don't:

Repeat the bad words your neighbor yells when you walk on his lawn.

Spend too much time with people who don't go to church.

Kill your little brother.

So in my mind, the Bible went from being a bunch of stories to being a list of rules. You can guess what happened: I didn't like the Bible as much as I did back when I was melodically spelling it out to a catchy tune! I read my Bible when I felt guilty about not reading it enough. I learned to like certain parts of the Bible--and avoid other parts; the boring parts, the confusing parts and the parts that told me I couldn't do the things I wanted to do. I thought the Bible set the rules for life; I didn't see the Bible as something that GAVE life. **I was wrong!**

The Bible is the all-time best-selling book. It stands alone when it comes to its impact on the hearts of people and the course of history. No other book has ever been more read, scrutinized, discussed, debated, loved or hated. Whether you grew up like I did (in church, learning about the Bible) or not, you probably have some strong opinions about the Bible.

Clearly the Bible is important--really important.

But...

What is the actual purpose of the Bible?

What do we do with the Bible?

What should our Bible reading accomplish?

Is it accomplishing anything in you?

The purpose of this book is to help you answer those questions by showing you a fresh study model, or at least fresh terms, to use in your Bible reading and study times, while also recognizing and honoring timeless and trusted approaches to studying the Bible.

In the next three chapters, we're going to look at Psalm 19 and see how the **Word of God WAKES us, WARNS us and WINS us.** Chapter two discusses how the Bible wakes us up and calls us out of the false identities we live out and the false realities we live in. Chapter three addresses our need for wisdom and how God's Word warns us. Chapter four concludes this Bible study model by considering how the commands of God can cause our hearts to be filled with true joy; his Word wins us.

Following those chapters, I've provided 31 days of selected Bible passages for you to read and apply this Bible study model to. As you study the Bible using this study model, I encourage you to share what you're learning with a youth leader, family member or friend.

My prayer is that you will grow to love and long for the B-I-B-L-E!

Chapter Two

The Word WAKES Us

There are good ways to wake up.

I love waking up to the smell of bacon. My mouth is salivating even as I write those words. I love waking up free of the annoying assistance of an alarm clock. Since I've been married, I love waking up and seeing the most beautiful woman in the world next to me. I am convinced we all have something we love waking up to. Maybe you love waking up to the smell of coffee, or to the news that it's a snow day!

There are also bad ways to wake up.

When I was a teenager, my dad would wake me up for school by coming into my room, pushing back the shades from my windows and belting out some old school worship song about "arising, shining and letting our enemies be scattered". Little did he know, but in that moment, HE was the enemy I wanted to scatter.

One of my friends in college worked at a movie theater and was given a promotional glow-in-the-dark mask similar to the mask used by the killer in the hit horror flick, *Scream*. Clearly God had provided an opportunity for us and we didn't want to waste it. We snuck into several of our friends' dorm rooms one night waking up poor unsuspecting souls. The resulting screams, and wild throw-

ing of punches into the air, only added to our enjoyment.

Waking up can be good and waking up can be bad. This chapter is about how God's Word wakes us up.

We're going to be looking at Psalms 19 in this chapter, as well as the following two chapters. Take a few minutes to read verses 7-14.

7 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The decrees of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. 8 The commandments of the LORD are right, bringing joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are clear, giving insight to life. 9 Reverence for the LORD is pure, lasting forever. The laws of the LORD are true; each one is fair. 10 They are more desirable than gold, even the finest gold. They are sweeter than honey, even honey dripping from the comb. 11 They are a warning to those who hear them; there is great reward for those who obey them. 12 How can I know all the sins lurking in my heart? Cleanse me from these hidden faults. 13 Keep me from deliberate sins! Don't let them control me. Then I will be free of guilt and innocent of great sin. 14 May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart be pleasing to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer. Psalm 19 (NLT)

Let's take a closer look at the first part of verse 7. It reads, *"The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul."* What does that mean?

The word "soul" in this verse can be understood as the word "self"... who you REALLY are. The Bible can revive YOU! Old Testament scholar Derek Kidner says it this way, "Only the Scripture has the power to show you who you are!"

The Word WAKES you!

In the summer of 2010, the movie Inception hit the big screen. In the film, there exists technology that allows trained experts to enter people's dreams and plant ideas in their minds without the dreamer knowing it. These experts walk around inside the dream worlds that they have carefully created. They use the technology to trick the sleeping person into thinking the dream is reality.

The experts could even fall asleep and dream within those created worlds. Then they could enter those dreams using the same technology – “a dream within a dream”. In the process, they would get deeper and deeper into the dream world and farther from reality. The deeper the expert went into the dream world and the longer they stayed there, the greater the likelihood the dream would become their reality. The only way they could get back to reality was with the assistance of a “kick”. In the movie, a kick is some sort of violent or extreme event in the real world, such as a gunshot or a car accident.

The Bible is the “kick” that we all need, at times, to wake us out of our false realities and shake us from our false identities. Throughout my life, I have watched individuals leave the reality that Scripture calls them to and allow something else to shape their view of reality, truth and self.

We tend to let the way other people view us shape our reality. It's so easy to believe that we are exactly what our family and friends say we are. We are prone to believe lies that society tells us about what makes us worth something and how we can "improve" ourselves.

Some of society's lies tell us that our image is the only thing that matters. Some lead us to believe that we're only as good as our ability to perform under pressure, or that we can know we're worth the space we take up if people like us, approve of us, want to be with us.

We are bombarded every day with messages; some obvious and some hidden. We are part of the most advertised to generation ever, and every advertisement is telling us a story about what matters and what's true. We hear and see these stories over and over, and soon we are living them out. And the result? We end up with spiritual amnesia. We forget who we are.

Only the Bible wakes you up and shows you who you really are. Only the Bible shows us how flawed and lost we are AND how loved and accepted we are--and gives us an explanation for both realities!

The Bible tells us that we are much worse than we think.

My wife and I have spent zero time and zero energy teaching our daughters to be selfish (at least not intentionally!). We have spent time and energy teaching our girls to share, to be kind, to think of others; it is NOT in their nature! Their nature is to steal some poor kid's toy and then beat them over the head with it.

Our hearts are deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. (Jeremiah 17:9) No one is good and no one seeks God. (Romans 3:11-12) Anyone who says he is without sin is a liar. (1 John 1:8) The Bible teaches us that we are not sinners because we sin—we sin because we are sinners. We're born steeped in this sin nature. We're rebellious and wired to shake our fist at anyone who stands in our way or tells us what to do.

The Bible wakes us up to see how sinful we are. It's a much bigger problem than bad behavior. It's our nature.

Waking up to the reality of how flawed you are keeps you humble. That realization prevents you from the fatal mistake of thinking you can save yourself. It keeps you from thinking we're better than others and looking down at those people. It also makes you much more likely to forgive others' flaws, because you know you need forgiveness just as much! And it keeps you grateful for that very forgiveness.

