



GREATER

OVERCOMING THE LESSER LIFE

WELCOME TO GREATER

I'm so glad you decided to join us on this journey of overcoming the lesser life and experiencing the greater life that is yours in Christ. This booklet will serve as a resource for you throughout the campaign.

The booklet consists of three major sections.

1. Weekend Message Notes
2. Weekday Devotional Readings
3. Small Group Discussion Guides

We encourage you to make use of all three! The weekend messages will cover the main topics of the campaign in a general sense. The weekly devotionals will tease out the main idea of the message using five different Scripture readings. The small group discussion guides will help you apply the main ideas of the week for personal growth & life transformation. We want you to fully benefit from the GREATER campaign and we think this will be a helpful tool in that regard.

TIMELINE FOR GREATER

APRIL 16TH

“Overcoming The Lesser Life” – Colossians 3:1-4

APRIL 23RD – APRIL 29TH

“Out With The Old” – Colossians 3:5-11

APRIL 30TH – MAY 6TH

“In With The New” – Colossians 3:12-17

MAY 7TH – MAY 13TH

“Greater Marriage” – Colossians 3:18-19

MAY 14TH – MAY 20TH

“Greater Parenting” – Colossians 3:20-21

MAY 21ST – MAY 27TH

“Greater Work” – Colossians 3:22-4:1

MAY 28TH – JUNE 3RD

“Greater Witness” – Colossians 4:2-6

Miss a Sunday? No worries. Catch up [online](#) or in the [app](#).

YOU MIGHT LIKE TO KNOW

All of the content for GREATER can be accessed through our Broadview smartphone app. Straight from the app you'll be able to access the weekly devotionals, discussion guides, small group teaching videos, & Sunday morning messages.

Download our app @ <http://broadview.church/app>

You can also find resources & information about GREATER on our website @ <http://broadview.church/greater>

If you're not able to make it to your small group or a weekend service, you can always catch up online or through the app.

We will have content distributed throughout the week on our social media platforms. There will be weekly devotional posts as well as testimonial videos from participants in the campaign. This is a great way to spread the word about GREATER as well as the things that God is doing through the campaign. Use the hashtag [#greaterbbc](#)

[Facebook.com/broadviewchurch](https://www.facebook.com/broadviewchurch)

[Instagram.com/broadviewchurch](https://www.instagram.com/broadviewchurch)

Lastly, if you happen to lose this booklet or wish to secure another one for a friend, we can print as many copies as is necessary through the church office. Just let us know! If you'd rather use a digital version, you can find it in the app.

FROM THE PASTOR

Let me just say personally how thankful I am that you've chosen to participate in this spiritual growth campaign. The staff has put in a lot of hard work to make this something that will help you grow. GREATER is a way for us to further our 2020 Vision to (1) Multiply Disciples & (2) Bless Our City.

I know this may be different than what you're used to as a small group. I appreciate your willingness to join the rest of our church in focusing on Colossians 3-4 for the rest of the spring. I believe we will hear from the Lord in a powerful way. It will be a special time in our life together as a church.

I'm hopeful that you'll receive help that is immediately practical to your daily life so that you can start winning at home, at work and in your most important relationships.

If you're reading this and haven't yet joined a group, please [find one today!](#) That's the only way you're going to fully benefit from what God has for us through this study. I'm looking forward to my own small group times during this season! We meet on Thursday nights (6:30) at my house (902 S Pioneer) if you're still looking for a group!

If you have any questions about anything just let me know!

Pastor Wes

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

COLOSSIANS 3:5-11

INTRODUCTION:

The main goal of the small group discussion this week is to identify behaviors & lifestyle patterns that undermine our ability to experience the GREATER life that is in Christ.

In the message, Pastor Wes talked about vices that undermine our relationship with God & vices that undermine our relationships with people. The following questions will help you identify those vices and explore ways of “putting off the old” so that you can then “put on the new.”

ICEBREAKER QUESTIONS: (OPTIONAL)

If you could change anything about yourself, what would it be? (physical, spiritual, emotional, etc.)

If you could change anything about anybody else what would it be and who would you change?

PLAY WEEK ONE VIDEO (10 MINUTES)

This video can be played all at once or paused after each section. After watching the video, use the discussion questions to encourage conversation. You don't have to ask every question. You can also ask your own.

DISCUSS:

1. How have you seen your relationship with God positively or negatively impact your relationships with others?
2. Look at the first group of vices in Colossians 3:5.
 - a. Which one stands out most to you?
 - b. Which do you struggle with most often?
 - c. How have you dealt with each of (or any of) these temptations in the past? (successfully or not)
3. Look at the second group of vices in Colossians 3:8-9a.
 - a. Which one stands out most to you?
 - b. Which do you struggle with most often?
 - c. How have you dealt with each of (or any of) these temptations in the past?
4. Colossians 3:10-11 speaks to the transformation brought about by the Gospel in our relationship with God, with ourselves and with other people.
 - a. Why is understanding this change in "status" so important if we want to change our "behaviors?"
 - b. How does this understanding help us deal with the sins listed in Colossians 3:5?
 - c. How does this understanding help us refrain from the relational sins listed in Colossians 3:8-9a?
5. In light of everything we've discussed so far, what are some practical changes you can make so that you "put off the old" in preparation for "putting on the new?"

DAILY DEVOTIONALS

APRIL 24TH – APRIL 28TH

This week the daily devotionals will cover select passages of Scripture that have to do with “putting off the old” in preparation for the new. While these passages aren’t the only ones in Scripture that address this idea, they do serve as a good start for further reflection and meditation.

Each devotional consists of three sections:

1. Key Passage
2. Key Thought
3. Application

The key passage is a selected passage of Scripture that will further explore the theme from Sunday’s message. The key thought will help to expound on the idea of the text. The application section will offer you an idea of how you can pray or apply the passage to your daily life.

These devotionals shouldn’t replace any current system you have for a daily devotional time. They may, however, supplement that time or serve as a kick-start if you don’t currently have a daily time with the Lord.

If you miss a few days, the devotionals are short enough for you to catch up on what you missed when you’re able to pick it back up. We hope you benefit from this resource!

DAY 1 – APRIL 24

KEY PASSAGE - 2 CORINTHIANS 3:12-18

“Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, [13] not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end.

[14] But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. [15] Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts.

[16] But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. [17] Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

[18] And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”

KEY THOUGHT – THE VEIL IS REMOVED

Go back and reread verses 16-17. It is most probable that Moses hid his face with a veil to protect the people. The peoples’ hardened hearts would not let them see God’s glory even reflected from Moses.

For them to have looked upon that reflected glory would have brought judgement because of their hardened hearts.

Today, when a person turns to the Lord, God gives them a new heart – a freedom from the veil. We are able with unveiled faces to look upon God’s glory in Jesus.

As we look, we are in a process of being changed *by* his glory into the likeness *of* his glory.

Away with the old. In with the new. The veil has been removed. The ministry of Moses was limited, impermanent, veiled & lacking transformative power. All of that has changed in Christ. His ministry is characterized by an all-surpassing, permanent, unveiled transformational glory that is mediated by the Holy Spirit.

Moses had an incredible encounter with the Lord. We have even more remarkable access through the Holy Spirit. This is all because of what Christ has done. He is the reason we can now behold the glory of the Lord and live the GREATER life.

You have unlimited access to the very presence of God through Christ. In Christ, you can be unashamedly bold as you go to him in prayer. Approach his throne of grace with confidence! In so doing, you will more and more experience his transformational work in your life. We are transformed into the image of his glory by experiencing that glory in our own lives. We are transformed by God's glory, for God's glory and into the image of God's glory, Jesus.

APPLICATION

Pray that the Spirit will help you put to death the old and yield to God's transforming work.

Consider any old habits or patterns of thinking that hinder you from seeing and savoring Jesus as you should.

Repent of those things and ask the Lord to help you see clearly the superiority and sweetness of Jesus in all things.

DAY 2 – APRIL 25

KEY PASSAGE - 2 CORINTHIANS 5:16-20

“From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. [17] Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. [18] All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; [19] that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. [20] Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

KEY THOUGHT – YOU ARE A NEW CREATION

This passage serves as a constant reminder of our new life in Christ - no matter how long we have been a Christian. It is an extreme makeover the Jesus way. It is out with the old.

Consider this story about Augustine, one of the early church fathers. Before Christ, he had a very sexually promiscuous lifestyle. Sometime after his salvation, a woman of his past ran into him. She called his name affectionately, but he began to walk away. She called after him, “Augustine, it is I.” He turned to her and said, “But it is not I. The old Augustine is dead and I am a new creature in Christ.”

Since we are a new creation in Christ, it is out with the old and in with the new. In Christ, everything has changed. The price has been paid. A great exchange has taken place.

He has taken on our sin and has given to us his perfect righteousness. We are, in a very literal sense, made new in every way. Our legal standing before God has shifted from that of unrighteousness to righteousness.

The status of our relationship with God has moved from conflict to reconciliation. We now have peace with God and can experience intimacy and communion with Him.

Our very being is transferred from death to life. We no longer fear physical death because we've been promised eternal life in Christ. We no longer belong to this world with all its brokenness. We belong to another world, another kingdom, the Kingdom of God.

As a new creation, God has given us new appetites. We have an increased appetite for righteousness & a decreased appetite for sin. We have a new power to resist sin & daily pursue a life of holiness.

Finally, our perspective is made new. We no longer focus on mere outward appearances. Now, we look to the heart. As God's ambassadors, we do all that we can to plead with others, "be reconciled to God!"

APPLICATION

Pray that the Spirit will enable you to put to death that which is earthly. Consider anything in your life that doesn't comport with your new-found identity in Christ.

