

# A fellow servant of yours

I hope after reading this, you come away with an even better grasp of the highest achievable rank in the Kingdom, that of “servant”.

Higher than a four star general. Higher than president or Prime Minister. Higher than CEO or MVP.

Some get there by living (surviving) long enough to transform from self centered, to other centered. Others get the “opportunity” to be assaulted by evil severe enough to transform them earlier than would have otherwise been the case.

If you’re one who’s being confronted with that kind of evil, I hope to encourage you to recognize what our Father may be doing with you ... and why. I hope you set out to become a “servant”.

Perhaps you have a profound loss of a loved one?

Perhaps an unfaithful spouse?

Perhaps a business partner who cheated you?

Perhaps an employer who’s wholly unfair?

Perhaps you have medical issues?

Perhaps you have grown children who’ve rejected you?

Perhaps you have friends who stay ... until they perceive you have nothing left to give them?

Perhaps like Job, you have church people around you giving you hypocritical legalistic advice?

Perhaps you’ve been caught up in a legal system that’s out to ruin you?

Wouldn’t it be cool to see those situations as God sees them? Wouldn’t it be helpful to have His perspective, His wisdom? His insights?

## Chapter one – My story

My hope is that by sharing my story, you recognize God’s desire, and your capacity, to become a “servant”.

I struggle to find a way to communicate my story to you. Not unlike the book of Revelation, it’s hard not to go back and forth in time. So I’ll give it a try and hope that God helps you track. As difficult things happened in my life, I wrote about them. Often, the act of writing about the circumstances helped me see clearer what God was attempting to do in my life.

I was born in 1961. Just yesterday I was twenty-two? I’m not very smart. I wish I were, but I’m not. I’m not holly. Not even close! I’ve never heard God speak to me or had prophetic dreams. I’m by design, nothing special. Exactly as God designed it. I’ve been around special people. My high school friend who successfully wooed me towards the Lord ended up being a rocket scientist and worked for NASA. I’ve worked with several genius level people in business. I pedal as fast as I can to keep up with them, and it wears me out. Most of the time I wish I had their brain power and their memory. But sometimes I realize that the “very smart” rarely consider that they sometimes have things incorrect. By definition, they’re always right! Fortunately for me with my diminished IQ, I don’t have that problem.

I was church-ed as a child, but never taught the bible. I began to look for “truth” via God’s word at the age of twenty. By the age of twenty-four, I was co-leading a bible study based home church. Over the last thirty years, God’s presented me with several unique “opportunities”, none of which would I have requested. All of them helped mold me into the person I am today in Christ. Because of what they produced, I wish that you could have those same “opportunities”. On the other hand, I wouldn’t wish them on my worst enemy. Perhaps you, unlike me, can learn the easy way?

As I look back, I recognize what God was doing, but at the time it was baffling. God allowed a cascade of events that rarely allowed clear sailing. As one friend of mine put it, the sub was forced to hover two inches above crush depth. That cascade of events is in part what I’d like to share with you. My hope is that you can either avoid them, or if not, at least have someone you know who made it through ... and lived to tell about it.

I have a significant reading problem. My comprehension rate is that of a fourth grader. I know that for a fact because as fourth graders, my grandchildren clearly bested me. I read at about half the speed I talk, and I talk too slow for most people. I’m also slightly dyslexic which makes reading in general “interesting”. I watch the news rather than read the news. I tend to think in linear patterns like an engineer, and not in a creative way like an artist. With those reading and comprehension difficulties, the Psalms are an utter mystery to me? I realize that David was writing about his experiences, good and bad, but I can’t place myself in his ancient shoes and grasp his thoughts. I’ve tried several times. I’ve never run across someone like me who can’t get Psalms. It seems everybody else can? Well, this work is effectively my psalms. Funny to think that I dare write these when I can’t read David’s, but that’s the deal.

Unlike Job, the difficulties God allowed in my live were not as rapid fire. They were spread out over many years. They were unexpected and destabilizing and compounding. Often, before one struggle resolved, the next began, and so on. It constantly got worse. Kind of like compounded penalties and interest on unpaid taxes. In short order, the penalty and interest are more than the tax. So it was for me. Unlike Paul, who had the same sort of spread out difficulties, none of mine were as severe. Many of you

have had to endure some of the same difficulties. I hope that sharing my struggles and the positive end resolve will give you \$20 of hope to trust this God we serve.

