

How Do You Spell Love?

1/15/23

Invest in the Essentials

Sunday AM

Essential – something so absolutely necessary, vital, indispensable, and foundational to a substance that w/out it, the entire system or complex collapses.

Example – What makes the Earth habitable?

1 – It's just the right distance from the sun. Any closer and we'd fry – while any farther and we'd freeze.

2 – It has the right chemical ingredients for life – including the correct distribution of water, carbon, and oxygen – that w/out couldn't sustain life.

3 – It has the perfect processes for shaping the Earth's environment by constantly recycling the planet's elements to influence the formation of the mineral and energy resources pertinent for life.

POINT – Change any of these essential elements – and life on earth ceases to exist.

DYK – God offers (6) essential principles for life that if missed causes our earthly relationships to collapse.

If you're just joining us, last week we began a series on the family entitled – *How do you spell love?* In this series, we're using the acrostic T.I.M.E to explain the *essential* ingredients to having a healthy home/family.

Last week, we discussed the first necessary ingredient using the letter (T) – learning to TRUST in the Lord. Whether you're a husband/father, a wife/mom, or a child – God calls us to make the time necessary to trust in Him so our marriages/families might survive/thrive.

Today, we're going to consider the letter (I) – for **INVEST** in the Essentials.

What are the essentials of life? You might say food, water, shelter, and relationships – and while I agree, in Proverbs 3 – God offers us (6) spiritual life essentials.

I Make God's **WORD** Your Top Priority

¹ *My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you peace and prosperity.*

do not forget – to prioritize/apply. IOW – *base/build your life on the truths of God.* This is more than a mental exercise – it's a joyful commitment to **know, submit, and apply** God's Word to every detail of life.

Blessed is the man who does not walk w/ the wicked or stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on God's truth day/night. This person will be like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf doesn't wither – whatever they do prospers. Ps. 1

The psalmist is saying that there's no greater influence upon one's life than God's truth b/c the Bible is **THE** great resource of life serving as a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. Everything we need for life is found in this revelation from God.

WHY – **God's Word is God's will** – it is His truth to give us everything we need for a fulfilling, healthy life.

teaching (*torah*) while we often refer to it as O.T. Law – it actually refers to God’s instruction for His people on how to live under God and w/ other people.

Torah is a word picture of an archer who accurately shoots an arrow to hit a target or a teacher who points a person in the right direction.

SEE – for the O.T. Jew, it was impossible to forget God's Word b/c he was required by law to write Bible texts on the doorposts of his house. So, when he went out, these passages would call after him – Where are you going? W/ whom will you be w/? What business will you be transacting? And don’t forget to check your conduct or guard your lips. Most importantly, pay close attention to your character b/c God will be w/ you and you will be representing Him in every way. And when he returned home, this same passage would be there awaiting to cross-examine him – Where have you been? What have you been doing? Did your words/actions honor your God, your family, and yourself? Did you treat others the way I treat you?

Meaning – Torah isn’t solely law (as in a set of rules not to be broken) but *instruction/truth for life*. That is, God’s Word is our guidebook and instruction manual for life – for the purpose of pointing us in the right direction toward God’s will and truth.

Promise – anyone who follows God’s instruction for life will experience a fulfilling and complete life full of God’s peace and blessings.

As it applies to our families – God has provided us w/ every truth/principle we need to make our homes a haven and blessing if we’ll learn them, live them, and never forget or lose them. (over 300 verses)

II **TREAT** Others as You Want to be Treated

IOW – it’s not enough to know it; we have to live it.

³ Let lovingkindness and faithfulness to the truth never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man.

Idea – we’re to conduct ourselves and treat others in a way that aligns w/ God’s example/expectation.