Spend time thanking the Lord for the ways in which he has already transformed your attitude and actions so that you better reflect the Lord Jesus Christ to our world today.

DAY 3 – APRIL 26

KEY PASSAGE - ROMANS 6:1-14

[1] What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? [2] By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? [3] Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

[4] We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

[5] For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. [6] We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. [7] For one who has died has been set free from sin.

[8] Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. [9] We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. [10] For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God.

[11] So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. [12] Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. [13] Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

[14] For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

KEY THOUGHT

This passage tells us why Christians can be “out with the old.” The power of sin has been destroyed (verse 6). We do not have to continue to sin. Will it be easy? No.

As one Bible teacher said, “*we have to become in practice what we are in principle.*” Some things are easier said than done. Some Christians testify that when they got saved all their cravings were gone. Their “*wanter*” was changed and they didn’t desire things of the “*earthly nature.*” Thank God for those. But for most, we struggle.

Sometimes we resist. Sometimes we *assist* – does it mean we are not saved? No! It means we are not in practice what we are in principle. What do we do?

By faith we confess our sin. By faith we strive to close the gap between practice and principle. The imperatives in the passage are all present tense. We must continue by faith to reckon ourselves dead to sin. We must continue by faith to yield ourselves to God in obedience.

“Out with the old” is a lifelong struggle. By faith we must believe what the Word says. By faith we must rely on the Holy Spirit. By faith we must gather with the church in corporate worship and small groups. By faith we must be on mission with Jesus.

APPLICATION

Pray that God will give you faith to believe that “in Christ” the power of sin is broken & you can walk in newness of life. Give thanks to God that the penalty & power of sin in your life is broken. Share with someone your area of struggle.

DAY 4 – APRIL 27

KEY PASSAGE - COLOSSIANS 3:5-11

“Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. **6** On account of these the wrath of God is coming. **7** In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. **8** But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. **9** Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices **10** and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. **11** Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.”

KEY THOUGHT

The story is told that a Navajo Christian likened the Christian life to two dogs living inside him. One is black, full of greed, self, anger, laziness, lust, etc. The other one is white, full of love, joy, peace, etc. All the time these two dogs are fighting within him. Someone asked him, “Which one wins?” He answered, “The one I feed the most”.

The story is helpful. There are times we need to ask, “Why am I feeding lust? Why am I feeding anger?” Don’t feed the lower nature. Put it to *death*. Out with the old.

There are several things in this text that are “easy to feed.” Things like covetousness and anger can grow without us evening noticing. Suddenly we find ourselves secretly angry at our friends for having a nicer car than us. Maybe you silently rejoice when you see them get a scratch on it.

With anger, it's not always the visible outbursts that get us. Often times it is just the private thoughts of hostility towards those who have upset us.

As with covetousness, you may just silently rejoice when things don't go well in that person's life. The monster feeding those thoughts is anger. The longer you feed it, the bigger it grows. The bigger it grows the more damage it will do. All the while, you're undermining your ability to enjoy the GREATER life that is in Christ.

Paul says our old self is put off as we renew our minds in knowledge. Spending daily time in God's Word will expose this silent enemies in our hearts. The Word of God is like a doctor's scalpel. It can carefully peel back what needs to be peeled back so that the right kind of surgery can take place.

APPLICATION

Read this passage again and write down the one or two words that really stick out to you. Ask yourself why these words are so significant. Write down anything that comes to mind. _____

Pray that God will keep you from rationalizing/justifying your sin. Pray that your heart doesn't deceive you by putting a good face on evil.

What in your "lower nature" needs to be put to death? Name it. Confess it. Put a concrete example around it.

Pray that God would give you the wisdom to know what to change & the courage to do what is necessary.

DAY 5 – APRIL 28

KEY PASSAGE - PSALM 51

[1] Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. [2] Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! [3] For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

[4] Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. [5] Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

[6] Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart. [7] Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. [8] Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice.

[9] Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. [10] Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. [11] Cast me not away from your presence, & take not your Holy Spirit from me.

[12] Restore to me the joy of your salvation, & uphold me with a willing spirit. [13] Then I will teach transgressors your ways, & sinners will return to you. [14] Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation. My tongue will sing aloud your righteousness.

[15] O Lord, open my lips, & my mouth will declare your praise. [16] For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. [17] The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken & contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

[18] Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; build up the walls of Jerusalem; [19] then will you delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings & whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on your altar."

KEY THOUGHT

“Create within me a pure heart, O God...”

The story of King David, his adulterous affair with Bathsheba and the cover-up murder of her husband, Uriah, can be found in 2 Samuel 11-12. Psalm 51 is David’s prayer of confession.

Nathan the prophet confronted him with the words, “Thou art the man.” David then came clean and said, “I have sinned against the Lord” (II Samuel 12:13). At some juncture David expounded on his confession with Psalm 51.

There is much to be learned by studying it. But David realized the problem was the heart. To be out with the old, there had to be a “new heart and a right spirit.”

May the Holy Spirit confront us with the sins of our earthly nature and may we pray “create within me a pure heart.”

APPLICATION

Pray for conviction of sin and grace to confess and repent. Consider opening up to someone else whom you can trust about the sin in your life.

Guilt & shame thrive in isolation & secrecy. Break the power of sin by bringing it into the light. When we confess our sin, God is faithful & just to forgive us our sins & cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

Consider forgiving someone who has approached you in a spirit of humility & contrition. Knowing God’s forgiveness towards you, will you work towards forgiving them?

MESSAGE NOTES

APRIL 30TH

"IN WITH THE NEW"
COLOSSIANS 3:12-17

"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, [13] bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. [14] And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. [15] And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. [16] Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. [17] And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

NOTES:

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

COLOSSIANS 3:12-17

INTRODUCTION:

The main goal of discussion this week is to identify virtues & lifestyle patterns that will encourage & facilitate our ability to experience the GREATER life in Christ.

Last week was all about putting off the old. This week is about putting on the "new." Walking in obedience to what Paul lays out in Colossians 3:12-17 paves the way for experiencing the GREATER life in your family, at your workplace and in every other relationship.

You can't grow into who God wants you to become unless you're connected relationally. This passage gives practical instruction on how to flourish in all of your relationships but especially those relationships within the church.

ICEBREAKER QUESTIONS: (OPTIONAL)

How have your "church relationships" impacted your life?

PLAY WEEK ONE VIDEO (10 MINUTES)

Remember: you don't have to watch the entire video all at once. Neither must you ask every question. You may want to create your own or only ask one or two. You decide!

DISCUSS:

1. Paul mentions three different “status changes” in 3:12. Why does he do that and why is it important?
2. Look at the virtues listed in Colossians 3:12-14.
 - a. Which one stands out most to you? Why?
 - b. Which one do you struggle with most? Why?
 - c. Which one comes most naturally? Why?
3. Colossians 3:16 encourages longsuffering & forgiveness.
 - a. Why does reflecting on the forgiveness we *receive* in Christ help us *give* forgiveness to others?
 - b. Share a time when you forgave someone without feeling very forgiving. What was that like? Why was it important for you to do?
 - c. God’s forgiveness is *undeserved* & *inexhaustible*. Which one is hardest for you when you forgive?
4. Love is the most-important & all-sustaining virtue of the GREATER life. Discuss the difference between culture’s definition of love and a biblical definition (1 Cor 13:4-8a.)
5. Discuss life rhythms or disciplines that best position you to let the “peace of Christ rule” and/or the “Word of Christ dwell” in your heart. (ones you’ve already done successfully or ones you plan to do eventually)
6. The rest of the GREATER campaign will look at four key relationships: husband & wife, parent & child, employees & supervisors, believers & unbelievers. Discuss how the teaching thus far speaks to all four. (week 1 then week 2)

DAILY DEVOTIONALS

MAY 1ST – MAY 5TH

This week the daily devotionals will cover select passages of Scripture that have to do with “putting on the new” so that we’re able to experience the GREATER life that is in Christ.

Each devotional consists of three sections:

1. Key Passage
2. Key Thought
3. Application

The key passage is a selected passage of Scripture that will further explore the theme from Sunday’s message. The key thought will help to expound on the idea of the text. The application section will offer you an idea of how you can pray or apply the passage to your daily life.

Remember, these devotionals aren’t meant to replace any current system you have in place. They may, however, add to what you’re already doing or help you start a system if one is not currently in place. We recommend that you spend at least 5-7 minutes of unhurried undistracted time with the Lord using this tool (anytime throughout your day.)

If you miss a few days, the devotionals are short enough for you to catch up! Be sure & use this resource so that you fully benefit from what God wants to do!

DAY 6 – MAY 1

KEY PASSAGE – ROMANS 8:28-39

“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. [29] For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

[30] And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

[31] What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? [32] He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

[33] Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. [34] Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

[35] Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? [36] As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

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

KEY THOUGHT – WHO CAN STAND AGAINST US?

Romans 8 is sometimes referred to as the greatest chapter in the greatest letter in the greatest book ever written. Romans 8:30 is known as the “golden chain.” It’s a glorious reminder of who we are in Christ and God’s faithfulness to do as He has promised.

So many benefits of the Gospel are put on display in this chapter. Chief among them is the security of the believer in the love of God. Having confidence that you are loved by God is key to experiencing the GREATER life. This truth will calm your heart when you’re anxious and anchor your soul when you suffer. You are a beloved child of God!

The logic of Romans 8 is that should we ever find ourselves doubting God’s love, all we need to do is look back to the cross. That’s the idea behind Paul’s 7 rhetorical questions in 8:31-35. If God has given us Christ, the ultimate treasure of heaven, how will He not also with Christ give us everything else we need. No one will frustrate or counteract the eternal purposes of God. Be encouraged that you stand secure in Christ. Nothing & no one can ever take that away from you.