My story is more akin to Joseph's. Abandon by his brothers. Falsely accused and imprisoned and forgotten by his prison mates. I also recognize that at the right time, God's likely to pull off a prison break. In the meantime, I write while partially imprisoned, not in a jail cell per se, I'm pinned down in Mayberry RFD while I'm the primary care giver for a stage 4 cancer patient, my wife. Very few visitors. The well wishers lost capacity to care after a month. In addition, those running things in churchianity understandably think I'm a heretic. Most others are just too busy to care. I'm like Father McKenzie. Writing the words of a sermon that no one will hear. No one comes near.

But you have come near. Perhaps, God has orchestrated it?

For years I've asked God for a mentor. I've asked God for anyone who can work with me to help correct any theological mistakes that I might be making.

Complete radio silence on that request.

Theologically, I'm utterly on my own and fully vulnerable to major learning curve mistakes, over and over and over. That silence also plays out in vulnerability to satanic accusation. The question would frequently arise – am I in this condition because of my sin ... or because of my pursuit of God ... or perhaps both? And how can I know? I viewed the situation like an old cowboy and Indians cartoon where 1,000 Indians are chasing a single cowboy and they fire their arrows all at once. The scene becomes black with arrows descending on the cowboy. Black arrows of satanic false accusations. The question was whether in that grouping of 1,000 black arrows, was there one hard to see white arrow of true accusation? One where yet another character flaw needed to be bent towards God's character? I could never rule that out. But that one arrow was always difficult to differentiate. The only sense I can make out of His silence on my request for a mentor is that He knew that the effort of trying and failing and trying again until I get it correct would burn in the truth like the hard wiring on a mother board. If someone simply told me a new truth, I'd be elated, but more likely to not understand all facets of it.

Let me give you an example. These days we are **told** that if we ask God to forgive us and accept Jesus into our lives that we are "saved". That's great news. But when I started really thinking about the entirety of the bible, I asked myself a difficult question; how were people before Jesus "saved"? The answer took me about 15 years to find. When I found it, things became clearer, simpler, more straight forward. A child can understand it. Exactly as Jesus indicated. Because I had to wrestle the issue to the ground, I know it completely. This is God's way with me. I'm a slow learner.

For many years there have been wonderful, Godly men that I've learned from. At this point I'm no longer gaining **major** insights from those men. Outstanding men like Chuck Swindoll, John MacArthur, Jim Dobson, Charles Stanley, and the two gentlemen who started Xenos. I've been allowed to go beyond those men's realms. To break away from 1,600 years of tradition and morphing of God's simple truths. I realize that sounds so arrogant? Joseph had the same response from his 10 brothers. I've asked for help from most of those men. I never get past their staff. It's not the way I want it, but it is the reality I find myself in.

Lou Holts tells a story of a wealthy businessman who had a party at his mansion for his employees. His pool was filled with alligators, and he said that anyone who jumped in and survived to the other side could have a million dollars or his daughter's hand in marriage. Just at that point there was a splash. The fella struggled with the gators and eventually made it to the other side alive. The rich man helped him out

of the pool and said that he was a man of his word and wanted to know if the survivor wanted a million dollars or his daughter's hand in marriage. The man caught his breath and said that he wanted to know who pushed him in the pool! That's me. I didn't ask for this, but I've been up to my eyeballs with alligators most of the time.

Please know that I'm on the thinnest of ice here. Those men I mentioned above are outstanding representatives of our Father. Outstanding. To in any way take a differing course from them is significantly risky. Yet, I find that our Father seems to have allowed me to do just that. Once again, not because I'm smart. Not because I'm holly. In fact, in spite of my lack of holiness. I needed a condensed, simple, childlike picture of what our Father has done and is doing. To my surprise, He has supplied that. He has granted me the ability to see through the man made boundaries that have been set up to cloud the true simple message. Boundaries even greater than the Pharisees set up during the 400 years of silence. Boundaries that we've had 1,600 years to assemble.

Here is that simple message - It's not primarily about sin. It's about desiring Him. It's just that ridiculously simple. Sins were never going to be the issue. Before creation, They knew how sin was going to be rectified. At the cross, the Son cleared away that barrier and gave us new life. The issue is whether the prodigal will come to his senses and desire to return to his Father ... perhaps even as a hired hand (servant). Yet the Father welcomes us back as a full son? Simply off the charts grace! That is our Father, our God.

