

One Thing: Confronting the Competing Desires in Our Hearts

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Introduction

Dear Believer,

The world is full of things that are vying for our attention and affection. And our hearts, deceitful as they are¹, try to convince us to turn those things – even good things that the Lord has given to us – into God things. Our hearts tell us that getting the one thing we desire will satisfy our souls, make us feel whole, and save us from our brokenness. But the truth is, in the same way that Jacob went to bed with “Rachel” and awoke to Leah², when we finally grasp that one thing, the thing for which our hearts have longed, we learn that the promises made were hollow and we’ve become a slave to the thing we wanted so much. At best, we’re left feeling underwhelmed. At worst, we’re disillusioned and disappointed with life and in bondage to a god of our own making.

The fact is, we’re needy. The Lord designed us that way. And that one thing, our deepest desire, the thing we spend all of our time, money, and energy chasing after, points to our most desperate needs. Much of how we move through the world are our attempts to meet our own needs and to try to look less needy!

But there is hope. We have a Father who is more than sufficient to meet our needs and willing to replace our desires with His³. Yes, we’re needy, broken, and limited. But we are also fully loved and accepted by a Father who is without need, wholly holy, and limitless in His power to love us fully. He delights in meeting our most desperate needs.

Over the next twelve weeks, I pray that you will allow Holy Spirit to reveal the condition of your heart. I pray that He will show you where your “one thing” is an inferior substitute and that you will turn to the One who is infinitely worthy of your attention and affection, and who will satisfy the deepest longings in your soul.

¹ Jeremiah 17:9

² Genesis 29:25

³ Psalm 37:4

Scripture Study Skills

INFORMATION: Before diving in and studying a passage of Scripture, it is first good to step back and gather a bit of background information. This helps to keep the passage you are considering in its correct context. A good place to begin (where possible) is to note the AUTHOR (Who was the human writer of this passage?), the AUDIENCE (Who was this intended for?) and the AIM (What was the author's main reason for writing?).

SUMMARIZATION: In just a sentence or two, use your own words to sum up what the author is saying in the portion of Scripture that you are studying. Summarizing helps you to focus on the text and better understand what the author is communicating.

OBSERVATION: Observation involves digging deeper into the passage at hand, taking time to reflect and ponder and notice details that might not stand out at first glance. During the observation process, more insight is gained into the meaning of the text and the implications it has for everyday life. Observation helps us to slow down and see beneath the surface, and is a means of gaining nourishment for the soul.

INVESTIGATION: Investigation takes the time to go beyond the given passage. If observation is going deeper, then investigation is going wider - using cross-references or a concordance to consider other places in the Bible that address similar topics, using dictionaries (English, Greek, or Hebrew) to look up word meanings, and using study Bibles or commentaries or other translations to gain greater understanding into anything that seems unclear or confusing. (See p. for a list of some helpful study resources)

APPLICATION: Application is where observing transitions to obeying. The goal of application is not to create a list of rules to govern our behavior or to generate a "to-do" or a "to-don't" list, but rather, to consider what it looks like to apply the truths of this passage in everyday life. This part of the study process considers how the passage

applies to our thoughts, our desires and our actions as followers of Christ. Application asks the question, “God, by your grace, how would you have me walk in this truth?”

EXALTATION: This is arguably the highest goal of studying Scripture - to discover praiseworthy truths about God in His Word and then use those truths as fuel for worship. To glorify God by proclaiming His greatness through the truths revealed in the passage at hand.

MEDITATION: Meditation is where a particular verse or thought from the passage is pulled out to ponder and pray over beyond the Bible study time. As you dwell on this truth throughout your day(s), you gain food for your own soul, and also nourishment to share with those God places in your path.

CONVERSATION: This is not a separate category, but from start to finish, as you are studying a passage of Scripture, have an ongoing conversation with God. Ask Him to give you understanding. Ask Him to give you a greater hunger and love for His Word. Ask Him what it looks like, in your current life circumstances, to embrace and apply what He is saying. Thank Him for His Spirit, who gives you the strength to obey. And pray the truths of this passage over others in your life, asking God to minister to them and to help them genuinely know Him. love Him, and walk in relationship with Him.