APPLICATION

When do you most doubt God’s love? Are you anxious right now? What is causing your anxiety? Remind yourself that “that thing” isn’t greater than God’s love for you in Christ.

Give thanks to God for his love towards you in Christ. Pray *that* He will give you peace amid your trial. Pray *until* he confirms His love for you in your heart. *Listen* to a song about God’s love for you in Christ.

DAY 7 – MAY 2

KEY PASSAGE – EPHESIANS 4:1-6

“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, [2] with all humility & gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, [3] eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

[4] There is one body & one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—[5] one Lord, one faith, one baptism, [6] one God & Father of all, who is over all & through all & in all.” (Ephesians 4:1-6)

KEY THOUGHT – YOU ARE A NEW CREATION

In yesterday’s devotional we focused on the love of God. Confidence in God’s love is key to living the GREATER life. Paul reminded the Ephesians of the same thing after giving them a similar kind of instruction as he did the Colossians. We best imitate God when we walk as beloved children.

In Ephesians 4:1-6 Paul lists 4 relational virtues that maintain the bond of peace: humility, gentleness, patience and long-suffering. These virtues are all included in Paul’s definition of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a. How many relational problems would be avoided if we did *just* these four things?

After describing practical ways to maintain peace he gives 7 truths on which unity in the church is built. (1) We are 1 body. (2) We have 1 Spirit. (3) We have 1 hope. (4) We have 1 Lord. (5) We have 1 faith. (6) We have 1 baptism. (7) We have one God & Father of all. Our unity isn’t watered down or trivial. It’s built upon these unchanging Gospel truths.

As with the Colossians, Paul reminds the Ephesians of their status before giving them pathways of obedience. Our obedience doesn't *create* our holy status. It does, however *reflect* that status to others. Through our obedience we honor God & bless those whom he has put in our life.

APPLICATION

Why do you live a holy life? Why do you choose to obey the teachings and commands of Jesus? Is it so that God will love you or is it because you're already confident in the love of God towards you?

Seriously examine your heart in this area. Pray that God would give you a heart that obeys out of delight instead of duty; out of confidence in God's love instead of fear of his condemnation.

Locate 2 or 3 areas in your life where you're struggling to obey God. (this could be an area of worry, some relational sin, financial irresponsibility or an addiction of some sort) Apply the truth of the Gospel to this area. In what way are you failing to believe your "change in status?"

Reflect again on the 4 relational virtues of Ephesians 4:2. Pray that God would increase your capacity to demonstrate love in these ways. Identify 1-2 people in your life with whom you need to exercise humility, gentleness, patience & long-suffering. Pray that God would give you grace to act this way towards those individuals.

If these individuals are members of our church, consider blessing them this week by writing a letter or giving them a phone call. Act out what God leads you to do in this time.

DAY 8 – MAY 3

KEY PASSAGES – 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-8A ROMANS 12:9-18

“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant [5] or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; [6] it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. [7] Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. [8] Love never ends...” (1 Corinthians 13:4-8a)

“Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. [10] Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

[11] Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. [12] Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. [13] Contribute to the needs of the saints & seek to show hospitality. [14] Bless those who persecute you; bless & do not curse them. [15] Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. [16] Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.

[17] Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. [18] If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.” (Romans 12:9-18)

KEY THOUGHT

Both of these passages were written by the Apostle Paul and both passages are sandwiched between teaching on spiritual gifts & believers doing life together in the local church. Paul rarely talked about one without the other. Love is essential if the body of Christ is going to work rightly.

Gifts of the Spirit don't accomplish their purpose without the fruit of the Spirit. The fruit that empowers a Spirit-filled life is love. Love for God, love for other Christians, and love for the world is the defining mark of a disciple of Jesus. In this passage, Paul is especially concerned with love between fellow Christians. Without it, the church won't function.

As we seek to grow in love, we must always keep Christ's saving work in clear view. Reflect on Paul's definition of love in 1 Corinthians 13. You can immediately see the supreme demonstration of such love at the cross of Christ. Scripture consistently treats the death & resurrection of Jesus as the ultimate demonstration of love. (John 3:16, 15:12-13; Rom 5:8; Gal 2:20; Eph 2:4-7; 5:2, 25; 1 John 3:16; 4:9-10)

God's love for us motivates & empowers our love for Him, other Christians and the unreached peoples of the world. Wherever the Gospel goes, it bears the fruit of faith, hope & love. The greatest of these is love. (This idea is worked out practically in Romans 12:9-21.)

Sincere love displays itself visibly by pursuing the good and elevating others. Even in the most difficult of circumstances, love finds a way. It is always open handed & open hearted.

APPLICATION

What if those closest to you had to honestly testify to how well you've loved them? What would they say? Why?

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a and replace the word love with Jesus. Worship Jesus for his great love towards you. Now read your name in place of the word love. How & with whom can you demonstrate these things today?

DAY 9 – MAY 4

KEY PASSAGE – PHILIPPIANS 4:2-8

"I entreat Euodia & I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. [3] Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement & the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. [4] Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. [5] Let your reasonableness be known to everyone.

The Lord is at hand; [6] do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. [7] And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

[8] Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

KEY THOUGHT

Philippians is a wonderful letter that displays the kind of Christian unity that Paul encouraged at Colossae. In this passage we see that there was a disagreement between two women in the church: Euodia & Synthyche. Evidently, the division between them was a needless one and was causing needless damage to the local church in Philippi.

Divisions in the local church undermine what God wants to display through His church. Acts of pride & self-preservation work against things like humility and sacrificial service.

The pathway to encouraging agreement in the Gospel is to rejoice in God's presence. The disagreement at Philippi was evidentially causing some to worry. Perhaps this anxiety was part of why the disagreement started in the first place.

That's why Paul encourages them to take their eyes off the problem, off their disagreements & onto the Lord. The word translated "reasonableness" in 4:5 is actually the word "gentleness." We're able to be reasonable with one another when we remember that God is with us & is in control.

In exchange for their anxiety they were to pray, give thanks & receive God's peace. Absent these things, fellowship with other believers can devolve into discord & discouragement. Relational division and unappeased anxiety will rob a faith family of joy in the Gospel.

APPLICATION

Are you worried about anything? Is there relational discord between you & another Christian? What's at the root of the problem? Write down as many things as come to mind.

Now pray. Pray about everything you wrote down. It might be people, places, things, culture, or circumstances outside your control. Pray about every little detail.

Afterwards, spend some time thinking about everything that is good in your life... every blessing, especially spiritual blessings that are true of you in the Gospel. Write it down.

Thank God for these things. Write a thank you note or text to someone or for something. Encourage a friend who you think is a good example of what Paul describes in this text.

DAY 10 – MAY 5

KEY PASSAGE – EPHESIANS 4:25-5:2

“[25] Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. [26] Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, [27] and give no opportunity to the devil. [28] Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

[29] Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. [30] And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

[31] Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. [32] Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

[1] Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. [2] And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering & sacrifice to God.”

(Ephesians 4:25-5:2)

KEY THOUGHT

Ephesians 4:25-5:2 may feel like a random assortment of moral exhortations but it isn't. It's actually a carefully put together list that address five key areas of life. Each topic contrasts two ways of living. Just like he did in Colossians 3:5-17, Paul is encouraging them to “put off the old and put on the new.” The motivation for why is in Ephesians 5:1-2.

The 1st choice is between telling the truth or lying. (4:25)
The 2nd choice is between sinful anger or righteous anger (4:26-27.) The 3rd choice is between stealing or working hard (4:28.) The 4th choice is between rotten or wholesome talk (4:29-30) and the 5th is between bitterness or compassion (4:31-32). In each case, the motivation matters.

Christians don't do these things just because "God said." They pursue holiness for the good of others (4:25, 28-29), to maintain intimacy with the Holy Spirit (4:30) and in imitation of and appreciation for God's work in Christ (4:32; 5:1-2.) In other words, it's a "Gospel motivated obedience."

Hopefully, you've seen this kind of obedience show up as a recurring theme in all the devotionals this week. This is what paves the way to experiencing the GREATER life.

APPLICATION

Think over the five areas mentioned in this passage. Ask God to search you and see if there be any "unclean way." Have you been less than truthful with someone? Repent and make it right. Did you let anger cause you to sin? Apologize.

Are you taking any shortcuts at work or at home? Repent. Do what's necessary to make it right. Was there any time this past week when your speech was unhelpful or ungodly? Apologize. Use this week to intentionally build someone up.

Are you still harboring bitterness in your heart towards someone? Identify an area of your life for which you're most grateful for God's forgiveness. Thank him. Pray that He help you release this other person. Write them a letter. Send it if you're able. If not, just hold on to it until you are.

MESSAGE NOTES

MAY 7TH

"GREATER MARRIAGE"

COLOSSIANS 3:18-19; EPHESIANS 5:22-33

"Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. [19] Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them."

"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. [23] For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. [24] Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

[25] Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, [26] that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, [27] so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. [28] In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies.

He who loves his wife loves himself. [29] For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, [30] because we are members of his body. [31] "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." [32] This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. [33] However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband."

NOTES:

LIST THREE WAYS YOU CAN APPLY TODAY'S MESSAGE TO YOUR DAILY LIFE:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

COLOSSIANS 3:18-19

INTRODUCTION:

We all approach marriage with a mental picture of how it is going to be. Even if you are single you have already begun to imagine what marriage should look like.

"She will meet my needs. He will meet my desires. She will take care of the household. He will be my 'Mr. fix it.'"

These are just a few of the many expectations we bring into our marriages. The problem is when we only focus on the benefits we'll receive. That's in direct contradiction to God's vision for marriage. Today's discussion will focus on a Christian vision for marriage and offer some practical help to bring it about.