The Bible also tells us that we are more loved than we hope.

Every romantic comedy film seems to have the same basic plot-line:

- Boy meets girl
- Boy and girl start to like each other
- Their relationship is based on a lie/half-truth
- The truth is dramatically, and predictably, exposed and it seems to end the relationship
- Music montage of them being sad and alone
- They work through it and end up accepting each other for who they are
- They live happily ever after

And we love it. We love this story, and we watch it over and over because in our hearts we all want to believe that there is someone 'out there' who will love us completely--even IF they know us completely. Yet for many that seems impossible.

The truth we learn in Scripture is this: we're loved beyond anything we could have dreamed. Because of Jesus; because of His life, His death, and His resurrection we can stand before God righteous and approved. Now each of us--even the worst--can be a child of God! He knows us completely AND He loves us completely.

One false reality we often buy into is that we found God. We went looking for him, and through enough sincere searching, or the right choices and actions, we saved ourselves...with God's help.

The Bible doesn't let us live in that false reality.

The truth is: God seeks us! We run, He pursues. While we were still far from Him, He sent His Son to seek and save us--even though it cost them both dearly. Our hearts can be made new all because God seeks us out!

Knowing the reality of how deeply loved and accepted you are keeps you hopeful, makes you secure and allows you to love others. If we don't wake up to this reality every day then we will spend all our energy chasing the acceptance and approval that can only be found in trusting in Jesus. Acceptance and approval that isn't dependent upon our ability to perform or be perfect also sets us free to be honest about our shortcomings and ultimately leads us to true repentance.

True repentance is much more than saying you're sorry for messing up or doing the wrong thing. It's more than feeling really bad. It's even more than turning from bad behavior to good behavior. True repentance is a complete shift of our trust and hope. A complete shift from the things and people we are looking to for approval and acceptance, to trusting fully in Jesus. Repentance is not about piling on the guilt or trying to pay up. It's about seeing Jesus for who He really is and trusting that on the cross He took both our guilt and our penalty.

Pastor Tim Keller has a helpful way of describing the Gospel. He

says we're "sinful beyond belief, but loved beyond hope" because of Jesus. The only place we are certain to get that wonderful wake-up call is the Bible. The Word WAKES us!

Recently my friend told me about a guy he met who described himself as a gamer. This gamer went on to explain to my friend that he plays an alternate reality game EIGHT hours a day. His life is being lived out in a world that doesn't really exist--it's a false reality and a false identity.

In fact, this gamer gets so engulfed in this video game world that he has to set an alarm every four hours, else he'll forget to eat lunch or forget to go to his evening job! He needs an alarm to wake him up to his real life. Can you imagine?!

When it comes down to it, I don't think you and I are all that different. We need the Bible to wake us, to kick us back to reality. There's a lot more at risk than forgetting to make a sandwich or getting fired for missing work. Our very souls are at stake.

The Word wakes us.

"The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul."

Some questions to ask yourself:

What are some false realities I live in?

What false identities do I take on?

Is God's word the KICK that wakes me up?

Am I defined by what the Bible says?

Chapter Three

The Word WARNS Us

When I was in college, I spent two months in New York City. My classmates and I lived in Queens and we spent our time helping people and serving churches all over New York City, plus taking a couple classes.

Every Monday, we had a free day. We would get up early, eat breakfast, purchase subway tokens, and head to Manhattan. We spent the day running around the greatest city in the world, seeing the sites, shopping and eating; it was a blast!

Fast-forward 15 years. My current ministry takes me into New York City often. No matter what is the primary purpose of my visit, I always have a secondary purpose. I am determined to eat something amazing. In fact, I plan on it; I scour the Internet to learn about the best pizza joints, the latest decadent dessert spots and the most authentic ethnic food kitchens. I'm a man on a mission.

However when I was 18 years old and eating in New York City every Monday, I am terribly ashamed to say that most of my meals were from fast food chain restaurants. With the best food in the world all around me, I was pounding processed meat burgers and generic pizza every Monday. I wish I could invent a time machine just so I can go back and slap myself in the face while yelling,

“EAT GOOD FOOD, YOU FOOL!”

At any point in our lives we can look back 5 years, 10 years and see how foolish we were. Looking back, we realize how little we knew about the world, about relationships, about our own hearts. Many of us would love to go back in time and warn our past selves about the stupidity of our own decisions. When we look back, we say things like, *“I can’t believe I did that, thought that, believed that, wanted that...”*

We’re all experts on who we used to be.

Now consider this. If that is true, then this is also true: 10 years from now, we’ll look back at who we are TODAY and wish we could slap ourselves. We’ll realize 10 years from now that today we are a fool, a jerk, naïve, misinformed or uninformed. Someday we’ll desperately wish we had done certain things differently; but not a single one of us knows YET what those things will be!

What’s the point?

Wisdom. That’s the point. We need wisdom--and the Word. It WARNS us.

Take a minute again and read the passage from Psalm 19. How many times in this passage does the psalmist mention the reasons for warning and the need for warning?

7 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The decrees of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. 8 The commandments of the LORD are right, bringing joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are clear, giving insight to life. 9 Reverence for the LORD is pure, lasting forever. The laws of the LORD are true; each one is fair. 10 They are more desirable than gold, even the finest gold. They are sweeter than honey, even honey dripping from the comb. 11 They are a warning to those who hear them; there is great reward for those who obey them. 12 How can I know all the sins lurking in my heart? Cleanse me from these hidden faults. 13 Keep me from deliberate sins! Don't let them control me. Then I will be free of guilt and innocent of great sin. 14 May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart be pleasing to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer. Psalm 19 (NLT)

The second half of verse seven says, *“The decrees of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple.”* We are the simple and we need wisdom. Verse 11 says that God’s Word is warning to those who hear it. We need to hear and obey Scripture’s warnings. We’re so simple and shortsighted that we can’t even know all our mistakes and flaws. Verse 12 says it so well: *“How can I know all the sins lurking in my heart? Cleanse me from these hidden faults.”*

One morning, I was getting ready to go to work as my family was still sleeping. I tried to keep as many lights off as possible and make as little noise as possible. While I was standing in my bedroom with the lights off and silently getting dressed, I reached for my cologne bottle with my right hand and went to spray some onto my wrist.

What I didn't know, and couldn't see, was that the tip of the bottle had twisted and the hole of the sprayer was pointed directly at my right eye. And this was no ordinary sprayer. For some reason, this sprayer shot out the cologne like it was angry at the world. Instead of a gentle mist, it was a laser beam of liquid.

My eye immediately clamped shut and the pain was unreal. I thought I was about to lose my eye, but I was still trying to be quiet and suffer in silence. So as quietly as possible, I ran to the bathroom and began to wash my eye out with water. The only problem was that my eye had no interest in opening up.