Week One Passage

One Thing

Psalm 27

27 The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? ² When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and foes, it is they who stumble and fall. ³ Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet I will be confident.

⁴ One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple. ⁵ For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me high upon a rock. ⁶ And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me, and I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing and make melody to the Lord.

⁷ Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud; be gracious to me and answer me! ⁸ You have said, “Seek my face.” My heart says to you, “Your face, Lord, do I seek.” ⁹ Hide not your face from me. Turn not your servant away in anger, O you who have been my help. Cast me not off; forsake me not, O God of my salvation! ¹⁰ For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord will take me in.

¹¹ Teach me your way, O Lord, and lead me on a level path because of my enemies. ¹² Give me not up to the will of my adversaries; for false witnesses have risen against me, and they breathe out violence. ¹³ I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living! ¹⁴ Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!

Week One Questions

One Thing

1. In a sentence or two, how would you sum up what is taking place in this passage?
 2. What does God reveal about Himself in this passage? How might embracing this truth (or truths!) strengthen your relationship with Him?
 3. It's possible that when David wrote this, he was being pursued by enemies who sought to kill him. Yet, what was the one thing he deeply desired?
 4. Can you imagine what underlying need he was seeking to have met? How does the Lord meet that need?

5. What blessings and benefits does David experience because of his heart position?
 6. In what ways do you identify with David? How does the truth contained in the passage apply to your life today?
 7. Is there anything in this passage that seems unclear or that you need to further investigate (this would be a good time to consult a study Bible, cross-references, or a commentary)?
 8. Using the truths found in this passage, write out a personal prayer expressing praise and thanksgiving to God, and asking Him for help to be a “doer” and not just a “hearer” of the Word.

Week Two Passage

The Tree Was To Be Desired

Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-13

2 The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

¹⁶ And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden,¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

3 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’”² And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden,³ but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’”⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die.⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

⁸ And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.⁹ But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?”¹⁰ And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.”¹¹ He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?”¹² The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.”¹³ Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

Week Two Questions

The Tree Was To Be Desired

1. In a sentence or two, how would you sum up what is taking place in this passage?
 2. What does God reveal about Himself in this passage? How might embracing this truth (or truths!) strengthen your relationship with Him?
 3. The Lord had given Adam and Eve everything they needed in the Garden. What one thing could Eve have desired so deeply that it consumed and ultimately controlled her?
 4. Can you imagine what underlying need she was seeking to have met? Read the following passages (and search for others, if you like). How does the Lord promise to meet that need for us?
 - a. Romans 8:29-31
 - b. James 1:5

5. What harm or hindrance did her disobedience create for her and others?
 6. In what ways do you identify with Eve? How does the truth contained in the passage apply to your life today?
 7. Is there anything in this passage that seems unclear or that you need to further investigate (this would be a good time to consult a study Bible, cross-references, or a commentary)?
 8. Using the truths found in this passage, write out a personal prayer expressing praise and thanksgiving to God, and asking Him for help to be a “doer” and not just a “hearer” of the Word.

Week Three Passage

Take Your Only Son

Genesis 17:15-22; 21:1-7; 22:1-19

17 And God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name.¹⁶ I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.”¹⁷ Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said to himself, “Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?”¹⁸ And Abraham said to God, “Oh that Ishmael might live before you!”¹⁹ God said, “No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him.²⁰ As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I have blessed him and will make him fruitful and multiply him greatly. He shall father twelve princes, and I will make him into a great nation.²¹ But I will establish my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this time next year.”²² When he had finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham.

21 The Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did to Sarah as he had promised.² And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him.³ Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore him, Isaac.⁴ And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him.⁵ Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.⁶ And Sarah said, “God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh over me.”⁷ And she said, “Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.”

22 After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.”² He said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”³ So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.⁴ On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar.⁵ Then Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you.”⁶ And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together.⁷ And Isaac said to his father Abraham, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” He said,

"Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" ⁸ Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together.