ICEBREAKER QUESTIONS: (OPTIONAL)

If you could give one piece of advice to a married person, what would it be? Why would you say that?

PLAY WEEK THREE VIDEO (10 MINUTES)

This video can be played all at once or paused after each section. After watching the video, use the discussion questions to encourage conversation. You don't have to ask every question. You can also ask your own.

DISCUSS:

1. What were the expectations that you had going into marriage? Have they changed since? If single, what mental pictures do you have of a good marriage? Why?
2. Ladies, when you hear the word submit, what first comes to your mind? What does Paul mean in our passage? What does he NOT mean by submission? Why do some think of submission as a negative thing?
3. What does it mean to submit "as is fitting in the Lord?" Does this change your view of submission? How should this phrase shape our view of submission?
4. Men, what comes to your mind when you hear the word love? How is it that you most effectively share love? Ladies, if love were a language, with which dialect do you connect most naturally? Why is that?
5. How are husbands harsh with their wives? (intentionally or unintentionally) Read 1 Peter 3:7. How does this verse add to Paul's teaching in Colossians & Ephesians? What pathway should men take to get "understanding?"
6. Pastor Wes talked about some tangible ways that husbands and wives can serve one another. Which one stood out most to you? Why was that?
7. Share 2-3 ways that you can show love & appreciation to God by serving your spouse this week.

DAILY DEVOTIONALS

MAY 8TH – MAY 13TH

This week the daily devotionals cover passages of Scripture that help you experience the GREATER life in marriage. If you're married, consider doing these with your spouse. Or, consider talking with one another concerning what the Lord has shown you during the devotional times at the end of the week. If you're single, you'll still benefit greatly from these devotional times on the theme of love and marriage.

Each devotional consists of three sections:

1. Key Passage
2. Key Thought
3. Application

By now, you know how each section is to be used. Remember, these devotionals aren't meant to supplant or replace your current devotional time. They may, however, be a great start if you don't currently have a system of spending daily time with the Lord.

If you miss a few days, the devotionals are short enough for you to catch up on what you missed when you're able to pick it back up. If you don't currently pray with your spouse on a regular basis, consider doing so over these next five days. It could start a wonderful habit between you.

DAY 11 – MAY 8

KEY PASSAGE – GENESIS 2:18-25

“Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” [19] Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. [20] The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.

[21] So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. [22] And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. [23] Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”

[24] Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. [25] And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.”

KEY THOUGHT – THE FOUNDATION OF MARRIAGE

This passage gives us the foundation for marriage. It reveals several things. First, marriage has a divine origin. God created man and woman. Genesis 1:27 says “male & female he created them.” Our key passage today says that God created the woman to complement the man. After that, the LORD brought the woman to the man. He was his initiative and design. The Lord created marriage.

Secondly, marriage is an exclusive union. The key passage uses the words leaving and cleaving. A man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife. The two shall become one flesh.

Lastly, marriage is a lasting union. For anyone who thought otherwise, Jesus made it plain in Matthew 19:6. After quoting Genesis 2:24 he said, *“What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”*

Every marriage writes its own story in light of these realities. The key to a successful marriage is coming to that realization early on and living in such a way that your story together brings glory to God.

APPLICATION

If you are married, pray that God will help you build your marriage on this foundation. Pray that your marriage would be God-centered, exclusive, & life-long. If you're single, pray your future marriage will be like this.

What kind of story is your marriage writing right now?

If your marriage was used by the Lord to show others the truth of the Gospel, what would it communicate?

Write down three to four goals that you'd like your marriage to reach within the next five years. Pray that the Lord would make that possible and share these with your spouse.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

DAY 12 – MAY 9

KEY PASSAGE – GENESIS 1:26-2:25

“Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea & the birds of the heavens & over the livestock & over all the earth & over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male & female he created them. And God blessed them. God said to them, “Be fruitful & multiply & fill the earth & subdue it, & have dominion over the fish of the sea & over the birds of the heavens & over every living thing that moves on the earth.” (Genesis 1:26-28)

“Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. [20] The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.”

So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”

Therefore a man shall leave his father & his mother & hold fast to his wife, & they shall become one flesh. And the man & his wife were both naked & were not ashamed.”

(Genesis 2:18-25)

KEY THOUGHT – THE PURPOSES OF MARRIAGE

Yesterday we considered the foundation for marriage. Now let's think about three different purposes for marriage. First, companionship. God saw that it was "not good for the man to be alone." He let Adam look for companionship among the animals but he didn't find anything to fulfill his need for companionship. So, God created woman. He brought her to the man. The two become one – companions.

The second purpose of marriage is procreation. In 1:28 God says, "Be fruitful & multiply." Marriage is uniquely capable of providing a context in which children can be raised. As husband and wife become one, children are given a safe and righteous setting in which they can flourish.

The third purpose is sexual fulfillment. This is implied in Gen 1-2. It is stated explicitly in 1 Corinthians 7:1-6. Sex is like fire and marriage a fireplace. Fire inside the fire place can keep the whole house warm. Outside the fireplace, it'll burn the whole house down. The fulfillment sex gives is only fully and properly experienced in marriage.

APPLICATION

If you're married, pray that God would make you and your spouse "one." Is there anything that you're doing to hinder God's design that you be one? Repent. Confess that to someone you can trust. Serve your spouse so that the two of you can experience what God wants you to experience.

If you're single but plan to be married, pray that God would enable you to remain pure until your marriage. Pray that the purposes of marriage all be fulfilled in your future union.

DAY 13 – MAY 10

KEY PASSAGE – 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-8^A

“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.”
(1 Corinthians 13:4-8a)

KEY THOUGHT – THE FUEL FOR MARRIAGE

This passage is a favorite to be read at weddings and like occasions. Rightfully so. It describes the kind of love that will make a marriage flourish. Love, as defined by our culture, is “feeling-based, sex-laced & self-centered.” This kind of love will undermine God’s purposes for marriage, turn it toxic & eventually bring it to an end.

Christian love is self-giving, not self-centered. It finds its source in God because God is love. This kind of love gives freely that which will benefit the beloved, even at personal cost to the lover. This kind of love was modeled for us at the cross. “For God so loved the world that he gave his one & only son...” (John 3:15) He gave what was most precious to Him so that we might be enriched - have eternal life.

According to this passage, it doesn’t matter how gifted, influential, successful or generous we are. Without love, it’s all meaningless. Our key passage reminds us that love isn’t always a “feeling.” Most often, love is a choice. Love “does.” Love is a verb. Love chooses “to do” & “not to do.” (this passage mentions 8 “not to do’s” & 7 “to do’s.”)

Love does not envy, boast, insist on its own way or rejoice at wrong-doing. It isn't arrogant, rude, irritable or resentful. Love is patient, kind, & rejoices in the truth. Love bears, believes, hopes & endures all things. Love never ends.

Each of these attributes is worthy of our attention and examination. How do you stack up against this definition of love? Do you find yourself practicing what love does & restraining yourself from what love doesn't do?

APPLICATION

Read the paragraph at the top of this page one more time. Honestly ask yourself where you're deficient when it comes to love. Write down the attribute that you believe is most absent from your life. _____.

Whatever you wrote down, think of how God demonstrated that kind of love towards you in Christ. Think of a practical instance when God showed you that kind of love in the past 12 months. Were you deserving of that at the time? Spend time thanking Him for his love towards you in that way.

Now, write down the attribute of love you most need to demonstrate (to spouse, to child, etc) _____. Consider a concrete way you can show that kind of love this week. Pray for God to open your eyes to possibilities if you're having a tough time. Ask God to open the right kind of door so that you can show love in that way.

Lastly, go back through the paragraph at the top of this page & think over how God has loved you in Christ in each of those ways. Give him thanks for his great love. Tonight, ask your spouse how you could love them better.

DAY 14 – MAY 11

KEY PASSAGE – 1 PETER 3:1-7

“Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, [2] when they see your respectful and pure conduct. [3] Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—[4] but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. [5] For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, [6] as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.

[7] Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.”

KEY THOUGHT

Today's passage has more instruction given to women than to men but the exhortations are equally important. 1 Peter was written to a group of Christians who were suffering. The general thrust of the letter is how we should apply the truth of the Gospel to our suffering.

We probably don't like thinking of marriage as a context in which we suffer but it is. What does it look like to apply the Gospel to your suffering in marriage? That's what our key passage seeks to answer for both husbands and wives.

You might think of your marriage as “God’s fitness center.” It will refine your faith so that it brings praise and glory to Jesus Christ. Don’t get bogged down into finger-pointing. It’s tough. Everybody suffers. Remember this:

- 1) Marriage is a place to live out & display the Gospel.
- 2) Marriage is a place for both partners to grow in grace.

Wives may find themselves married to someone who isn’t a Christian. By their conduct, they are to seek to win their husband. Like most successful approaches to evangelism, the way to persuade isn’t through nagging or guilt-tripping. It’s through a humble and respectful spirit of love.

Husbands are to honor their wives and live with them in an understanding way. (lit. according to knowledge.) Any spirit of superiority in the heart of a Christian man is groundless. Husbands and wives serve one another in love. Service may look different but in every case it’s done out of submission to Lord Jesus and love for the other.

APPLICATION

Wives are encouraged to be respectful, gentle, and pure in their attitude towards their husbands. If a lady, how have you been doing in this area? What needs to change? If a man, how can you encourage your spouse in these things?

Husbands are to honor & understand their wives. If a man, do you honor your spouse or demonstrate a spirit of superiority? Do you feel like you adequately “know” your wife? How could you get to know her better? If a lady, how can you help your husband succeed in knowing you better? Pray that the Lord would help you in serving each other.