So I stood at the bathroom sink with one hand trying to pry my eye open and with the other hand I grabbed my smartphone and began searching the phrase "cologne in my eye". I was relieved to learn that I would in fact not lose my eye, and I was actually comforted to know that enough people had already done this extreme act of stupidity to justify many online search results.

The Internet seems to have made any and all knowledge available at the click of a button. Want to know how to do your science project? Need up-to-the-minute weather reports? Have lyrics to some random song stuck in your head? Need driving directions to your friend's house? Type a few words, push a few buttons and BAM – there's the knowledge you need.

The Internet can give us knowledge, but it can't make wisdom available. A computer can't put wisdom at your fingertips. So what are we to do?

The Word WARNS us.

The Bible warns us of our tendencies and our flaws. The Word of God is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. (Psalm 119:105) There are so many stories in Scripture where we can study individuals and learn from their successes, from their failures, and from their lives. There are many great passages that are loaded with spiritual truths and real life thoughts for living.

In his book, [The Best Question Ever](#), Andy Stanley talks about the importance of wisdom and the need to ask the question: What is the WISE thing for me to do? In light of my past experiences, present circumstances and future hopes and dreams, what is the wise thing for me to do?

For some of you, past experiences include addictions or bad relationships or repeated patterns of mistakes. Your present circumstances could include being a student, having a job, dealing with health concerns, and your family life. Every teenager has future hopes and dreams. Yours might involve college, the military, being a teacher, being a professional athlete, marriage, having a family, etc...

Considering your past experiences, present circumstances and future hopes and dreams, what is the wise thing for you to do?

Here's a simpler version of that question for you to try and remember:

Considering where I've been, where I am, and where I want to be: what is the wise choice?

Many of the wrong decisions that I've made in my life began with an unwise decision. I grew up in a Christian home and my parents instilled in me an enormous sense of right and wrong; I didn't want to disappoint my parents by making wrong choices. So I'd make choices that weren't necessarily wrong, but were definitely not wise. Those unwise choices would eventually put me in a situation where I did not have the strength, the will power, or the integrity to make the RIGHT choice. We need to allow the Word to warn us.

Let's consider a few examples of choices that may not be clearly right or wrong, but where we do need wisdom.

Some of you have jobs and are offered the opportunity to work more hours. There is not a right or wrong answer, so if you only ask the question, *"Is it wrong for me to work more?"* you will miss the opportunity to ask yourself, *"Considering the fact that I'm a full time student (and maybe a struggling one!), is it wise for me to*

take on more hours?”

Is there anything wrong with going to certain parties? Or is there anything wrong with being alone with your girlfriend or boyfriend? Assuming your parents haven't asked you not to, then maybe not, but is it wise?

Is there anything right or wrong about spending most free moments you have chatting online or watching TV or just entertaining yourself? Probably not, but what is the wise thing to do?

In light of where you've been, where you are and where you want to be – what is the wise thing for you to do in each situation?

If you have any regrets (and all of us do), then you'll realize that if you had asked yourself the question, *“What is the wise thing to do?”* you might have saved yourself (and others!) much pain. We need wisdom, we need warning and thank God that His Word warns us.

Two final thoughts about wisdom.

First, one way that God's word warns us is by telling us of the dangers of trying to live life alone, void of any help. We need to benefit from the wisdom of others. We need to “do” life together. When you have an important decision to make, seek out those people in your life who you can go to for wise counsel. Let them speak into your life and help you process what the Bible has to say to help you make that decision. Look for someone who loves₂₁

Jesus, values what's best for you even MORE than they value your friendship, and who has been, or is, where you want to be.

Secondly, we go to the Word of God for more than just to learn principles by which to live and to learn from the examples of people in the Bible; we go to the Bible to know Jesus--to know His heart and to have His mind! He is the wisdom of God. Jesus is wisdom in the flesh, and as we'll see in the next chapter, he took our foolishness upon Himself so that we could be free from the ultimate and eternal consequence of all our failures.

"The decrees of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple."

Some questions to ask yourself:

Do I allow the Bible to WARN me?

What areas of my life do I need wisdom?

Where do I look for wisdom?

Who in my life can I trust for wise counsel/advise?

Chapter Four

The Word WINS Us

I'm a pretty competitive person. Ok, I'm a really competitive person. I'm the person who doesn't understand why people play sports, but don't keep score. I am so competitive that I've been known to stomp away angrily from board games. I can watch just about anything on TV--if there is a winner and a loser.

I remember a time when my family and I were at Chuck E. Cheese's for my daughter's friend's birthday party. I went ahead of my family to get us a table. We ended up sitting right next to a child sized air hockey table, where a little girl and boy were playing. I could tell from the electronic scoreboard that the boy was winning 5-0.

One riveting goal at the time, the girl began catching up. I realized that I was witnessing an epic comeback. I got so caught up in watching and when she scored the tying goal I thought to myself, "You're about to witness history!" Sure enough, she scored the winning goal and I lifted her onto my shoulders and ran around the play area screaming like a wild man. Her suddenly concerned parents, however, didn't seem to share my excitement.

Ok, maybe I exaggerated the ending of that story, but the point is I like winning and watching people win. Many of us spend our lives trying to win. We try to win in sports, in school, in relationships, in

life. What we may not realize, though, is that there are things trying to win us too! Trying to win our attention--and trying to win our affections. And eventually, something WILL win you.

One more time, let's read these eight verses from Psalm 19 again and notice the ways God's Word is described as a wonderful and desirable thing.

7 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The decrees of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. 8 The commandments of the LORD are right, bringing joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are clear, giving insight to life. 9 Reverence for the LORD is pure, lasting forever. The laws of the LORD are true; each one is fair. 10 They are more desirable than gold, even the finest gold. They are sweeter than honey, even honey dripping from the comb. 11 They are a warning to those who hear them; there is great reward for those who obey them. 12 How can I know all the sins lurking in my heart? Cleanse me from these hidden faults. 13 Keep me from deliberate sins! Don't let them control me. Then I will be free of guilt and innocent of great sin. 14 May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart be pleasing to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer. Psalm 19 (NLT)

Look at verse 8. *"The commandments of the LORD are right, bringing joy to the heart."* See something odd there, commands that bring joy? In verse 10, the law of God is described as being more desirable than the finest gold in existence and being sweeter, or more enjoyable, than fresh honey. In what crazy, alternate universe do rules give us joy? How is it possible that someone who commands us to live a certain way can make our hearts rejoice? Don't our hearts want to do their own thing? Isn't true happiness found in living life by our own rules?

I went to a Bible college with some pretty strict rules. One of those rules was that we had to wear a tie to every class. On top of that, we had to have either a suit jacket or a sweater with us at all times. We didn't have to wear it; we just had to have it. Why? I'll never know. What I do know is that we spent a lot of time finding ways to "creatively follow" that rule.