⁹ When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰ Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son.

¹¹ But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." ¹² He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." ¹³ And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴ So Abraham called the name of that place, "The Lord will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided."

¹⁵ And the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven ¹⁶ and said, "By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷ I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, ¹⁸ and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice." ¹⁹ So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba. And Abraham lived at Beersheba.

Week Three Questions

Take Your Only Son

1. In a sentence or two, how would you sum up what is taking place in these passages?
 2. What does God reveal about Himself in this passage? How might embracing this truth (or truths!) strengthen your relationship with Him?
 3. Consider the promise the Lord made to Abraham. Faithful Father that He is, He then fulfills it, but then tells Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. What do Abraham's actions, words, and attitude reveal to us about the thing he most desired?
 4. Can you imagine what underlying need he was seeking to have met? How does the Lord meet that need?

5. What blessings and benefits does Abraham and others experience because of his heart position and obedience?
 6. In what ways do you identify with Abraham? How does the truth contained in the passage apply to your life today?
 7. Is there anything in this passage that seems unclear or that you need to further investigate (this would be a good time to consult a study Bible, cross-references, or a commentary)?
 8. Using the truths found in this passage, write out a personal prayer expressing praise and thanksgiving to God, and asking Him for help to be a “doer” and not just a “hearer” of the Word.

Week Four Passage

I Will Not Let You Go

Genesis 32:9-12, 22-30

32 And Jacob said, “O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O Lord who said to me, ‘Return to your country and to your kindred, that I may do you good,’¹⁰ I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps.¹¹ Please deliver me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him, that he may come and attack me, the mothers with the children.¹² But you said, ‘I will surely do you good, and make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.’”

²² The same night he arose and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok.²³ He took them and sent them across the stream, and everything else that he had.²⁴ And Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day.²⁵ When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched his hip socket, and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him.²⁶ Then he said, “Let me go, for the day has broken.” But Jacob said, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.”²⁷ And he said to him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Jacob.”²⁸ Then he said, “Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed.”²⁹ Then Jacob asked him, “Please tell me your name.” But he said, “Why is it that you ask my name?” And there he blessed him.³⁰ So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, “For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered.”

Week Four Questions

I Will Not Let You Go

1. In a sentence or two, how would you sum up what is taking place in this passage?
 2. What does God reveal about Himself in this passage? How might embracing this truth (or truths!) strengthen your relationship with Him?
 3. Look back over the span of Jacob's life captured in scripture (read Genesis chapters 25, and 27-31). He had spent his life wrestling with people, searching for something. What was the one thing he deeply desired?
 4. Can you imagine what underlying need he was seeking to have met? How does the Lord meet that need?

5. What blessings and benefits does Jacob and others experience because of his heart position?
 6. In what ways do you identify with Jacob? How does the truth contained in the passage apply to your life today?
 7. Is there anything in this passage that seems unclear or that you need to further investigate (this would be a good time to consult a study Bible, cross-references, or a commentary)?
 8. Using the truths found in this section of passage, write out a personal prayer expressing praise and thanksgiving to God, and asking Him for help to be a “doer” and not just a “hearer” of the Word.

Week Five Passage

This Time I Will Praise the Lord

Genesis 29:16-35

29 Now Laban had two daughters. The name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel.¹⁷ Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful in form and appearance.¹⁸ Jacob loved Rachel. And he said, "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel."¹⁹ Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to any other man; stay with me."²⁰ So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her.

²¹ Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife that I may go in to her, for my time is completed."²² So Laban gathered together all the people of the place and made a feast.²³ But in the evening he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob, and he went in to her.²⁴ (Laban gave his female servant Zilpah to his daughter Leah to be her servant.)²⁵ And in the morning, behold, it was Leah! And Jacob said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Did I not serve with you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me?"²⁶ Laban said, "It is not so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn.²⁷ Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also in return for serving me another seven years."²⁸ Jacob did so, and completed her week. Then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife.²⁹ (Laban gave his female servant Bilhah to his daughter Rachel to be her servant.)³⁰ So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than Leah, and served Laban for another seven years.