DAY 15 – MAY 12

KEY PASSAGE – EPHESIANS 5:22-33

“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. [23] For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. [24] Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

[25] Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church & gave himself up for her, [26] that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, [27] so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy & without blemish. [28] In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. [29] For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes & cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, [30] because we are members of his body. [31] “Therefore a man shall leave his father & mother and hold fast to his wife, & the two shall become one flesh.” [32] This mystery is profound, & I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. [33] However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”

KEY THOUGHT

Verse 33 of this foundational passage on marriage is one of the most practical. Dr. Emerson Eggerichs has written a best-selling book based on this verse entitled “Love & Respect.” The thesis of the book is that men have a hard-wired craving for respect whereas women have a hard-wired craving for love/affection. When we fight, or feel dissatisfied in our marriages, it usually boils down to 1 of those 2 things.

Just as yesterday's key text gave more instruction to wives, today's key text gives more instruction to the husband. The love that husbands are to give to their wives is modeled after the love that Christ gave to the church. The submission that wives demonstrate towards their husbands is modeled after the submission that the church gives to Christ.

Many couples have struggled with the teaching in this text because they think it's unreasonable or overly one sided. If, however, we were to apply just this one passage to our marriages, it would radically change our marriage forever.

APPLICATION

The only way to serve your spouse in light of this teaching is if you're doing so with the right motivation. Obedience in this area is never done firstly for the sake of the spouse. It's always done for the sake of the Lord.

How much of your thinking/acting towards your spouse is shaped by the fact that GOD has called you to these things? Spend some time reorienting yourself to that truth.

You know your spouse. If a man, what concrete display of love & affection does she most need to receive from you? Write it down. _____ Spend some time praying for God's help to give it.

If you're a woman, what concrete display of respect does your husband need most? Write it down. _____ Pray for God's help to give it.

Single/married: what about you is most likely to undermine the hard-wired craving of your (future) spouse? Pray for God's help to be able to serve your (future) spouse well.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

COLOSSIANS 3:20-21

INTRODUCTION:

Today's discussion revolves around becoming GREATER in our parenting. What does it look like to raise children God's way? Teaching on this subject doesn't just apply to moms & dads. It applies to grandparents, foster parents, mentors or anyone has any kind of authority over a child.

Nobody wants their kids to grow up and hate God. Most everyone would agree that they want to raise godly kids. The problem is they just don't know how. The discussion today won't answer every question in this arena but it will remind you that you're not alone. It should also give you a starting place for moving forward from where you are.

ICEBREAKER QUESTIONS: (OPTIONAL)

In what kind of household did you grow up? Traditional or non-traditional? Strict or flexible? Good or bad?

PLAY WEEK THREE VIDEO (10 MINUTES)

This video can be played all at once or it can be paused after each section. After watching the video, you can use the discussion questions to encourage conversation. You don't have to ask every question. You can also ask your own.

DISCUSS:

1. How has the way your parents raised you influenced the way you raise your kids? What are the similarities and differences? Why do you think that is?
2. What's the hardest part of parenting and why?
3. God commands children to obey their parents. Why is this so important?
4. There's a correlation between the obedience of children and an effort by parents to not treat them harshly. How have you seen this play out in your experience?
5. How do you encourage your children to obey from their heart? Why is behavior modification not enough? Share any tips or tricks you've learned for each age or season.
6. The teaching in Col 3:20-21 stems from Paul's general advice about relationships in Colossians 3:12-17. With that in mind, consider some of the following questions.
 - a. How does reflecting on our Heavenly Father's love towards us shape the way we parent our kids?
 - b. Discuss a time when you showed grace to your kids.
 - c. Discuss a time when you showed mercy to them.
 - d. Discuss a time when you had to ask for forgiveness or a time when you had to forgive them.
7. What are 1-2 ways you can encourage & speak life into your kids this week? (If childless, then apply this question to any influence you have over any kids in your life.)

DAILY DEVOTIONALS

MAY 15TH – MAY 19TH

This week the daily devotionals will cover select passages of Scripture that have to do with “putting on the new” so that we’re best positioned to experience the GREATER life that is in Christ.

Each devotional consists of three sections:

4. Key Passage
5. Key Thought
6. Application

The key passage is a selected passage of Scripture that will further explore the theme from Sunday’s message. The key thought will help to expound on the idea of the text. The application section will offer you an idea of how you can pray or apply the passage to your daily life.

These devotionals aren’t meant to supplant or replace any current system you have in place for a daily devotional time. They may, however, be a great start if you don’t currently have a system of spending daily time with the Lord.

If you miss a few days, the devotionals are short enough for you to catch up on what you missed when you’re able to pick it back up. We hope you benefit from this resource!

DAY 16 – MAY 15

KEY PASSAGE – JOHN 8:2-11; MATTHEW 21:12-13

“Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them. [3] The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst [4] they said to him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. [5] Now in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?” [6] This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. [7] And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.” [8] And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. [9] But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. [10] Jesus stood up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” [11] She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”]] (ESV)”

“And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. [13] He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.” (Matthew 21:12=13)

KEY THOUGHT – STRIKING A BALANCE

Ecclesiastes 3:1 says, “For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven.” As you may have noticed, many times in Scripture it is about balance.

Its not all one end of the spectrum or the other. There is a time for each. Think about Jesus, he didn't always have the same response to wrongdoing. He defended the adulterous women from being stoned to death but he flipped the tables over in the temple with righteous anger. How God calls us to parent is no exception.

We're called to give our kids structure & nurture. Structure includes correcting, rules, routines, discipline, etc. Nurture includes meeting physical/emotional needs, spontaneity, fun, etc. Children need their parents to give both. There needs to be a balance in order for them to thrive.

Usually one or the other comes to us more easily and/or we feel is more important. The good news is that it's up to you what you raise & lower to make them balance. If you are high on structure you can raise nurture to meet your level of structure. If you are high on nurture then you can raise your structure to meet nurture. Just remember that you need a fair share of each in your parenting.

APPLICATION

Assess yourself. Are you unbalanced in structure & nurture in your parenting? In which do you tend to be higher/lower? Which one do you plan to raise/lower to be more balanced? Think about/try specific ways to strike a better balance.

Ask God to reveal to you what he wants you to change so that you can be more balanced.

Come up with a specific short prayer you can pray in parenting moments that will help you to remember to have a balance of both structure and nurture.

DAY 17 – MAY 16

KEY PASSAGE – GAL 5:22-23; MAT 5:37; EPH 4:31

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

“Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.’ [34] But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, [35] or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. [36] And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. [37] Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil.” (Matthew 5:33-37)

“Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.” (Ephesians 4:31)

KEY THOUGHT – CORRECTING YOUR CHILD

Usually, the 1st thing to come to mind when we think of parenting is correcting/disciplining our children. To be fair, this does take up a lot of our parenting time because well, we are all sinners, kids included! If correcting plays such a big role in parenting, we need to make sure that the ways we do it line up with Biblical principles.

Here are a few things to remember when correcting. **Be direct** by responding immediately to the behavior and not just yelling instructions across the room.

Go to your child to correct them so it is clear. Make sure to **follow through** with the consequences or discipline you have decided on.

Be **consistent** to do these things not just in one instance, but in every instance. This is what really helps your child to learn the expected behavior over time.

Have **self-control** while correcting. Keep your emotions in check - not losing control by yelling, punishing, giving in by feeling guilty your child is unhappy, or being apathetic. Your tone should be firm & neutral, aimed at the behavior, not the child (not sarcastic, disrespectful, overly agreeable or amusing).

Lastly, don't **just teach what is wrong but also teach what is right**. Sometimes children continue behaviors because they aren't sure what they are supposed to do. Think about how God has written the Bible for us- it is not just a book of rules & what is wrong; it is also filled with guidance in how we *should* live. Balance correction with biblical instruction.

APPLICATION

Assess your parenting in each of these areas. What do you do well and not so well? Pick one of these to work on right now. Think about and try out ways to make sure you do that when correcting.

Ask God to show you one area he wants you to focus on now. Confess to God if you lose control while correcting and ask Him to help you to be more aware and have self-control.

DAY 18 – MAY 17

KEY PASSAGE – MAT 18:10; MK 9:36-37; 1 TIM 5:8

“Beware that you don’t look down on any of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels are always in the presence of my heavenly Father.” (Matthew 18:10)

“Then he put a little child among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, ‘Anyone who welcomes a little child like this on my behalf welcomes me, & anyone who welcomes me welcomes not only me but also my Father who sent me’.” (Mark 9:36-37)

“But those who won’t care for their relatives, especially those in their own household, have denied the true faith. Such people are worse than unbelievers.” (1 Timothy 5:8)

KEY THOUGHT – CONNECTING WITH YOUR CHILD

God wired us for connection and if you don't give your child that connection they will find it somewhere else, or in another way (i.e. negative attention). As parents, we are called to be one of our child’s first connections.

Parents tend to underestimate the power of connecting with their children in order to improve their behavior and help them grow. Children obey more easily when they trust their parent is doing what is best for them, they care for them, they love them, & are trying to help them.

Think about our obedience to God. Why do we obey? Because we trust that God loves us, knows what’s best for us, cares for us because we have evidence of that in His Word and our lives.

Our kids need that trust with us to obey & that trust is built through connection. Discipline without connection can lead to rebellion. How do you connect?

- Be present by listening & asking specific questions about what is going on in their lives.
- Praise them specifically not generically.
- Spend *quality* time together doing things.
- Tell your child “yes” more often! Sometimes, we say no for no reason (i.e. being lazy, inconvenienced, or distracted by less important things).