As an example, one of my friends went to the local thrift shop and bought an infant sized sweater. Whenever a professor would ask him where his sweater or jacket was, he would proudly reach into his backpack and produce that miniature sweater. Technically, he was following the rules. Another student came up with another way around the rule. Whenever an RA asked him if he had his sweater or jacket with him, he would simply turn his body to show them the sweater sleeve hanging out of his backpack. Naturally they assumed there was a sweater attached to that sleeve. They were wrong.

We love to break the rules. Or at least we love to find loopholes in the rules. We don't love rules. At many youth events, I've had the responsibility of informing the youth of the rules. Never once has this resulted in teenagers celebrating and high-fiving each other!

So how do the commands of God make our hearts rejoice? How are they desirable and sweet? By winning us.

How does the Word WIN us?

It shows us two things:

1. A Father committed to His children
2. A Son committed to His Father

Let's look first at the Father who is committed to His children.

The best-known rules in the entire Bible have to be the Ten Commandments. Everybody knows something about the Ten Commandments, including both people who grew up in church and people who have never set foot in a church. There have been some very popular films made all about Moses, the Israelites in Egyptian slavery and their deliverance. Then God comes along and seems to rain on their desert parade with the Ten Commandments and other rules.

Not so fast. It's important to notice that God FIRST delivered the people of Israel, and THEN he gave them the law. Right before he gives the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20, he reminds them, *"I am the Lord your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery."* They did not have to obey the law first in order to be brought out of Egypt. God rescued them miraculously, and then instructed them how to live in response to that great rescue.

This is the pattern throughout the Bible. God saves us and in the

light of that great salvation we gladly honor Him with our lives by following His commands. Jesus rescues us; resting and rejoicing in the reality of that rescue shapes our hearts and lives. Obedience is not a means to salvation; it is a result of salvation.

One other thing: the Israelites had been in slavery for 400 years; that's a long time. Generations had come and gone. Everyone who was delivered from Egypt was born into slavery. None of them knew any other sort of existence. Most likely they had never decided where to work, where to live, when to go on their lunch break. I'm guessing that their Egyptian masters made the majority of their decisions for them.

Then God delivers them from that slavery and there are millions of them walking in the wilderness. How could they possibly know how to live and exist as a healthy community? I don't think we can even begin to understand how impossible that was; but God did.

All the laws that God gave to his children were so the fabric of their community wouldn't fall apart; so they wouldn't destroy themselves in the process of becoming a nation.

God's commandments were to protect and guide and bless.

Behind all this LAW and Scripture, do you see a Father committed to his children?

I remember that night at youth group very well. She was a visitor and the odd thing was she showed up alone. I went over to introduce myself and asked her some questions. I asked if her parents knew she was at our youth group. She said no.

I suggested to her that they probably should know, as they might be concerned about her whereabouts. She assured me they wouldn't notice, they didn't care and they never asked where she was going, or what she was doing, and that they didn't even give her a curfew.

As "rule-free" as she had it, she didn't seem happy about it. In fact, she seemed sad. She said to me, *"Sometimes I wish they would just act like they're my parents and set some rules for me."* I asked her why she felt that way. I'll never forget her answer. *"Because then I would know that they love me."*

Likewise, the least loving thing God could do for us is to leave us in a world filled with pain and give us no guidelines or parameters for how to live. On the flip-side, the most loving thing God could do is save us and then show us how to live like we've been saved. And that's exactly what He has done by giving us His commands.

The Word wins us because it shows us a Father committed to His

children. The Father we all long for.

The law also shows us...a Son committed to his Father

The Bible teaches us that the Law has one primary purpose: to lead us to Jesus. The impossibility of you and me fulfilling the law is meant to bring us to the point of realizing how great our need is for Jesus. The totality of the law was not given to us so we can earn our salvation, or gain God's approval by keeping the law; it was given to show us that we never could.

And here's the best part: Jesus came to fulfill the law. Jesus kept the law, the whole law, and He lived perfectly. He got it right! Why is that the best part for us? Because Jesus didn't just die in our place--he lived in our place too! He is our substitute in death and in life!

So how does this win us?

In Genesis 22, there is the story of God asking Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. Horrible story, I know. Three times now, I've held my daughters down while they've received stitches in their foreheads and I hated every second of it. The thought of harming my own child, or standing by while someone else does, makes me want to vomit.

Yet, Abraham obeys and begins the journey to the place of sacrifice. Isaac carries the wood as they walk up the hill, but he notices something is missing. Where's the animal for the sacrifice, dad?²⁹

Abraham's response is simple yet profound: God will provide the animal.

As you may know, God stops Abraham from killing his son. God is against human sacrifice; he was testing Abraham's faith. God said to Abraham, *"Do not hurt him in any way, for now I know that you truly fear God. You have not withheld from me even your son, your only son."*

And as the story of Scripture unfolds, thousands of years later we come to a different mountain. Once again a Son is carrying the wood; once again a sacrifice is about to be made--but this time, it isn't a test.

On the cross, the commitment of the Father to his children collided with the commitment of the Son to His Father. It was resolved when the Father allowed the sin and shame of His children to crush His Son--all so He could have you and me.

And now you can say: I know you love me God because, "You have not withheld from me even your son, your only son."

At the cross, and in all of Scripture, we see a Father committed to his children and a Son committed to His Father. Even the psalmist, King David, knew he could not redeem himself by keeping the law or by sacrificing animals. Look at how he ends Psalm 19, *"May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart be*

pleasing to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.”

My redeemer. A redeemer who buys us back. A redeemer who makes us new. A redeemer who rescues the lost. A redeemer who wins our hearts.

The Word WAKES us, the Word WARNS us, the Word WINS us.

The commandments of the LORD are right, bringing joy to the heart.

Some questions to ask yourself:

What things are trying to win my heart?

How does the Bible reveal a God committed to my good?

Why is that hard for me to believe (sometimes)?

How is my heart changed by seeing a Son committed to His Father?

Do I see the law as something I must fulfill, or something that leads me to Jesus?

DAILY READING

DAY ONE

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MARK 2:1-12

1 Several days later Jesus returned to Capernaum, and the news of his arrival spread quickly through the town. 2 Soon the house where he was staying was so packed with visitors that there wasn't room for one more person, not even outside the door. And he preached the word to them. 3 Four men arrived carrying a paralyzed man on a mat. 4 They couldn't get to Jesus through the crowd, so they dug through the clay roof above his head. Then they lowered the sick man on his mat, right down in front of Jesus. 5 Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, "My son, your sins are forgiven." 6 But some of the teachers of religious law who were sitting there said to themselves, 7 "What? This is blasphemy! Who but God can forgive sins!" 8 Jesus knew what they were discussing among themselves, so he said to them, "Why do you think this is blasphemy? 9 Is it easier to say to the paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven' or 'Get up, pick up your mat, and walk'? 10 I will prove that I, the Son of Man, have the authority on earth to forgive sins." Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man and said, 11 "Stand up, take your mat, and go on home, because you are healed!" 12 The man jumped up, took the mat, and pushed his way through the stunned onlookers. Then they all praised God. "We've never seen anything like this before!" they exclaimed.