³¹ When the Lord saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren.³² And Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Reuben, for she said, "Because the Lord has looked upon my affliction; for now my husband will love me."³³ She conceived again and bore a son, and said, "Because the Lord has heard that I am hated, he has given me this son also." And she called his name Simeon.³⁴ Again she conceived and bore a son, and said, "Now this time my husband will be attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." Therefore his name was called Levi.³⁵ And she conceived again and bore a son, and said, "This time I will praise the Lord." Therefore she called his name Judah. Then she ceased bearing.

Week Five Questions

This Time I Will Praise the Lord

1. In a sentence or two, how would you sum up what is taking place in this passage?
 2. What does God reveal about Himself in this passage? How might embracing this truth (or truths!) strengthen your relationship with Him?
 3. The text implies that Leah wasn't beautiful. Jacob was tricked into marrying her and the Bible tells us that she was hated. Reread verses 31-34. What was the one thing that Leah deeply desired above all?
 4. Can you imagine what underlying need she was seeking to have met? How does she go about meeting that need herself?

5. What harm or hindrance did doing so create for her and others?

6. Read the following passages (and search for others, if you like). How does the Lord promise to meet that need for us?
 - a. Jeremiah 31:3
 - b. Ephesians 3:17-18

7. Reread verse 35. It appears that something changed for Leah. What was it?

8. In what ways do you identify with Leah? How does the truth contained in the passage apply to your life today?

9. Is there anything in this passage that seems unclear or that you need to further investigate (this would be a good time to consult a study Bible, cross-references, or a commentary)?

10. Using the truths found in this section of passage, write out a personal prayer expressing praise and thanksgiving to God, and asking Him for help to be a “doer” and not just a “hearer” of the Word.

Week Six Passage

Up, Make Us Gods

Exodus 32:1-7, 15-35

32 When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, “Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.” ² So Aaron said to them, “Take off the rings of gold that are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.” ³ So all the people took off the rings of gold that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. ⁴ And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf. And they said, “These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!” ⁵ When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, “Tomorrow shall be a feast to the Lord.” ⁶ And they rose up early the next day and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings. And the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.

⁷ And the Lord said to Moses, “Go down, for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. ⁸ They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them. They have made for themselves a golden calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!’”

¹⁵ Then Moses turned and went down from the mountain with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand, tablets that were written on both sides; on the front and on the back they were written. ¹⁶ The tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets. ¹⁷ When Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, “There is a noise of war in the camp.” ¹⁸ But he said, “It is not the sound of shouting for victory, or the sound of the cry of defeat, but the sound of singing that I hear.” ¹⁹ And as soon as he came near the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, Moses' anger burned hot, and he threw the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain. ²⁰ He took the calf that they had made and burned it with fire and ground it to powder and scattered it on the water and made the people of Israel drink it.

²¹ And Moses said to Aaron, “What did this people do to you that you have brought such a great sin upon them?” ²² And Aaron said, “Let not the anger of my lord burn hot. You know the people, that they are set on evil. ²³ For they said to me, ‘Make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of

Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’²⁴ So I said to them, ‘Let any who have gold take it off.’ So they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf.”

²⁵ And when Moses saw that the people had broken loose (for Aaron had let them break loose, to the derision of their enemies),²⁶ then Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, “Who is on the Lord's side? Come to me.” And all the sons of Levi gathered around him.²⁷ And he said to them, “Thus says the Lord God of Israel, ‘Put your sword on your side each of you, and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and each of you kill his brother and his companion and his neighbor.’”²⁸ And the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And that day about three thousand men of the people fell.²⁹ And Moses said, “Today you have been ordained for the service of the Lord, each one at the cost of his son and of his brother, so that he might bestow a blessing upon you this day.”