Pay attention and see if you can build more trust and connect with your child throughout each day. It doesn't take a lot of time but it can make a huge difference when we are connected to our children like our heavenly Father is always ready and waiting to connect with us.

APPLICATION

Find 5 ways to connect with your child today.

Ask God to help you meet your child's need for connection and to not let the things of this world come in front of your calling as a parent to connect with your child.

Thank Him for His example of being a perfect Father, always willing and open to connect with us.

DAY 19 – MAY 18

KEY PASSAGE – COL 3:13; ACTS 3:19-20; ISA 1:18

“Make allowance for each other’s faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.” (Colossians 3:13)

“Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.” (Acts 3:19-20a)

“‘Come now, let’s settle this,’ says the Lord. ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, I will make them as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, I will make them as white as wool.’” (Isaiah 1:18)

KEY THOUGHT – REPAIRING MISTAKES

One of the things that we have in common with our child is our sin nature. Because we are all sinners, sin is going to break our relationship with our child. It’s not a matter of if it happens. It’s simply a matter of when.

When that happens, we need to help facilitate the repair of the relationship God has called us to oversee as parents. Sometimes that means swallowing our pride & making sure we apologize and fix things after we mess up.

Modeling this is one of the ways we can teach our child about how to handle their own mistakes. It models for them what repentance looks like after they’ve sinned themselves. This is one of the most important things that they can learn.

Repairing mistakes in our relationship with our child is not only important for our own spiritual growth & teaching our child, but also because we need a good connection in our relationship for our parenting to be effective & for our child to thrive.

Repairing mistakes with our child can also be a great reminder to us and them of God's love for us in how He forgave us for our sins and made a way for us to be made right with Him through Jesus. There is a great video by Dr. Karyn Purvis on this topic at the link below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uBPtp-tFOq8>

APPLICATION

The next time you make a mistake in your relationship with your child (yelling, a mean tone, ignoring, punishing, lashing out, not keeping a promise etc.) repair it by confessing your wrongdoing to them and ask for forgiveness. If it applies, also make it right by doing what you should have done or helping to fix it.

The next time your child makes a mistake in your relationship (being disrespectful, disobeying, ignoring, yelling, breaking something etc.) help guide them in how to repair it with you.

Ask God to help reveal to you when you make mistakes in your relationship with your child and to put away all pride that would stop you from repairing it. Confess to Him and repent when it is you who created a break in your relationship with your child due to your sin.

DAY 20 – MAY 19

KEY PASSAGE – PSALMS 71:17-18; 1 THESS 2:7-8

“O God, from my youth you have taught me,
and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds.
So even to old age and gray hairs,
O God, do not forsake me,
until I proclaim your might to another generation,
your power to all those to come.
(Psalms 71:17-18)

“But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.” (1 Thessalonians 2:7-8)

KEY THOUGHT –

Many parents have the desire to teach their child to grow spiritually but aren't very successful. Sometimes it's because they have not built a foundation of discipline ensuring the required amount of focus from their child to teach spiritual truths. The habit never develops and as a result, the child never grows spiritually.

An example of this is the parent who has the desire to do daily devotionals with their child but their child does not sit and listen for the time it takes to complete the devotional.

That's why the previous devotionals spent so much time trying to give practical parenting advice. They lay the groundwork to be able to have the opportunity to invest in your child spiritually.

The fact that we've spent so much time on those things in no way negates the fact that your most important role as a parent is to help your child grow spiritually. It is hands down your number one priority in parenting.

This responsibility stands over school, sports, arts, or any other competitor for your child's time and attention. It is a responsibility that you must not let anyone take from you, not even the church! The church's responsibility is to come alongside you as a parent. They are there to help reinforce the spiritual truths that you are already teaching your child. The church cannot do this for you. You are the primary agent of discipleship for your child.

Be purposeful. Lay a foundation of obedience. Plan times to invest in your child spiritually. (teach/read the Bible, pray, discuss, help apply it to their daily lives) Most importantly, make sure *you* are an example of what it looks like to grow spiritually. Children tend to copy more what we do than what we tell them to do.

APPLICATION

Have you laid a foundation of obedience in your child that would allow spiritual investment? Schedule some time at least once this week to spiritually invest in your child. Be a model of spiritual growth for your child.

Pray for God to help you disciple your child well. Ask him to help you make this your number one parenting goal. Pray for your child's salvation and/or spiritual walk.

Pray that your children will be used by God and that he'll use you as the vessel to teach them as he has called you.

MESSAGE NOTES

MAY 21ST

"GREATER WORK"

COLOSSIANS 3:22-4:1; EPHESIANS 6:5-9

"Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.

[23] Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, [24] knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

[25] For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.

[1] Masters, treat your bondservants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven. (ESV)."

(Colossians 3:22-4:1)

"Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, [6] not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart,

[7] rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, [8] knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free.

[9] Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him."

(Ephesians 6:5-9)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

COLOSSIANS 3:22-4:1

INTRODUCTION:

Today's discussion is about experiencing the GREATER life in our work. Not all work a 9-5 job but all do have a calling in life. The word vocation actually comes from the Latin verb "to call." We find greater fulfillment in our calling when we see our work from God's perspective.

Whether we're at our place of employment, at home, or in school, we are to work in a way that honors God. We're always working at something. Since we spend so much of our time "at work," it's important for us to apply Scripture to this area of our life. Basically, our work is a stewardship for which we'll give an account.

ICEBREAKER QUESTIONS: (OPTIONAL)

What is the worst job you have ever had? What is the most fulfilling/enjoyable job you've ever had? Why is that?

PLAY WEEK THREE VIDEO (10 MINUTES)

This video can be played all at once or it can be paused after each section. After watching the video, use the discussion questions to encourage conversation. You don't have to ask every question. You can also ask your own.

DISCUSS:

1. Share a time when a change in attitude about your job changed your level of satisfaction & productivity at work.
2. How satisfied/dissatisfied are you with your current job? If a change of attitude is necessary, what would it be?
3. To “work heartily” means to give 100% of yourself 100% of the time. Discuss times when it’s difficult to do this. What have you done to ensure you work this way?
4. Discuss the phrase, “as for the Lord & not for men.”
 - a. How does this change your goals at work?
 - b. What’s the difference in rewards?
 - c. How does it change your response to injustice?
5. In your specific occupation, what does it look like to work “as for the Lord?” (Share what you do & have the group help you brainstorm different ideas.)
6. Which specific areas of your work are receiving your best efforts? Why those areas? Which need greater attention?
7. What are 1-2 specific action steps you can take this week in your job/work so that Jesus can shine his love through you? After sharing a few examples, spend time praying that God would bring those opportunities about.

DAILY DEVOTIONALS

MAY 22TH – MAY 26TH

This week the daily devotionals will cover select passages of Scripture that deal with “winning in our work” so that we’re best positioned to experience the GREATER life that is in Christ.

Each devotional consists of three sections:

7. Key Passage
8. Key Thought
9. Application

The key passage is a selected passage of Scripture that will further explore the theme from Sunday’s message. The key thought will help to expound on the idea of the text. The application section will offer you an idea of how you can pray or apply the passage to your daily life.

These devotionals aren’t meant to supplant or replace any current system you have in place for a daily devotional time. They may, however, be a great start if you don’t currently have a system of spending daily time with the Lord.

If you miss a few days, the devotionals are short enough for you to catch up on what you missed when you’re able to pick it back up. We hope you benefit from this resource!

DAY 21 – MAY 22

KEY PASSAGE – GENESIS 2:5-9; 15-17

“When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, [6] and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground—[7] then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. [8] And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. [9] And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” (Genesis 2:5-9)

“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.” (Genesis 2:15-17)

KEY THOUGHT – WORK IS NOT A CURSE!

God’s plan for man was to worship him, walk & work with him. The garden in which God placed the man was a perfect place. His work was not frustrated. Adam and Eve walked with God and worked the garden God created.

Contrary to what some may believe. Work is not part of the curse. Work existed prior to the fall and will exist after we get to heaven. Originally, work was a wonderful thing!

There was harmony between man, his work and his God. That harmony fell into disorder when Adam & Eve used their freedom to deviate from God's good design.

As a result of Adam & Eve's sin, a curse was put on the earth which affects our work. (Genesis 3:17-19) Now, instead of enjoying our work, all we're left with is pain, suffering, blood, sweat & tears.

Thankfully, in Christ we are reconciled with God. Once again we are able to walk in right relationship with God. Greater still, in Christ, man can now find fulfillment in his work once again. We can "work heartily as unto the Lord." (Col. 3:23)

Blood, sweat and tears are no longer the only thing we can expect from our work. We can now experience fulfillment, purpose, and glory.

APPLICATION

What's your attitude towards work? Have you ever thought about the fact that work is not part of the curse? Hard work may be part of the curse but not work itself. Think about your "dream job." What could you spend all eternity doing for the glory of God? _____

Spend some time thanking God for the blessing of work. If you're struggling in your job right now, ask God to help you see it with new eyes.

How can you find purpose & meaning in your work now? Ask God to help you work as "unto the Lord" and not as "unto man" this week. Whatever you do, do it in a way that brings glory to the Lord Jesus Christ.

DAY 22 – MAY 23

KEY PASSAGE – DEUTERONOMY 8:11-19

“Take care lest you forget the LORD your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, [12] lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, [13] and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, [14] then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, [15] who led you through the great and terrifying wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water, who brought you water out of the flinty rock, [16] who fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers did not know, that he might humble you and test you, to do you good in the end. [17] Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’ [18] You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day. [19] And if you forget the LORD your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish.”