I'm the oldest of four children. Those of you who are the oldest understand what that means. I have two younger sisters and one brother, who's sixteen years younger than me. He's now taller, smarter, and far more handsome than me. My mother, at five foot two, was a cheerleader and my father, at six foot three, played all sports. The proverbial ideal couple. Didn't work out that way. It rarely does. Looking back, I realize that early on in their marriage, my mother began to exhibit signs of mental illness. My father may have known something was wrong but did nothing that I know of to address the issues. He may have thought that all couples go through these kinds of difficulties? Instead, he learned how to pacify her, and then dedicated himself to his work.

In his defense, he was a great provider. I never went hungry. I never had nowhere to sleep at night. He was a great moral man. A leader in his industry. He was the ultimate HP "what if" fella. He could solve gnarly real estate financing challenges that no others could. He made it seem simple. He routinely took the complex and made it look simple. I miss him desperately. At five foot nine, I didn't get his height, nor his great athletic ability, but I did get that problem solving capacity ... in spades. I hope that he would be proud of me.

My father was bright. Second in his class of about 175 students, a class that he said produced a nuclear physicist and the gentleman that started The Cincinnati Insurance Company. My mother, who was one year younger, reminds me that her IQ test score was one point higher than my father's. By the time my mother's illness progressed to the point of paranoid delusions, my father had a net worth of about ten million. Thinking he was going to kill her because he "raised an eyebrow" at her, she locked him out of the house and filed for divorce. Looking back, my father seemed to welcome the opportunity to get out. By that time, I was married and had children of my own, as did my sisters. My poor brother was still in high school.

For me as a pre-teen, having a mentally ill mother was quite challenging. I knew she was "off", but I had no knowledge of the mental and emotional issues like I do today. Even as a pre teen, my logic was too

much for her to handle, and she became irate and would frequently rant. In her defense, she was an outstanding mother to us all as toddlers and preschoolers, as well to the grandchildren and great grandchildren. She struggled once her children got to the age where we could ask questions of “why”.

We were churched, so one time when I was very young, I asked her where the money that we put in the offering plate went. She said it went to God. Not to the pastor and staff and the building’s mortgage, but to God. I never did see any of the money levitating Heavenwards? To her, that was a sufficient answer, and I should stop asking about it. I asked her why I had to get dressed up in a suit and tie to go to church? Beyond the typical “Sunday best” and “tradition”, she had no plausible answer. Any time my mother couldn’t give me a rational answer and I objected, she reverted to pulling rank and used the “I’m your mother” and “because I say so” lines! My initial solution was to see her as having “pretzel logic”. Since no one can win an argument with such a person, my next solution at the age of fourteen was to emotionally check out of the family ... and their church. With a mentally ill mother and a terminally work focused father, I **felt** like I was on my own.

As an engineer type, I joked with the grandchildren when they were young about my interest in knowing what they **think**, not what they **feel**. I tried to restrict them from using the “F” words ... Feel and Fair. At the time, I told them that I didn’t care if they **feel** that it wasn’t **fair** that his portion was larger than hers. I used to tell folks that I actually do care how they feel ... but don’t tell them. Eventually, all four of the grandchildren figured out that I do actually care about how they feel. I try hard not to use those “F” words myself, but sometimes there’s no getting around it. I hate to admit it, but sometimes how we feel is well worth noting.

My mother had been churched as a young girl. Legalistic. Follow the rules. No concept of grace whatsoever. Once I graduated from high school and left the house, my mother started following Shirley MacLaine. She too was god! Now, in her early eighties, the real God is wooing her back. His ability to tolerate rejection and His patience are remarkable.

My mother did great harm to my siblings. I found out 20 years later that when I turned 18 and moved out of the house, one of my sisters felt abandoned. I had more mental resolve than my siblings to put her pretzel logic behind me and move on. At one point my mother asked my father to kidnap my sister’s children so that she could “raise them right”. At that point, to protect the grandchildren, we cut all ties with her. Once the grandchildren were old enough to fend for themselves, I began to try and help her with the mental illness and her needing to acknowledge that God was God, and she was not. My reengaging was understandably despised by my siblings, but I made some small progress and eventually my siblings reengaged as well.

Today, my mother is unfortunately in the middle stages of dementia. When dementia is coupled with paranoid schizophrenia, the result is an extremely hard to care for person. To my sibling’s credit, they’re taking good care of her ... even though her care is utterly undeserved.

Perhaps you’ve said as I did, that I’d never be like my parents! In fact, I have some of my mother’s mental illnesses and my father’s work drive. An MMPI test revealed that I’m just short of clinically paranoid and my “T” score for narcissism was “elevated”. Chip off the old block! At least I know what to look for and work on.