³⁰ The next day Moses said to the people, “You have sinned a great sin. And now I will go up to the Lord; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.”³¹ So Moses returned to the Lord and said, “Alas, this people has sinned a great sin. They have made for themselves gods of gold.³² But now, if you will forgive their sin—but if not, please blot me out of your book that you have written.”³³ But the Lord said to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against me, I will blot out of my book.³⁴ But now go, lead the people to the place about which I have spoken to you; behold, my angel shall go before you. Nevertheless, in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them.”³⁵ Then the Lord sent a plague on the people, because they made the calf, the one that Aaron made.

Week Six Questions

Up, Make Us Gods

1. In a sentence or two, how would you sum up what is taking place in this passage?
 2. What does God reveal about Himself in this passage? How might embracing this truth (or truths!) strengthen your relationship with Him?
 3. The Lord had shown Himself strong, faithful, kind, and present to the Israelites, yet when Moses delayed his return from the mountain, they grew impatient. What one thing did they desire which caused them to disobey the Lord?
 4. Can you imagine what underlying need they were seeking to have met? How did they go about meeting it?

5. What harm or hindrance did doing so create for them and others?

6. Read the following passages (and search for others, if you like). How does the Lord promise to meet that need for us?
 - a. Deuteronomy 4:31
 - b. Deuteronomy 31:8

7. In what ways do you identify with the Israelites? How does the truth contained in the passage apply to your life today?

8. Is there anything in this passage that seems unclear or that you need to further investigate (this would be a good time to consult a study Bible, cross-references, or a commentary)?

9. Using the truths found in this section of passage, write out a personal prayer expressing praise and thanksgiving to God, and asking Him for help to be a “doer” and not just a “hearer” of the Word.

Week Seven Passage

Will You Not Do It?

2 Kings 5:1-14

5 Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master and in high favor, because by him the Lord had given victory to Syria. He was a mighty man of valor, but he was a leper. ² Now the Syrians on one of their raids had carried off a little girl from the land of Israel, and she worked in the service of Naaman's wife. ³ She said to her mistress, "Would that my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." ⁴ So Naaman went in and told his lord, "Thus and so spoke the girl from the land of Israel." ⁵ And the king of Syria said, "Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel."

So he went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of clothing. ⁶ And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, "When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you Naaman my servant, that you may cure him of his leprosy." ⁷ And when the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Only consider, and see how he is seeking a quarrel with me."

⁸ But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent to the king, saying, "Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come now to me, that he may know that there is a prophet in Israel." ⁹ So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and stood at the door of Elisha's house. ¹⁰ And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean." ¹¹ But Naaman was angry and went away, saying, "Behold, I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call upon the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper. ¹² Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" So he turned and went away in a rage. ¹³ But his servants came near and said to him, "My father, it is a great word the prophet has spoken to you; will you not do it? Has he actually said to you, 'Wash, and be clean'?" ¹⁴ So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God, and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

Week Seven Questions

Will You Not Do It?

1. In a sentence or two, how would you sum up what is taking place in this passage?
 2. What does God reveal about Himself in this passage? How might embracing this truth (or truths!) strengthen your relationship with Him?
 3. Naaman was a man of great influence and prestige, but he was sick with an incurable disease. Verses 5-12 seem to indicate that, while he wanted to be healed, there was something he wanted more. What do his actions and attitude tell us about what he desired?
 4. Can you imagine what underlying need he was seeking to have met? How did he go about meeting it?

5. What harm or hindrance did doing so create for Naaman?

6. Read the following passages (and search for others, if you like). How does the Lord promise to meet that need for us?
 - a. Romans 8:17
 - b. Revelation 3:5

7. In what ways do you identify with the Naaman? How does the truth contained in the passage apply to your life today?

8. Is there anything in this passage that seems unclear or that you need to further investigate (this would be a good time to consult a study Bible, cross-references, or a commentary)?

9. Using the truths found in this passage, write out a personal prayer expressing praise and thanksgiving to God, and asking Him for help to be a “doer” and not just a “hearer” of the Word.

Week Eight Passage

As He Had Done Previously

Daniel 6

6 It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 satraps, to be throughout the whole kingdom; ² and over them three high officials, of whom Daniel was one, to whom these satraps should give account, so that the king might suffer no loss. ³ Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other high officials and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. ⁴ Then the high officials and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom, but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him. ⁵ Then these men said, “We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God.”