*Now that you've read today's Scripture text,
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Consider writing down your answers in a journal.*

DAY TWO

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: GALATIANS 5:16-26

16 So I advise you to live according to your new life in the Holy Spirit. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. 17 The old sinful nature loves to do evil, which is just opposite from what the Holy Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are opposite from what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, and your choices are never free from this conflict. 18 But when you are directed by the Holy Spirit, you are no longer subject to the law. 19 When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, your lives will produce these evil results: sexual immorality, impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, 20 idolatry, participation in demonic activities, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, divisions, the feeling that everyone is wrong except those in your own little group, 21 envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other kinds of sin. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God. 22 But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. Here there is no conflict with the law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. 25 If we are living now by the Holy Spirit, let us follow the Holy Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. 26 Let us not become conceited, or irritate one another, or be jealous of one another.

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DAY THREE

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MARK 4:35-41

35 As evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, “Let’s cross to the other side of the lake.” 36 So they took Jesus in the boat and started out, leaving the crowds behind (although other boats followed). 37 But soon a fierce storm came up. High waves were breaking into the boat, and it began to fill with water. 38 Jesus was sleeping at the back of the boat with his head on a cushion. The disciples woke him up, shouting, “Teacher, don’t you care that we’re going to drown?” 39 When Jesus woke up, he rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Silence! Be still!” Suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm. 40 Then he asked them, “Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?” 41 The disciples were absolutely terrified. “Who is this man?” they asked each other. “Even the wind and waves obey him!”

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DAY FOUR

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: GENESIS 3:1-9

1 Now the serpent was the shrewdest of all the creatures the LORD God had made. “Really?” he asked the woman. “Did God really say you must not eat any of the fruit in the garden?” 2 “Of course we may eat it,” the woman told him. 3 “It’s only the fruit from the tree at the center of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God says we must not eat it or even touch it, or we will die.” 4 “You won’t die!” the serpent hissed. 5 “God knows that your eyes will be opened when you eat it. You will become just like God, knowing everything, both good and evil.” 6 The woman was convinced. The fruit looked so fresh and delicious, and it would make

her so wise! So she ate some of the fruit. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her. Then he ate it, too. 7 At that moment, their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they strung fig leaves together around their hips to cover themselves. 8 Toward evening they heard the LORD God walking about in the garden, so they hid themselves among the trees. 9 The LORD God called to Adam, “Where are you?”

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DAY FIVE

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MARK 8:27-37

27 Jesus and his disciples left Galilee and went up to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. As they were walking along, he asked them, “Who do people say I am?” 28 “Well,” they replied, “some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and others say you are one of the other prophets.” 29 Then Jesus asked, “Who do you say I am?” Peter replied, “You are the Messiah.” 30 But Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him. 31 Then Jesus began to tell them that he, the Son of Man, would suffer many terrible things and be rejected by the leaders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, and three days later he would rise again. 32 As he talked about this openly with his disciples, Peter took him aside and told him he shouldn't say things like that. 33 Jesus turned and looked at his disciples and then said to Peter very sternly, “Get away from me, Satan! You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God's.” 34 Then he called his disciples and the crowds to come over and listen. “If any of you wants to be my follower,” he told them, “you must put aside your selfish ambition, shoulder your cross, and follow me. 35 If you try to keep your life for yourself, you will lose
36

it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will find true life. 36 And how do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul in the process? 37 Is anything worth more than your soul?

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DAY SIX

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: GALATIANS 6:1-10

1 Dear brothers and sisters, if another Christian is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. 2 Share each other's troubles and problems, and in this way obey the law of Christ. 3 If you think you are too important to help someone in need, you are only fooling yourself. You are really a nobody. 4 Be sure to do what you should, for then you will enjoy the personal satisfaction of having done your work well, and you won't need to compare yourself to anyone else. 5 For we are each responsible for our own conduct. 6 Those who are taught the word of God should help their teachers by paying them. 7 Don't be misled. Remember that you can't ignore God and get away with it. You will always reap what you sow! 8 Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful desires will harvest the consequences of decay and death. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit. 9 So don't get tired of doing what is good. Don't get discouraged and give up, for we will reap a harvest of blessing at the appropriate time. 10 Whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone, especially to our Christian brothers and sisters.

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DAY SEVEN

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MARK 9:33-37

33 After they arrived at Capernaum, Jesus and his disciples settled in the house where they would be staying. Jesus asked them, “What were you discussing out on the road?” 34 But they didn’t answer, because they had been arguing about which of them was the greatest. 35 He sat down and called the twelve disciples over to him. Then he said, “Anyone who wants to be the first must take last place and be the servant of everyone else.” 36 Then he put a little child among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, 37 “Anyone who welcomes a little child like this on my behalf welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes my Father who sent me.”

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DAY EIGHT

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: EXODUS 20:1-17

1 Then God instructed the people as follows: 2 “I am the LORD your God, who rescued you from slavery in Egypt. 3 “Do not worship any other gods besides me. 4 “Do not make idols of any kind, whether in the shape of birds or animals or fish. 5 You must never worship or bow down to them, for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God who will not share your affection with any other god! I do not leave unpunished the sins of those who hate me, but I punish the children for the sins of their parents to the third and fourth generations. 6 But I lavish my love on those who love me and obey my commands, even for a thousand generations. 7

“Do not misuse the name of the LORD your God. The LORD will not let you go unpunished if you misuse his name. 8 “Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 9 Six days a week are set apart for your daily duties and regular work, 10 but the seventh day is a day of rest dedicated to the LORD your God. On that day no one in your household may do any kind of work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock, and any foreigners living among you. 11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; then he rested on the seventh day. That is why the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy. 12 “Honor your father and mother. Then you will live a long, full life in the land the LORD your God will give you. 13 “Do not murder. 14 “Do not commit adultery. 15 “Do not steal. 16 “Do not testify falsely against your neighbor. 17 “Do not covet your neighbor’s house. Do not covet your neighbor’s wife, male or female servant, ox or donkey, or anything else your neighbor owns.”

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DAY NINE

TODAY’S BIBLE READING: MARK 10:17-27

17 As he was starting out on a trip, a man came running up to Jesus, knelt down, and asked, “Good Teacher, what should I do to get eternal life?” 18 “Why do you call me good?” Jesus asked. “Only God is truly good. 19 But as for your question, you know the commandments: ‘Do not murder. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal. Do not testify falsely. Do not cheat. Honor your father and mother.’ “ 20 “Teacher,” the man replied, “I’ve obeyed all these commandments since I was a child.” 21 Jesus felt genuine love for this man as he looked at him. “You lack only one thing,” he told him. “Go and sell all you have and give the money to the poor, 39

and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” 22 At this, the man’s face fell, and he went sadly away because he had many possessions. 23 Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for rich people to get into the Kingdom of God!” 24 This amazed them. But Jesus said again, “Dear children, it is very hard to get into the Kingdom of God. 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God!” 26 The disciples were astounded. “Then who in the world can be saved?” they asked. 27 Jesus looked at them intently and said, “Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But not with God. Everything is possible with God.”