IOW – more than knowing the principles/truths of God, we have to live them out by applying them to our lives. *It reminds me of the encouragement in James 1.*

*Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. **Do what it says.** Anyone who listens to the Word but doesn’t do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it – not forgetting what they’ve heard, but doing it – they will be blessed in what they do. James 1:22-25*

James is saying that to have all of this information stored in our heads is useless if we don’t actually apply it to our relationships w/ others. **WHY** – b/c God has always intended for His Word to do more than sit on a shelf or even be proclaimed from pulpits – it’s intended to be put into practice where life intersects w/ others – to direct our steps and bless our relationships.

Suffice it to say, what we think of Scripture is directly related to how we’ll engage/treat others – *especially our loved ones*. Should we allow His Word to direct our steps, we’ll find favor w/ God and people b/c we’ll find ourselves treating others as we want to be treated.

III **GIVE** God His Rightful Place in Your Life

We discussed this idea last week...

⁵ Trust in the Lord w/ all your heart, leaning not on your own understanding; but in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your steps...

trust (*batach*) to lie face down helpless – yielded. It means to make a volitional decision to stretch out face down before God in total dependence/surrender. It speaks to daily, minute-by-minute choosing to give God His rightful seat on the throne of your life.

As we talked about last week – this is God’s math. It might not always make good earthly sense, but I promise, it makes perfect heavenly sense.

Choose to Trust God
– Don’t Rely on Yourself
+ Put God First in Everything

= He Will Direct Your Steps

Practically speaking, here’s what we must understand.

A Trust is a **DECISION**

Trust is a choice to connect/yield to God – **and to invite Him into the details of your life**.

This doesn’t mean God strips us of our responsibility, abilities, or ingenuity, but instead – we decide to rely on His way instead of on our way. It means that before we act on our own initiative, we consult Him first.

Do you remember WWJD? *What would Jesus do?* I think this is what God is saying here. Before we speak, act, or do anything, we must ask God what He’d do – and if He’d do it, then we do it – and if not – we don’t!

B Trust is a **DETERMINATION**

Trust is more than a decision in the moment – it’s also the determination w/in our soul. We’re compelled to trust Him b/c we’re convinced of His certainty.

This is what it means to **acknowledge** God. It is to give Him 1st place and top priority in our lives b/c we know that He alone is trustworthy and able.

C Trust is a **DIRECTION**

Trust always results in action. W/ God, it results in a direction to be lived according to His will/Word as He reveals/directs our steps.

Point – When we give God His rightful position and influence in our lives as our Lord/Master – He promises He will direct our steps.

IV Live **HUMBLY** Understanding Your Limits

⁷ Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.

The idea here is to never start thinking you've got life all figured out or that you have the capacity w/in yourself to navigate it. **SEE** – there's no greater threat or enemy to honoring the Lord, loving your wife, and leading your kids than a self-sufficient, arrogant heart.

wise – means to be sensible and prudent.

Solomon is saying the most sensible way to live life is by living under the influence, in total dependence, on God – while to live life by relying on yourself is not only senseless – but reckless.

SO – stop thinking or pretending you're perfect – and stop expecting perfection from everyone else. We all have limitations. So, stop trying to keep up w/ the Joneses (whoever they are). Stop comparing yourself or your children to everyone else. Instead, seek to see yourself as God sees you and as He sees others.

This week, I was meeting w/ a friend, and as he was praying for our lunch, he said – *Lord, show me what you see when you see me – and show me what you see when you see others.* And I was like... that's it. This is what it means to live humbly understanding our limits.

So, instead, **God calls us to fear the Lord by always turning TO Him instead of FROM Him.**

This is important. The word **fear** doesn't mean to be afraid, but to be in awe/amazement. It speaks to having the right posture/disposition to respond to God w/ love, honor, and respect b/c of who He is and what He has done. It means I don't have to be afraid of accepting my limitations (and those of others) b/c we know He loves us and has our best interests at heart.

V Faithfully **STEWARD** God's Blessings

⁹ Honor the Lord w/ your wealth, w/ the first fruits of your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim w/ new wine.