KEY THOUGHT – YOU ARE A NEW CREATION

In the wilderness God humbled Israel, so that the people would learn to depend on him and walk in his ways. In the Promised Land God blessed Israel with an abundance so they'd learn to depend on him. They needed to know that it was the Lord who empowered them for abundant life. Forgetting this only sets us up for disaster.

Jesus taught us this same principle of dependence, using the figure of a vine and branches (John 15:5). As a branch depends on the main stalk, so we depend on Jesus to live a truly fruitful life. Depending on Jesus is one aspect of “abiding” in him (John 15:4–6), and abiding in him certainly requires that we remember him continually, as Israel was to remember the Lord continually.

We are privileged to live in America, but it comes with great temptation to be self-reliant and forgetful of the Lord’s blessing. As Americans, we’re told regularly that we can “attain our dreams” and with the right opportunities, those dreams can become a reality. It’s easy and common for us to think we made our own lot in life.

The warning of Scripture is clear. *“Beware lest you say in your heart, my power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth...remember...it is the Lord your God who gives you the ability to get wealth.”* (v 17-18)

APPLICATION

Pray and thank God for the mind, body and opportunity to have wealth. Pray that your wealth will be used to serve God and bless others as well as meet your needs.

Do you think about your wealth or position in life in terms of having accomplished all of it by yourself? Think through all the blessings that you have. Try & trace God’s provision in each instance.

Is there anything in your life for which you are the sole and sufficient cause? Spend a few minutes thanking God for all that he has done in your life to bring you where you are.

DAY 23 – MAY 24

KEY PASSAGE – PROVERBS 15:22-27

“Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed. To make an apt answer is a joy to a man, and a word in season, how good it is! The path of life leads upward for the prudent, that he may turn away from Sheol beneath. The LORD tears down the house of the proud but maintains the widow's boundaries. The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD, but gracious words are pure. Whoever is greedy for unjust gain troubles his own household, but he who hates bribes will live.”

KEY THOUGHT

There are several verses in this passage that inform our work. Wise is the one who heeds and practices them. One verse to consider in particular is verse 22. *“Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.”*

As one person put it, “the one lesson history teaches us is we do not learn the lessons.” It doesn’t have to be this way. Many who have “learned from experience” are more than ready to help others.

God’s word instructs us to ask counsel from many sources. Why should we learn everything by trial and error? We can learn in an easier way. We can learn from the mistakes of others and/or ask for their advice.

This truth applies to our personal life & our work life. Before taking off on a project half-cocked, seek many advisers. Often, you won’t know what you don’t know until you ask.

Of course, the same is true in reverse. There is also value in giving counsel to others from your field of expertise. One of the great things about the church is the variety of vocations represented. There's an abundance of wisdom in our life together. Play your part in contributing what you have.

Many of these proverbs speak to the value of working in a way that is upright. Rejecting folly, greed, wickedness and other sorts of vice will, in the long run, always lead to prosperity. Even if that prosperity doesn't come until the next life, the one who is wise will always walk upright, especially in his work.

We also see how our work affects our family either positively or negatively. A righteous approach to your work will not just pay positive dividends in the workplace; it will also increase God's blessing on your life at home with your family. There's always a connection between our work and our family. Make sure it remains a positive one.

APPLICATION

Are you quick to ask for counsel or do you tend to avoid it? If you tend to avoid asking for counsel, why is that? Examine your heart as to whether or not there's something for which you need to repent.

Think about something you're really struggling with at the moment. Who could you ask for help? Pray that God will crucify the pride that's keeping you from asking for help.

Is your work a blessing or a curse to your family? What could you do this week to ensure that your family loves your work and doesn't feel in competition with it?

DAY 24 – MAY 25

KEY PASSAGE – JAMES 1:2-12

“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, [3] for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. [4] And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

[5] If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. [6] But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. [7] For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; [8] he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

[9] Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, [10] and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. [11] For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits. [12] Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.”

KEY THOUGHT

In the Garden of Eden before the fall, work did not frustrate man. After the fall it did and does. Work is now by “the sweat of our brow.” Instead of being sweet it can instead cause us to suffer. Instead of giving us purpose it can cause us pain. The Lord’s original intent for work is sabotaged by our own sin nature & the brokenness of this sinful world.

James is no stranger to this dynamic. He didn't write this passage to deal specifically with the pain and suffering associated with our work, but the message applies nonetheless. Our text tells us how to deal with many kinds of trials. Surely, this includes trials at work.

We can choose how we respond to our trials. As Christians, we are to count it joy, pure joy.

Kay Warren says, "Joy is the settled assurance that God is in control of all the details of my life..." The reason we can count it joy is because of what the trials are accomplishing in us. The trials are producing something great.

Trials are used by God to test our faith. It is giving faith an opportunity to show itself real. So, as you face trials at and in your work, choose joy. Choose to focus not on yourself or on your problems, but on God who is doing a greater work.

APPLICATION

Are you currently frustrated in your work? How have you seen the truth of this passage flesh itself out in your own experience?

Pray that God would give you wisdom to consider your trials and frustrations at work "as all joy." Ask God for specific wisdom to help you with this specific situation.

Give thanks to God for producing a steadfast spirit within you through the trials that he has brought into your life.

Think about the different ways that this suffering at work has made you stronger. How has it brought you closer to the Lord? How has it made you seek the Lord for wisdom?

DAY 25 – MAY 26

KEY PASSAGE – MATTHEW 25:14-30

“For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. [15] To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. [16] He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. [17] So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. [18] But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money.

[19] Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. [20] And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have made five talents more.’ [21] His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’

[22] And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me two talents; here, I have made two talents more.’ [23] His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’

[24] He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, [25] so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.’ [26] But his master answered him, ‘You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I

scattered no seed? [27] Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest.

[28] So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. [29] For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. [30] And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

KEY THOUGHT

This is a powerful parable that teaches us about how to view life and work. God has given to each of us according to our ability certain responsibility, opportunity and wealth. It is not ours. It all belongs to him, but he entrusts us with some of it.

There will be a day of accounting. A day when we must give account of what we did with what God gave us. The parable shows us that God expects us to steward faithfully what we've been given. We should take what God has entrusted to us and multiply it for the sake of God's Kingdom.

When we do we are commended as “faithful” and rewarded with His joy. Not to be a good steward brings judgement.

APPLICATION

Are you viewing your calling and/or vocation as a trust from the Lord? Pray that God will help you to be a wise & faithful steward/manager of what he has given you.”

If you gave an account today of how you've managed God's blessings would you be ready? If not, repent. Ask God for wisdom on how to manage his blessings well.

MESSAGE NOTES

MAY 28TH

“GREATER WITNESS”

COLOSSIANS 4:2-7; EPHESIANS 6:13-20

“Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. [3] At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison—[4] that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. [6] Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.”
(Colossians 4:2-7)

“Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. [14] Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, [15] and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. [16] In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; [17] and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, [18] praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.

To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, [19] and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, [20] for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.”
(Ephesians 6:5-9)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

COLOSSIANS 4:2-7

INTRODUCTION:

This is the last week of GREATER. Paul's concluding instruction to the Colossians is fitting. We've already discussed how the Gospel transforms our relationships in a general sense. We've applied this general teaching to the specific contexts of marriage, parenting & the workplace. Today's discussion will apply the Gospel to our relationships with those outside the church.

Paul gives two main encouragements. (1) Be steadfast in your prayers & (2) walk wisely among outsiders. Today's discussion will explore best practices on how to do both of these things well.

ICEBREAKER QUESTIONS: (OPTIONAL)

What has been your favorite part of the GREATER campaign thus far? Share one thing that's different in your life as a result of this spiritual growth campaign.

PLAY WEEK THREE VIDEO (10 MINUTES)

After watching the video, use the following discussion questions to encourage conversation. You don't have to ask every question. You can also ask your own.

DISCUSS:

1. Being an effective witness in the world starts with prayer. What does it mean to be “watchful” in prayer? How have you done this in your own life?
2. Paul asks them to pray for “open doors” to preach the Gospel & “clarity” as they preach it. Spend time praying these two things for all the spiritual leaders you know. Discuss who you’re praying for before doing so.
3. In our culture, what does it look like to “walk in wisdom” towards outsiders? How do we “make the best use of time” in our cultural setting?
4. Knowing the right answer is not the same as taking the right approach. (preaching vs persuasion) What IS the right approach when evangelizing someone?
5. Persuasive answers are “gracious, seasoned with salt, & person specific.”
 - a. In what way can we make our speech “gracious?”
 - b. How about speech that is acceptable & inoffensive (while maintaining the integrity of the Gospel)?
 - c. How’ve you taken different approaches with different people when sharing your faith? What should we look for when trying to understand where a person is coming from in their question?
6. Is there anyone in your life with whom you need to share the Gospel? Share a name. Pray for God’s help to be effective in your witness to that person.

DAILY DEVOTIONALS

MAY 29TH – JUNE 2ND

This week the daily devotionals will cover select passages of Scripture that have to do with “putting on the new” so that we’re best positioned to experience the GREATER life that is in Christ.

Each devotional consists of three sections:

1. Key Passage
2. Key Thought
3. Application

The key passage is a selected passage of Scripture that will further explore the theme from Sunday’s message. The key thought will help to expound on the idea of the text. The application section will offer you an idea of how you can pray or apply the passage to your daily life.

These devotionals aren’t meant to supplant or replace any current system you have in place for a daily devotional time. They may, however, be a great start if you don’t currently have a system of spending daily time with the Lord.

If you miss a few days, the devotionals are short enough for you to catch up on what you missed when you’re able to pick it back up. We hope you benefit from this resource!

DAY 26 – MAY 29

KEY PASSAGE – EPHESIANS 6:10-20

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. [11] Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. [12] For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. [13] Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. [14] Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, [15] and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. [16] In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; [17] and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, [18] praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, [19] and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, [20] for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.”