⁶ Then these high officials and satraps came by agreement to the king and said to him, “O King Darius, live forever! ⁷ All the high officials of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an injunction, that whoever makes petition to any god or man for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. ⁸ Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked.” ⁹ Therefore King Darius signed the document and injunction.

¹⁰ When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously. ¹¹ Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and plea before his God. ¹² Then they came near and said before the king, concerning the injunction, “O king! Did you not sign an injunction, that anyone who makes petition to any god or man within thirty days except to you, O King, shall be cast into the den of lions?” The king answered and said, “The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked.” ¹³ Then they answered and said before the king, “Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or the injunction you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day.”

¹⁴ Then the king, when he heard these words, was much distressed and set his mind to deliver Daniel. And he labored till the sun went down to rescue him. ¹⁵ Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, “Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or ordinance that the king establishes can be

changed."

¹⁶ Then the king commanded, and Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions. The king declared to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!" ¹⁷ And a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel.

¹⁸ Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no diversions were brought to him, and sleep fled from him.

¹⁹ Then, at break of day, the king arose and went in haste to the den of lions. ²⁰ As he came near to the den where Daniel was, he cried out in a tone of anguish. The king declared to Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?" ²¹ Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever! ²² My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm." ²³ Then the king was exceedingly glad, and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. ²⁴ And the king commanded, and those men who had maliciously accused Daniel were brought and cast into the den of lions—they, their children, and their wives. And before they reached the bottom of the den, the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces.

²⁵ Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: "Peace be multiplied to you. ²⁶ I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end. ²⁷ He delivers and rescues; he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, he who has saved Daniel from the power of the lions." ²⁸ So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

Week Seven Questions

As He Had Done Previously

1. In a sentence or two, how would you sum up what is taking place in this passage?
 2. What does God reveal about Himself in this passage? How might embracing this truth (or truths!) strengthen your relationship with Him?
 3. When the passage opens, we see that King Darius had plans to promote Daniel. Then, the other high officials and satraps conspire to not only stop his promotion but have him either betray God or be put to death. Even in light of all of that, the text tells us that Daniel just kept doing what he had always done – praying and giving thanks to the Lord, three times a day. What do his actions point to as the one thing he deeply desired, even more than power, promotion, or his safety?

4. Can you imagine what underlying need Daniel was seeking to have met? How did the Lord meet that need?
 5. What blessings and benefits does Daniel experience because of his heart position?
 6. In what ways do you identify with Daniel? How does the truth contained in the passage apply to your life today?
 7. Is there anything in this passage that seems unclear or that you need to further investigate (this would be a good time to consult a study Bible, cross-references, or a commentary)?

8. Using the truths found in this passage, write out a personal prayer expressing praise and thanksgiving to God, and asking Him for help to be a “doer” and not just a “hearer” of the Word.

Week Nine Passage

What Do I Still Lack?

Matthew 19:16-26

19 And behold, a man came up to him, saying, “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?” ¹⁷ And he said to him, “Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments.” ¹⁸ He said to him, “Which ones?” And Jesus said, “You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, ¹⁹ Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” ²⁰ The young man said to him, “All these I have kept. What do I still lack?” ²¹ Jesus said to him, “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” ²² When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

²³ And Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴ Again I tell you, 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.” ²⁵ When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, “Who then can be saved?” ²⁶ But Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.

Week Nine Questions

What Do I Still Lack?

1. In a sentence or two, how would you sum up what is taking place in this passage?
 2. What does God reveal about Himself in this passage? How might embracing this truth (or truths!) strengthen your relationship with Him?
 3. The Rich Young Ruler asked Jesus about how to gain eternal life. He had done well to keep all of the commandments. When he asked what he was lacking, the Lord told him to sell his possessions, give to the poor, and follow Him. The Ruler's countenance as he left Jesus reveals his heart position. What was the one thing the Rich Young Ruler desired more than the eternal life about which he had inquired?