It's long been said that true worship involves trusting (3) books – **God's book** (the Bible), the **hymn book**, and one's **pocketbook**. *Unknown*

I'm not so sure I agree, but I definitely think this idea misses the point – to trust in the Lord w/ all your heart includes trusting Him in these ways, but we're to trust God w/ everything in every way – including our earthly relationships and opportunities.

Men – your spouse/kids are a gift you're to steward just as much as (if not more) than the calling you have to steward your time, talents, and treasures. And the same is true for the ladies and for our kids. Every blessing in our lives is to be stewarded to honor God and to honor those our lives intersect w/ each day.

We do this by employing the **first fruits principle** – that is, we're to give to God our first/best instead of our least/leftovers. And under God, we're to give our spouse our first/best – as parents, we're to give our kids our first/best – and even as an employee/employer – again, under God, we're to give our first/best instead of our least/leftovers. It's the difference b/w have a Cain or Abel heart and outlook on life.

In Genesis 4, we learn that Abel brought God his first/best, while Cain offered God his least/leftovers. Abel's offering said, "God, I'm grateful/dependent on your blessings, and you are worthy of my first/best." While Cain's offering said, "God, it's not necessarily that I'm ungrateful, but I hate feeling obligated. I worked the land and did my part; so, I should have a right to take the best for myself (I get first dibs), and you ought to be grateful that I'm giving you anything."

See the difference? Abel believed he was a steward, while Cain saw himself as the owner. Abel was trusting in God, while Cain was trusting in himself.

What about you? Do you have a Cain/Abel approach to life? Is it all about you or about honoring God and others? This is the principle of stewardship.

Imagine in your marriage if your spouse got your first and best instead of your least/leftovers – and if your kids got your first/best – what difference would this make? **LISTEN** – **it'd make all the difference!**

There's (1) final life essential to consider...

VI **EMBRACE** Discipline as a Gift from God

¹¹ *My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline and do not resent his rebuke, b/c the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.*

LBH – no one enjoys discipline b/c it's often painful and humiliating. Yet the point of God's discipline is never for our harm but for our good – to sand off the rough edges and then to point us in the right direction – b/c it's discipline for our good and for His glory.

God's discipline is part of His plan to mature our faith and character. And while this chastening is seldom enjoyable, it's necessary for our spiritual and earthly well-being as God's heart is never to harm us, but only to help us. So, in His discipline, we must never forget that He doesn't strive to punish us like a hardened criminal, but guide us as a loving parent.

But it's not just God's discipline. **SEE** – we can receive ***constructive discipline*** from any number of sources including our spouses, friends, parents, children, bosses, colleagues, etc.

Point – don't be so arrogant/fool-hearted to reject a word of encouragement or enlightenment that might come from a source other than directly from God. In fact, I've often found that God's message is more often than not delivered thru a human channel.

Let me offer an example as I close – when I was a little boy, maybe 7 or 8, I learned a curse word that no 7 or 8-year-old should know. And while I didn't know what it meant, one day while in a heated conversation w/ my mom – yes... I allowed that word to slip. I can still see the expression on her face. I think I still remember the expression on the dog's face. Even more, I remember what happened next. W/in about 30 sec. my mom had gone outside, picked a switch, and was spanking me in the round. She had my hand in her hand and was using the switch as I tried to outrun her.

Let's just say – I never again spoke to my mother using that sort of language b/c her discipline, which was absolutely for my good – **WORKED!**

The essentials – God's essentials for life – that must be lived out in our marriages and in our homes so that neither will collapse are straightforward

- 1 – Make God's Word Your Top Priority
- 2 – Treat Others the Way You Want to be Treated
- 3 – Give God His Rightful Place in Your Life
- 4 – Live Humbly Understanding Your Limits
- 5 – Faithfully Steward God's Blessings
- 6 – Embrace Discipline as a Gift from God