Starting at age nine, I worked summers for my father doing grounds maintenance at his apartments. I worked for him every summer up through eighth grade. Then I took two summers off and became a couch potato teenager. I resumed summer work as a rough framing carpenter after my sophomore year. As a junior, I worked after school every day and throughout that summer at a small factory building foam

based furniture. As a senior, I went to school a half day and then was released to go to full time work as a carpenter doing all phases of construction. I was making \$6.50 an hour at a time when minimum wage was \$2.50. I found out later that my father had asked my employer not to pay me the \$8.00 that the older fellas got so that I'd be more likely to go to college. After some time, when my employer recognized that I could read blueprints and solve construction question better than any of the other thirty somethings, he finally gave me the \$8.00 per hour. I did eventually attempt collage. I studied construction management at OCAS in Cincinnati. Because I had worked in the industry for years, I knew more than several of the so-called teachers. I lasted one quarter, ran out of money and patience, and went back to construction work.

I started playing drums at fourteen and was in my first rock band at sixteen. I was into the classic sex drugs and rock -N- roll. But the sex was only with the one I thought I would marry, not whoever came along. Looking back, I was desperately trying to fill the void my mother created. The drugs were short lived because I had no money, and I was beginning to be confronted with a righteous God. Not to mention Romans 13:8.

I reluctantly married at twenty. At that time, I would have preferred to just live together. At about the same time, I began to systematically consider the claims of the bible. Since I had purchased the band's PA, I rented it and myself out to other bands to run sound. During the set breaks, I'd crack open my bible, wisp away the cigarette smoke, and read my way through the New Testament. The guys thought that was a riot, but they respected me. I was hungry. That was the beginning of the end.

As I began to understand this Jesus, my life modified in a positive direction. My wife's didn't. As a teen, she was churched. Legalistic. Marriage rescued her from the oversight of her parents and the legalistic church that her older brother was hauling her off to. She was free to do as she wished. She was unknowingly drifting away from Jesus as I was being drawn too Him. A recipe for disaster.

She had first seen me behind the drums as my band played at a neighborhood clubhouse. She knew who I was, but I didn't know her. A guitar player in my band needed me to go with him on a double date. The stated deal was that his date had a friend that needed a date. May have been a ploy by the girls to get a date with the drummer, but it was a blind date for me. An unheard of risk for me. She became my wife a few years later. What she initially admired in me was what she despised in me shortly after the marriage ceremony. I was married to the band first, and her second.

After about four years of that nonsense, I quit the band and we had our first of three children. I was throwing off my old man and beginning to put on Christ. She was trying to fill her life with everything but Christ. Marriage, work, children, material things, but none of it satisfied. None of it brought the "happiness" she was sure God desired for her. Early on, I had asked God to send hard to love people into my life so that I could learn to love like His Son loved. Little did I know that the hardest of all would be my wife. No good deed went unpunished. I made it twenty years with her.

Unbeknownst to me, at about year fifteen of our marriage, she began an affair with my closest friend, the music minister at the small church we attended. The church was a plant and we had started attending in week four. It was a PCA church but marketed as a community church. The young pastor was just a couple years older than me, and he recognized that I could help in just about every area, including starting up and managing small groups. I did that and we eventually reached an 80% incorporation rate. That young pastor eventually moved on to another new church plant and we had a different fellow come in and take his place. That fella knew nothing of me and my A to Z work in building that little local church.

At that time, my small group was doing well, and I had a desire to take that small group of wonderful friends and make it an outreach group. I had wanted to do something like that for years. We were ready ... and I knew it. They all agreed and the first week I shared the vision with them and the invited newcomers. The second week I had a co-leader scheduled to start the teaching when unannounced, one of the Elders walked in and took over. The gentleman completely went legalistic and scared off the newcomers and ruined the group. When the group had finished for that night, I confronted him, and he ran to the other Elders who were having a meeting that very night. I sat there with him in that Elder meeting and explained what happened and why it was so destructive. The Elders handled it poorly. They said that they would get together after church the next Sunday and discuss whether or not to excommunicate me?

Wow?

I came across an audio recording of that meeting and as I listened, it was like listening to a Twilight Zone program? The things these men said “behind my back” were astounding! Horrible. Wrong. Inaccurate. Slanderous. It was devastating. You should try it some time. It really jolts you back to the sinfulness of man. It shatters the illusion of the happy Sunday church faces. Pride and the “good old boy network” exist even in elders meeting. What a shame. The net result was that these days I try not to say anything about someone behind their back that I wouldn’t say face to face with them. It’s difficult but doable.