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DAY TEN

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: EPHESIANS 1:3-14

3 How we praise God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we belong to Christ. 4 Long ago, even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. 5 His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. And this gave him great pleasure. 6 So we praise God for the wonderful kindness he has poured out on us because we belong to his dearly loved Son. 7 He is so rich in kindness that he purchased our freedom through the blood of his Son, and our sins are forgiven. 8 He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding. 9 God’s secret plan has now been revealed to us; it is a plan centered on Christ, designed long ago according to his good pleasure. 10 And this is his plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under

the authority of Christ -- everything in heaven and on earth. 11 Furthermore, because of Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us from the beginning, and all things happen just as he decided long ago. 12 God's purpose was that we who were the first to trust in Christ should praise our glorious God. 13 And now you also have heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago. 14 The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us everything he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. This is just one more reason for us to praise our glorious God.

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DAY ELEVEN

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MARK 10:35-45

35 Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came over and spoke to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do us a favor." 36 "What is it?" he asked. 37 "In your glorious Kingdom, we want to sit in places of honor next to you," they said, "one at your right and the other at your left." 38 But Jesus answered, "You don't know what you are asking! Are you able to drink from the bitter cup of sorrow I am about to drink? Are you able to be baptized with the baptism of suffering I must be baptized with?" 39 "Oh yes," they said, "we are able!" And Jesus said, "You will indeed drink from my cup and be baptized with my baptism, 40 but I have no right to say who will sit on the thrones next to mine. God has prepared those places for the ones he has chosen." 41 When the ten other disciples discovered what James and John had asked, they were indignant. 42 So Jesus called them together and said, "You know that in this world kings are tyrants, and officials lord

it over the people beneath them. 43 But among you it should be quite different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever wants to be first must be the slave of all. 45 For even I, the Son of Man, came here not to be served but to serve others, and to give my life as a ransom for many.”

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DAY TWELVE

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOSHUA 23: 1-11

1 The years passed, and the LORD had given the people of Israel rest from all their enemies. Joshua, who was now very old, 2 called together all the elders, leaders, judges, and officers of Israel. He said to them, “I am an old man now. 3 You have seen everything the LORD your God has done for you during my lifetime. The LORD your God has fought for you against your enemies. 4 I have allotted to you as an inheritance all the land of the nations yet unconquered, as well as the land of those we have already conquered -- from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. 5 This land will be yours, for the LORD your God will drive out all the people living there now. You will live there instead of them, just as the LORD your God promised you. 6 “So be strong! Be very careful to follow all the instructions written in the Book of the Law of Moses. Do not deviate from them in any way. 7 Make sure you do not associate with the other people still remaining in the land. Do not even mention the names of their gods, much less swear by them or worship them. 8 But be faithful to the LORD your God as you have done until now. 9 “For the LORD has driven out great and powerful nations for you, and no one has yet been able to defeat you. 10 Each one of you will put to flight a thousand of the enemy, for the LORD your God fights for you, just

as he has promised. 11 So be very careful to love the LORD your God.

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DAY THIRTEEN

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MARK 10:46-52

46 And so they reached Jericho. Later, as Jesus and his disciples left town, a great crowd was following. A blind beggar named Bartimaeus (son of Timaeus) was sitting beside the road as Jesus was going by. 47 When Bartimaeus heard that Jesus from Nazareth was nearby, he began to shout out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" 48 "Be quiet!" some of the people yelled at him. But he only shouted louder, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" 49 When Jesus heard him, he stopped and said, "Tell him to come here." So they called the blind man. "Cheer up," they said. "Come on, he's calling you!" 50 Bartimaeus threw aside his coat, jumped up, and came to Jesus. 51 "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked. "Teacher," the blind man said, "I want to see!" 52 And Jesus said to him, "Go your way. Your faith has healed you." And instantly the blind man could see! Then he followed Jesus down the road.

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DAY FOURTEEN

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: EPHESIANS 1:15-23

15 Ever since I first heard of your strong faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for Christians everywhere, 16 I have never stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly, 17 asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. 18 I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the wonderful future he has promised to those he called. I want you to realize what a rich and glorious inheritance he has given to his people. 19 I pray that you will begin to understand the incredible greatness of his power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power 20 that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms. 21 Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else in this world or in the world to come. 22 And God has put all things under the authority of Christ, and he gave him this authority for the benefit of the church. 23 And the church is his body; it is filled by Christ, who fills everything everywhere with his presence.

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DAY FIFTEEN

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MARK 11:12-19

12 The next morning as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus felt hungry. 13 He noticed a fig tree a little way off that was in full leaf, so he went over to see if he could find any figs on it. But there were only leaves because it was too early in the season for fruit. 14 Then Jesus said to the tree, "May no one ever eat your fruit again!" And the disciples heard him say it. 15 When they arrived back in Jerusalem, Jesus entered the Temple and began to drive out the merchants and their customers. He knocked over the tables of the money changers and the stalls of those selling doves, 16 and he stopped everyone from bringing in merchandise. 17 He taught them, "The Scriptures declare, 'My Temple will be called a place of prayer for all nations,' but you have turned it into a den of thieves." 18 When the leading priests and teachers of religious law heard what Jesus had done, they began planning how to kill him. But they were afraid of him because the people were so enthusiastic about Jesus' teaching. 19 That evening Jesus and the disciples left the city.

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DAY SIXTEEN

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 1 SAMUEL 17: 40-50A

40 He (David) picked up five smooth stones from a stream and put them in his shepherd's bag. Then, armed only with his shepherd's staff and sling, he started across to fight Goliath. 41 Goliath walked out toward David with his shield bearer ahead of him, 42 sneering in contempt at this ruddy-faced boy. 43 "Am I a dog," he roared at David, "that you come at me with a stick?" And he cursed David by the names of his gods. 44 "Come over here, and I'll give your flesh to the birds and wild animals!" Goliath yelled. 45 David shouted in reply, "You come to me with sword, spear, and javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD Almighty -- the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. 46 Today the LORD will conquer you, and I will kill you and cut off your head. And then I will give the dead bodies of your men to the birds and wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel! 47 And everyone will know that the LORD does not need weapons to rescue his people. It is his battle, not ours. The LORD will give you to us!" 48 As Goliath moved closer to attack, David quickly ran out to meet him. 49 Reaching into his shepherd's bag and taking out a stone, he hurled it from his sling and hit the Philistine in the forehead. The stone sank in, and Goliath stumbled and fell face downward to the ground. 50 So David triumphed over the Philistine giant with only a stone and sling.