KEY THOUGHT – WHERE THE BATTLE LIES

One of the things you learn when sharing your faith is that spiritual warfare is real. Our battle isn't against flesh & blood. It's always against the powers we cannot see. That's why prayer is such an important factor when engaging in personal evangelism. Without it, we are going into battle without any real preparation.

That's unwise and unnecessary. God does not send us into battle against Satan without divine assistance. In fact, when we are willing to respond to his grace, he dresses us in his own armor. The imagery contained in this passage comes from the book of Isaiah, where the Lord and his Messiah are arrayed for battle (Isa. 11:4–5; 52:7; 59:17).

Our posture is almost entirely defensive. We are told to “stand” (Eph. 6:11, 13, 14), knowing that Christ has already won the victory. We war against Satan's lies & accusations with the truth of the Gospel. We fight the fight of faith by believing that it is the cross that brings us peace. Our salvation is secure and the Lord is our righteousness.

Our one offensive weapon is the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. God's Word is what Jesus used when facing temptation in the wilderness. In like fashion, we should remind ourselves of the great promises of God in his Word when engaging a lost world with the Gospel.

Whatever the battle, the strength of our might is never in ourselves. It's always in the Lord. “Putting on the armor” every day will help us remember these things and be more effective in advancing the kingdom.

APPLICATION

If you're the creative type, draw a soldier wearing armor & indicate each item according to this passage. Visualize yourself putting on the armor of God. Think about what your day holds. How will putting on “the armor” make you more successful in honoring the Lord & more effective in advancing His kingdom? Give thanks to God for the armor.

DAY 27 – MAY 30

KEY PASSAGE – EPHESIANS 5:15-21

“Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, [16] making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. [17] Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. [18] And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, [19] addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, [20] giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, [21] submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

KEY THOUGHT – WISE WALKING

Because we live in dark times, we need frequent reminders to wake up (v. 14) and to watch out (v. 15). This means discerning what is pleasing to the Lord (v. 10) and walking in countercultural obedience to him: not unwise, but wise (v. 15); not foolish, but understanding (v. 17); not drunk on wine, but filled with the Spirit (v. 18). The world wants to press us into its mold (Rom. 12:2), but we have been given a different pattern.

As Christians, we no longer have to fear falling under the wrath of God. Even so, living a life of sin will have negative effects on ourselves and on those closest to us. That’s why the Scripture encourages us to live a holy life. In addition to living a life of holiness, it’s also necessary that we pursue a life of wisdom. Paul’s encouragement in this passage ties both of those things together. That’s what it looks like to understand the will of the Lord.

So much of God's will is already revealed. It's living how He has already told us to live. What we do isn't nearly as important as who we are and how we do it. Our character matters more than our choice of colleges or a career. On matters that aren't already revealed, we need wisdom.

In verse 18 Paul encourages us to be filled with the Spirit. He explains the Spirit-filled life with four different participles. (1) speaking to one another in songs, (2) singing in your own heart, (3) giving thanks to God, & (4) submitting to one another. It's interesting to see the connection between music and a Spirit-filled life.

Psalms, hymns, & spiritual songs have a unique way of taking the truth of Scripture and engaging the affections of our heart. God designed the connection between creative arts and the soul. That's why the singing portion of a worship service is so important. Music engages the heart and increases the sway of the Holy Spirit over our lives.

That's not to say being filled with the Spirit is the same as just being emotional or spontaneous. The Spirit of God is always centered on the Word of God. He uses the truth of God's Word to magnify and glorify Jesus.

APPLICATION

Where are you struggling to understand God's will? Pray that God would give you wisdom to know what to do.

Ask, in light of my past experience, current circumstances and future hopes and dreams, what is the wise thing for me to do in this situation? What scares you about that decision?

Play your favorite worship song before stopping your devo.

DAY 28 – MAY 31

KEY PASSAGE – 1 PETER 3:13-17

“Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? [14] But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, [15] but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, [16] having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. [17] For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.”

KEY THOUGHT

1 Peter 3:15 is commonly quoted by Christian apologists as one of the clearest exhortations in the Scripture to defend the faith against those who would come against it. The phrase translated “make a defense” is the Greek word “apologia.” It’s where we get our English word apologetics.

Giving an apologetic for the Christian faith isn’t saying “I’m sorry for being a Christian.” It literally means, “a word back.” Apo=back. Logia=word. You’re just giving someone a reason for why you believe what you believe.

There’s a difference between knowing your faith to be true and showing your faith to be true. You can know your faith to be true merely through the inner witness of the Holy Spirit. God’s Spirit testifies with your spirit that you are a son or daughter of God. This knowledge doesn’t depend on empirical evidence or logical arguments.

Showing your faith to be true, however, does require those type of things. Scripture encourages us to do both. We should know our faith to be true apart from arguments and evidence. However, we should also attempt to show our faith to be true when people ask us for a reason to believe.

Today's culture, in many respects, could be described as post-Christian. It's not that people have a basically biblical worldview and just need answers to their questions. Rather, people have a basically unbiblical worldview and don't even know what kinds of questions to ask.

In today's culture, evangelism may require more than just sharing your testimony or a basic Gospel presentation. It requires us to know the people with whom we converse. We need to know their worldview so that we can share the Gospel in a way that will make sense to them.

A good way to diagnose a worldview is with 4 basic worldview questions. (1) How did we get here? (2) What's wrong with the world? (3) How do we fix it? (4) What happens after we die? These questions will expose a person's fundamental faith commitments.

APPLICATION

How would you answer those 4 basic worldview questions? Think of ways that you could ask these questions naturally in a conversation.

Is there someone that you're praying for to come to know Christ? What is their worldview? How could you give an apologetic that would be effective given how they think? Pray for God's help to do so well.

DAY 29 – JUNE 1

KEY PASSAGE – 1 CORINTHIANS 5:6-13

“Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? [7] Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. [8] Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

[9] I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—[10] not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. [11] But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. [12] For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? [13] God judges those outside. “Purge the evil person from among you.”

KEY THOUGHT

1 Corinthians 5 reminds us that God’s grace provides us with a power for holiness, not a license for sin. It also clarifies the question of when a Christian should judge. Our culture is quick to point out Jesus’ teaching of “judge not lest you be judged.” There’s actually more to it than that.

While Christians have no business judging those who are “outside” the faith. We are given a clear responsibility to judge those who are “inside” the faith. Usually, church people reverse these two!

This text gives two fundamental principles for Gospel living. First, where the gospel is at work, holiness will result. Those who profess faith in Christ are therefore not free to engage in immorality, sexual or otherwise (v. 11), and they must be disciplined when they persist in sin.

The most severe form of discipline involves being cut off from the fellowship of the church. Yet the Gospel offers hope that even such offenders may one day be restored to full fellowship and “saved in the day of the Lord.”

Second, the kind of holiness God desires cannot be produced apart from the Gospel. When the sinful patterns “of this world” surround us & tempt us to compromise, the proper response is to return to the unchanging grace of God. Why would we hold them to a standard that they never agreed to in the first place? God is the one who judges those outside the faith, not us.

APPLICATION

Do you find yourself sitting in judgment over those who are outside the Christian faith? Why is that? Why do you think Christians judge the outsiders instead of the insiders? Think about a time when you’ve done this and ask God to forgive you. Maybe call someone and apologize for your attitude.

Is there someone in your life, a Christian person, who is clearly living in disobedience before the Lord? How could you lovingly approach that person so that you attempt to save them from their rebellion?

Spend time grieving over the consequences of that person’s sin so that you approach them with the right kind of spirit.

DAY 30 – JUNE 2

KEY PASSAGE – MATTHEW 5:13-16

“You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. [14] “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. [15] Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. [16] In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

KEY THOUGHT – LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

Matthew 5:13-16 is part of Jesus' famous Sermon on the Mount. This sermon from Jesus gives believers a template for what a “Kingdom Life” looks like. While specific instructions follow this paragraph, Matthew, 5:13-16 offers a succinct summary of who we are in Christ and what we're called to do through our obedient lives.

The GREATER campaign has been about applying the victory & power behind the resurrection of Jesus to our everyday lives. We've sought to exchange the lesser life for which many of us settle, for with the GREATER life that is available to us in Christ. To do that, we must know, believe & deeply apply the Gospel to every area of our lives.

Most of this series has explored what it looks like to apply the Gospel in our marriage or with our kids. We've look at settings like the workplace or among our unchurched friends and neighbors. Today's text takes an overarching view.

Living the GREATER life isn't just so that we get more enjoyment or success out of our own lives. The GREATER life is evangelistic in that it points others to what they can have if they would repent and trust in Christ. A life that has been truly transformed by the Gospel really does shine bright. Through our lives, people will come to see and savor Jesus for who He really is.

As you conclude this spiritual growth campaign and go on to what's next in your spiritual journey, never forget the power of a transformed life. Our marriages, our families, our lifestyle among friends and co-workers are all to be for the glory of God and the advancement of His Kingdom. That is the great end of all our obedience as Christian people. The glory of God is our chief aim.

APPLICATION

So, let your light shine! Be salt in your family, among your friends and with your coworkers. Don't let the spiritual progress that you've made over these past six weeks stop. Continue to grow in and demonstrate the life of Christ in all you do. The Lord will use you greatly!

Look back over these past few months. Identify the area of greatest change in your life. _____

How do you think God is going to use this change in your life to advance his Kingdom?

Spend time giving thanks to God for all that he has done. Pray that He would enable you to continue being salt & light in your sphere of influence. Do all you can to point others to Christ so that they will glorify your Father in heaven.



GREATER

OVERCOMING THE LESSER LIFE