One of the younger “Elders” was tasked with being the one to “hold my hand and take me through this”. The next Sunday when he went to shake my hand, I held his for about 30 seconds and wouldn’t let go. I looked him right in the eye and watched his response. Another of the “Elders” was a good friend. I had designed and built a custom home for he and his family. In the secret meeting, he had stated that I was “clearly mentally ill and needed help”. So I took him to breakfast at Bob Evans and told him how much I cared for him and valued him. Tears streamed down my face. He had no idea why. God was teaching me how deceitful most men are and more importantly, how to forgive ... even when the offender has no idea why.

Back to the story of my first wife and my close friend, (one of the Elders). I eventually tricked them into admitting to what they were doing. Years earlier I had asked God to search my heart as David did. I asked Him to show me the depth of my sin. God gladly answered those requests. Because He had done that, I was able to unconditionally forgive my wife and my friend. I offered financial assistance to my friend, his wife, and their two children in case the church fired him. I offered my wife any counseling needed to put our broken family back together. I told my friend that it was up to him to tell his wife and the Elders and that I wouldn’t, unless he continued interactions with my wife. I demanded a full cut off.

Over the next few months, I did my CIA, KGB work and observed that they had actually doubled their phone time. The lying continued. The deceit continued. I knew what they were saying. I knew their plans. I did all that I could to stop them without letting them know how I knew. My friend eventually had an emotional breakdown as he was conducting a choir practice. Persistent sin will do that to you. It wasn’t much longer before the Elders put the pieces of the puzzle together. They fired him. The very thing I begged them not to do. I knew that it would be the impetus for my friend and my wife to leave their spouses. I had told the Elders that I’d pay his salary if they needed to temporarily step him down so that he and his family could get help. They foolishly ignored my offer. They were “**offended**” by his deceit ... and they **retaliated**.

Love is ... love is not. Paul had it right. Paul put it so clearly. Why do we bother reading it if when the time comes, we ignore it?

My friend is a unique person who was born in America, but his formative years were in Israel. His parents were missionaries. He speaks five languages and has perfect pitch when he sings. I helped record and engineer three Christian albums with him. A few years ago, my friend did a phone interview with Christian radio host Steve Brown. He explained that he had been abused as a boy by the Bedouins while he and his parents were in Israel. Everybody has an excuse. Even though he knows that he's unconditionally forgiven, he's never attempted to do what Jacob did in reuniting with his brother Esau. One of the languages that he speaks is Arabic. He is sympathetic to the plight of the Palestinians. I suspect that God will use him mightily when the time comes. We shall soon see?

Even though I was doing all I could imagine to help both he and my wife, two months later I was served with divorce papers. I spent the next two years and about \$40,000 in legal fees trying to stop my wife and the Godless State from blowing my family apart. I assembled a list of about twenty-five people, family, friends, psychologist, court officials, and church leaders that I thought would rally to my defense and stop this madness. Not one of them did. Her parents actually assisted her. All abandoned me.

Not long after she filed, I was falsely accused of abusing her. These days if a female even "feels" threatened, it's prosecutable ... and she knew it. When a domestic abuse call comes in and the police respond, one of the two is going to jail. Either the one who abused, or the one who made the false police report. The officer arrested me with zero evidence. Just her lying words. I ended up spending \$4,000 to defend myself only to have the case dismissed five minutes before the trial. They never had a case and had tried for months to get me to plead to a lesser charge and therefore not have to spend time in jail. Had I of done that, I would have had to register as a sexual predator for quite a while.

What you may not know is that crooked attorneys routinely get private information on an opponent via illegal means then use interrogatories or depositions to "ask the right questions" to get the answer they need "legally". They can get into your bank accounts, credit cards, mortgages, medical history, and private business dealings via "private investigators" so that the attorney never takes the fall if caught. Whatever it takes to win! Furthermore, all attorneys are licensed by the State. Therefore, they do whatever the "State" tells them. But even worse, they are "officers of the court". The court is their boss. They are typically in cahoots with the judges. Judges who are typically accountable to no one. It's a great racket. Satan has significant control of our court system. Lest you get caught in it, you'd never know.

The godless State eventually prevailed, and I lost. Adultery is perfectly legal you see. Believe it or not, my wife was slated to be awarded the children and therefore significant child support and seven years of alimony! The amount of the alimony and child support was based on the average of the last three years of income. The problem was that those three years were the best three years I'd ever had by double, and at that time I had zero income. The kind of "you go to jail if you don't pay", lack of income. I eventually outsmarted her and gained custody of our two oldest children, the boys. My daughter, my first princess, decided to stay with her mother because her mother promised her a kitten. I'm highly allergic to dogs, cats, and women. I take shots for the women.