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DAY SEVENTEEN

TODAY'S BIBLE READING:

MARK 12:28-34

28 One of the teachers of religious law was standing there listening to the discussion. He realized that Jesus had answered well, so he asked, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” 29 Jesus replied, “The most important commandment is this: ‘Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. 30 And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.’ 31 The second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ No other commandment is greater than these.” 32 The teacher of religious law replied, “Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth by saying that there is only one God and no other. 33 And I know it is important to love him with all my heart and all my understanding and all my strength, and to love my neighbors as myself. This is more important than to offer all of the burnt offerings and sacrifices required in the law.” 34 Realizing this man’s understanding, Jesus said to him, “You are not far from the Kingdom of God.” And after that, no one dared to ask him any more questions.

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DAY EIGHTEEN

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: EPHESIANS 2:1-10

1 Once you were dead, doomed forever because of your many sins. 2 You used to live just like the rest of the world, full of sin, obeying Satan, the mighty prince of the power of the air. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. 3 All of us used to live that way, following the passions and desires of our evil nature. We were born with an evil nature, and we were under God's anger just like everyone else. 4 But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so very much, 5 that even while we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's special favor that you have been saved!) 6 For he raised us from the dead along with Christ, and we are seated with him in the heavenly realms -- all because we are one with Christ Jesus. 7 And so God can always point to us as examples of the incredible wealth of his favor and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us through Christ Jesus. 8 God saved you by his special favor when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. 9 Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. 10 For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so that we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

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DAY NINETEEN

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MARK 12:38-44

38 Here are some of the other things he taught them at this time: “Beware of these teachers of religious law! For they love to parade in flowing robes and to have everyone bow to them as they walk in the marketplaces. 39 And how they love the seats of honor in the synagogues and at banquets. 40 But they shamelessly cheat widows out of their property, and then, to cover up the kind of people they really are, they make long prayers in public. Because of this, their punishment will be the greater.” 41 Jesus went over to the collection box in the Temple and sat and watched as the crowds dropped in their money. Many rich people put in large amounts. 42 Then a poor widow came and dropped in two pennies. 43 He called his disciples to him and said, “I assure you, this poor widow has given more than all the others have given. 44 For they gave a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she has.”

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DAY TWENTY

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ISAIAH 53:1-7

1 Who has believed our message? To whom will the LORD reveal his saving power? 2 My servant grew up in the LORD's presence like a tender green shoot, sprouting from a root in dry and sterile ground. There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him. 3 He was despised and rejected -- a man of sorrows, acquainted with bitterest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way when he went by. He was despised, and we did not care. 4 Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God for his own sins! 5 But he was wounded and crushed for our sins. He was beaten that we might have peace. He was whipped, and we were healed! 6 All of us have strayed away like sheep. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the LORD laid on him the guilt and sins of us all. 7 He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth.

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DAY TWENTY-ONE

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MARK 14:1-9

1 It was now two days before the Passover celebration and the Festival of Unleavened Bread. The leading priests and the teachers of religious law were still looking for an opportunity to capture Jesus secretly and put him to death. 2 “But not during the Passover,” they agreed, “or there will be a riot.” 3 Meanwhile, Jesus was in Bethany at the home of Simon, a man who had leprosy. During supper, a woman came in with a beautiful jar of expensive perfume. She broke the seal and poured the perfume over his head. 4 Some of those at the table were indignant. “Why was this expensive perfume wasted?” they asked. 5 “She could have sold it for a small fortune and given the money to the poor!” And they scolded her harshly. 6 But Jesus replied, “Leave her alone. Why berate her for doing such a good thing to me? 7 You will always have the poor among you, and you can help them whenever you want to. But I will not be here with you much longer. 8 She has done what she could and has anointed my body for burial ahead of time. 9 I assure you, wherever the Good News is preached throughout the world, this woman’s deed will be talked about in her memory.”

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DAY TWENTY-TWO

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11

1 Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and sympathetic? 2 Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one heart and purpose. 3 Don't be selfish; don't live to make a good impression on others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourself. 4 Don't think only about your own affairs, but be interested in others, too, and what they are doing. 5 Your attitude should be the same that Christ Jesus had. 6 Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God. 7 He made himself nothing; he took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form. 8 And in human form he obediently humbled himself even further by dying a criminal's death on a cross. 9 Because of this, God raised him up to the heights of heaven and gave him a name that is above every other name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

*Now that you've read today's Scripture text,
turn to the inside of the back cover for the study questions.
Consider writing down your answers in a journal.*

DAY TWENTY-THREE

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MARK 14:32-42

32 And they came to an olive grove called Gethsemane, and Jesus said, "Sit here while I go and pray." 33 He took Peter, James, and John with him, and he began to be filled with horror and deep distress. 34 He told them, "My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and watch with me." 35 He went on a little farther and fell face down on the ground. He prayed that, if it were possible, the awful hour awaiting him might pass him by. 36 "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will, not mine." 37 Then he returned and found the disciples asleep. "Simon!" he said to Peter. "Are you asleep? Couldn't you stay awake and watch with me even one hour? 38 Keep alert and pray. Otherwise temptation will overpower you. For though the spirit is willing enough, the body is weak." 39 Then Jesus left them again and prayed, repeating his pleadings. 40 Again he returned to them and found them sleeping, for they just couldn't keep their eyes open. And they didn't know what to say. 41 When he returned to them the third time, he said, "Still sleeping? Still resting? Enough! The time has come. I, the Son of Man, am betrayed into the hands of sinners. 42 Up, let's be going. See, my betrayer is here!"

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DAY TWENTY-FOUR

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ISAIAH 53:8-12

8 From prison and trial they led him away to his death. But who among the people realized that he was dying for their sins -- that he was suffering their punishment? 9 He had done no wrong, and he never deceived anyone. But he was buried like a criminal; he was put in a rich man's grave. 10 But it was the LORD's good plan to crush him and fill him with grief. Yet when his life is made an offering for sin, he will have a multitude of children, many heirs. He will enjoy a long life, and the LORD's plan will prosper in his hands. 11 When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish, he will be satisfied. And because of what he has experienced, my righteous servant will make it possible for many to be counted righteous, for he will bear all their sins. 12 I will give him the honors of one who is mighty and great, because he exposed himself to death. He was counted among those who were sinners. He bore the sins of many and interceded for sinners.

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DAY TWENTY-FIVE

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MARK 15:1-15

1 Very early in the morning the leading priests, other leaders, and teachers of religious law -- the entire high council -- met to discuss their next step. They bound Jesus and took him to Pilate, the Roman governor. 2 Pilate asked Jesus, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus replied, "Yes, it is as you say." 3 Then the leading priests accused him of many crimes, 4 and Pilate asked him, "Aren't you going to say something? What about all these charges against you?" 5 But Jesus said nothing, much to Pilate's surprise. 6 Now it was the governor's custom to release one prisoner each year at Passover time -- anyone the people requested. 7 One of the prisoners at that time was Barabbas, convicted along with others for murder during an insurrection. 8 The mob began to crowd in toward Pilate, asking him to release a prisoner as usual. 9 "Should I give you the King of the Jews?" Pilate asked. 10 (For he realized by now that the leading priests had arrested Jesus out of envy.) 11 But at this point the leading priests stirred up the mob to demand the release of Barabbas instead of Jesus. 12 "But if I release Barabbas," Pilate asked them, "what should I do with this man you call the King of the Jews?" 13 They shouted back, "Crucify him!" 14 "Why?" Pilate demanded. "What crime has he committed?" But the crowd only roared the louder, "Crucify him!" 15 So Pilate, anxious to please the crowd, released Barabbas to them. He ordered Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip, then turned him over to the Roman soldiers to crucify him.