4. We don't know for sure what happened to this man after his conversation with Jesus. But based on verses 23-24 what harm or hindrance can you imagine might've come from this man going away with an unchanged heart?
 5. In what ways do you identify with the Rich Young Ruler? How does the truth contained in the passage apply to your life today?
 6. Is there anything in this passage that seems unclear or that you need to further investigate (this would be a good time to consult a study Bible, cross-references, or a commentary)?
 7. Using the truths found in this passage, write out a personal prayer expressing praise and thanksgiving to God, and asking Him for help to be a "doer" and not just a "hearer" of the Word.

Week Ten Passage

One Thing Is Necessary

Luke 10:38-42

38 Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house.³⁹ And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching.⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me."⁴¹ But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things,⁴² but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."

Week Ten Questions

One Thing Is Necessary

1. In a sentence or two, how would you sum up what is taking place in this passage?
 2. What does God reveal about Himself in this passage? How might embracing this truth (or truths!) strengthen your relationship with Him?
 3. The text tells us that “Martha was distracted with much serving.” Even in the presence of God incarnate, she was anxious and troubled. What is the “one thing” the Lord tells her is necessary?
 4. What harm or hindrance did her preoccupation **serving** Jesus over **being** with Jesus create for her?

5. In what ways do you identify with Martha? How does the truth contained in the passage apply to your life today?
 6. Is there anything in this passage that seems unclear or that you need to further investigate (this would be a good time to consult a study Bible, cross-references, or a commentary)?
 7. Using the truths found in this passage, write out a personal prayer expressing praise and thanksgiving to God, and asking Him for help to be a “doer” and not just a “hearer” of the Word.

Week Eleven Passage

He Climbed Into A Tree

Luke 19:1-10

19 He entered Jericho and was passing through.² And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich.³ And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature.⁴ So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way.⁵ And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.”⁶ So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully.⁷ And when they saw it, they all grumbled, “He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.”⁸ And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.”⁹ And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham.¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

Week Eleven Questions

He Climbed Into A Tree

1. In a sentence or two, how would you sum up what is taking place in this passage?
 2. What does God reveal about Himself in this passage? How might embracing this truth (or truths!) strengthen your relationship with Him?
 3. As a tax collector, Zacchaeus had all of the riches and influence he could ever want. Yet, what do his actions reveal about the one thing he desired when Jesus came to Jericho?
 4. Can you imagine what underlying need he was seeking to have met? How does the Lord meet that need in the text?

5. What blessings and benefits do Zacchaeus and others experience because of his heart change?
 6. In what ways do you identify with Zacchaeus? How does the truth contained in the passage apply to your life today?
 7. Is there anything in this passage that seems unclear or that you need to further investigate (this would be a good time to consult a study Bible, cross-references, or a commentary)?
 8. Using the truths found in this passage, write out a personal prayer expressing praise and thanksgiving to God, and asking Him for help to be a “doer” and not just a “hearer” of the Word.

Week Twelve Passage

I Count it As Loss

Phillippians 3

3 Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you. ² Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. ³ For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh— ⁴ though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. ⁷ But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— ¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

¹² Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. ¹⁶ Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

¹⁷ Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. ¹⁸ For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. ²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Week Twelve Questions

I Count it As Loss

1. In a sentence or two, how would you sum up what is taking place in this passage?
 2. What does God reveal about Himself in this passage? How might embracing this truth (or truths!) strengthen your relationship with Him?
 3. Paul writes of the reasons for which he could have confidence in himself. Yet, he counted them as, what some translations refer to as “dung.” What was the one thing he deeply desired?
 4. Can you imagine what underlying need he was seeking to have met? How does the Lord meet that need?

5. What blessings and benefits do Paul and others experience because of his heart position?
 6. In what ways do you identify with Paul? How does the truth contained in the passage apply to your life today?
 7. Is there anything in this passage that seems unclear or that you need to further investigate (this would be a good time to consult a study Bible, cross-references, or a commentary)?
 8. Using the truths found in this passage, write out a personal prayer expressing praise and thanksgiving to God, and asking Him for help to be a “doer” and not just a “hearer” of the Word.