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DAY TWENTY-SIX

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: COLOSSIANS 1:15-23

15 Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before God made anything at all and is supreme over all creation. 16 Christ is the one through whom God created everything in heaven and earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see -- kings, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities. Everything has been created through him and for him. 17 He existed before everything else began, and he holds all creation together. 18 Christ is the head of the church, which is his body. He is the first of all who will rise from the dead, so he is first in everything. 19 For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, 20 and by him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of his blood on the cross. 21 This includes you who were once so far away from God. You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions, 22 yet now he has brought you back as his friends. He has done this through his death on the cross in his own human body. As a result, he has brought you into the very presence of God, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault. 23 But you must continue to believe this truth and stand in it firmly. Don't drift away from the assurance you received when you heard the Good News. The Good News has been preached all over the world, and I, Paul, have been appointed by God to proclaim it.

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DAY TWENTY-SEVEN

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MARK 15:22-32

22 And they brought Jesus to a place called Golgotha (which means Skull Hill). 23 They offered him wine drugged with myrrh, but he refused it. 24 Then they nailed him to the cross. They gambled for his clothes, throwing dice to decide who would get them. 25 It was nine o'clock in the morning when the crucifixion took place. 26 A signboard was fastened to the cross above Jesus' head, announcing the charge against him. It read: "The King of the Jews." 27 Two criminals were crucified with him, their crosses on either side of his. 28 29 And the people passing by shouted abuse, shaking their heads in mockery. "Ha! Look at you now!" they yelled at him. "You can destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days, can you? 30 Well then, save yourself and come down from the cross!" 31 The leading priests and teachers of religious law also mocked Jesus. "He saved others," they scoffed, "but he can't save himself! 32 Let this Messiah, this king of Israel, come down from the cross so we can see it and believe him!" Even the two criminals who were being crucified with Jesus ridiculed him.

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DAY TWENTY-EIGHT

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HABAKKUK 3:1-2, 17-19

1 This prayer was sung by the prophet Habakkuk: 2 I have heard all about you, LORD, and I am filled with awe by the amazing things you have done. In this time of our deep need, begin again to help us, as you did in years gone by. Show us your power to save us. And in your anger, remember your mercy.

17 Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vine; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty, 18 yet I will rejoice in the LORD! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation. 19 The Sovereign LORD is my strength! He will make me as surefooted as a deer and bring me safely over the mountains.

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DAY TWENTY-NINE

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MARK 15:33-39

33 At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock. 34 Then, at that time Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" 35 Some of the bystanders misunderstood and thought he was calling for the prophet Elijah. 36 One of them ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, holding it up to him on a stick so he could drink. "Leave him alone. Let's see whether Elijah will come and take him down!" he said. 37 Then Jesus uttered another loud cry and breathed his last. 38 And the curtain in the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. 39 When the Roman officer who stood facing him saw how he had died, he exclaimed, "Truly, this was the Son of God!"

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DAY THIRTY

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JAMES 1:19-27

19 My dear brothers and sisters, be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. 20 Your anger can never make things right in God's sight. 21 So get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the message God has planted in your hearts, for it is strong enough to save your souls. 22 And remember, it is a message to obey, not just to listen to. If you don't obey, you are only fooling yourself. 23 For if you just listen and don't obey, it is like looking at your face in a mirror but doing nothing to improve your appearance. 24 You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. 25 But if you keep looking steadily into God's perfect law -- the law that sets you free -- and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it. 26 If you claim to be religious but don't control your tongue, you are just fooling yourself, and your religion is worthless. 27 Pure and lasting religion in the sight of God our Father means that we must care for orphans and widows in their troubles, and refuse to let the world corrupt us.

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DAY THIRTY-ONE

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MARK 16:1-7

1 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. 2 Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb 3 and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?" 4 But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. 5 As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. 6 "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. 7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.' "

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Acknowledgements:

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The book by Andy Stanley that I draw content from and reference in chapter 3 is entitled *The Best Question Ever*. (Multnomah Books October 8, 2004) Get it. Read it.

All the Scripture passages in the study portion of this resource are in the New Living Translation.

The catalyst for this resource was a sermon that I heard preached by Dr. Timothy Keller. The sermon was preached in 2004 and is entitled: "The Doctrine of The Word". I give credit and appreciation to Tim Keller for that sermon – it's greatly impacted how I approach Scripture and hopefully it is accurately communicated here. You can (and should!) listen to that sermon online here:

<http://sermons2.redeemer.com/sermons/doctrine-word>

A lifetime of thanks to all of my family...My sister, my brother, my grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, nephews, nieces and Erin's family...you've enriched my life!

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Lilia and Caraline – you light up our lives. My prayer for you now and always is that your hearts will always rest and rejoice in the goodness of Jesus. His life and His work is all you will ever need.

Lastly...Thank you Jesus for loving, pursuing and rescuing sinners. I'll spend eternity saying thank you.

-David Hertweck (@DavidHertweck)

How does this passage WAKE me?

WHAT DOES THIS PASSAGE SHOW ME ABOUT MYSELF (ABOUT HUMAN NATURE)?

WHAT TRUTH(S) CAN I LEARN FROM THIS PASSAGE THAT ARE DIFFERENT FROM WHAT THE WORLD BELIEVES?

HOW DOES THIS PASSAGE REMIND ME THAT I AM BOTH SINFUL BEYOND BELIEF AND LOVED BEYOND HOPE?

How does this passage WARN me?

WHAT WISDOM ABOUT LIVING CAN I LEARN FROM THIS PASSAGE?

HOW CAN I APPLY THAT WISDOM TO MY LIFE TODAY?

WHO CAN I SHARE MY DISCOVERY WITH?

How does this passage WIN me?

WHAT DOES THIS PASSAGE SHOW ME ABOUT WHO JESUS IS?

HOW DO THE COMMANDS OR EXPECTATIONS OF THIS PASSAGE SHOW ME THAT GOD CARES FOR ME?

HOW DOES THIS PASSAGE REMIND ME, AND MAKE ME THANKFUL, THAT JESUS CAME AND LIVED A PERFECT LIFE IN MY PLACE AND DIED A SHAMEFUL DEATH IN MY PLACE?



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THE WORD

Wakes us, Warns us, Wins us