Prior to that mess, I designed and built custom homes. The first gulf war had started, and the recession was underway. Things were tough. Unfortunately, most of the clients were jerks. Two even cheated me and sue me. After the divorce, I was working in Real Estate Development and was transitioning from working for several men who I had helped make into multi-millionaires, to becoming the principle of my own company. All of the gentlemen I've worked for and have helped become very wealthy have done their best to economically hold me down so as to never let me get ahead. Not illegal. It's the "American way".

My work in Real Estate Development has been complicated by recessions and insane cutthroat immoral competition. In my business, I've gone as much as eight years with only one small pay day, and then have one deal that comes through that tides me over for the next period of time. Just after the divorce was finalized, there was no income, but the courts routinely don't believe that. So, imprisonment for my "lying to the court" was always hanging over my head. There is actually a debtor's prison in America. If you don't pay child support or alimony, the court can and will imprison you. Makes it hard to earn money while in prison? The classic getting blood out of a turnip. I ended up borrowing money from one of my partners against a future hoped for real estate pay day in order to pay child support so as to stay out of prison ... even though I had two of the three children.

Well, one year to the day after the divorce decree was legally finalized, my father died from a rare cancer at the age of sixty three. After his divorce from my mother, he had been deceived and unfortunately married a wicked person who at one time held a national swimming title and was a scratch golfer. She was on her third husband. As my first wife was suing me for divorce, that stepmother was aiding and abetting her, against my wishes. You see, birds of a feather flock together. Unfortunately, my father wouldn't stop her. This understandably caused difficulty between my father and me. When he passed, she had counted on gaining the proceeds from one or more very large life insurance policies my father had. There would have been a large one for my father's business partner to keep the Real Estate Development company going. She would have been a 50% beneficiary of that. Unfortunately, that partner who would have been the other 50% beneficiary was in cahoots with my dad's wife. There was also a policy for the family. That one was over one million in value.

Thing is, she had forgotten to coerce my father into switching beneficiaries from his four adult children to his AB Trust. So she tried to get me and my siblings to sign away our rights to the proceeds, "promising" us a small portion if we went along with it. In ignorance of the situation, my three siblings signed immediately. Being the older, and craftier, I didn't. For her to pull off the charade, all four had to agree and sign. By not signing, I stopped it for all of us. I contacted the insurance carrier, and we had the monies within a week. I helped my siblings each gain over a quarter million ... tax free. I told my siblings that she would sue, and that we should make me the bad guy and try to contain the suit to me alone. As a businessman, I was used to being sued. They agreed. Older brother to the rescue.

Initially she figured she was outsmarted on the insurance proceed so she did the only retributive thing she could, she sued me for monies that my father had used to capitalize my home building company many years earlier. My father had forgiven the loan, but that fact had not been legally recorded. My stepmother sued me for the initial principal amount of \$92,000 plus years of compounded interest totaling almost a quarter million. She eventually won the suit and gained a Certificate of Judgement that attached to my house, but she never got a penny. I had mortgaged the property to the hilt. By design, there was no equity left to take. It's a defense that some in Real Estate undertake to dissuade frivolous suits. But the legal fees cost me dearly. I have not owned any real property since.

Makes letting go of things that much easier.

Not long after that, I had the opportunity to make a lump sum payment to my first wife to lessen the seven years of alimony she would have received. Adultery pays well in my State. You see, she'd found a new man, gotten pregnant, and needed to marry him. That would have stopped the alimony. Since I had borne the brunt of the legal costs in the suit from my stepmother, I asked my siblings if they could contribute their portion of those legal costs to the lump sum payment to my first wife. To my shock, they declined, stating that I had been a bad husband and father. They sided with my first wife. I later found out that she had been lying about me to them for years. They bought the lies hook line and sinker. Over

time, my siblings have seen that the things my first wife told them were lies. I have a much better relationship with my siblings now. Thank God.

My stepmother then sued the four of us for the insurance proceeds. My siblings eventually settled for \$30,000. Did I mention that she had a sister who was a federal judge and several high powered attorneys willing to do anything to gain the favor of that federal judge? Anyway, at that settlement signing, the wicked stepmother exclaimed to my siblings that she didn't need the money ... she just wanted to teach them a lesson. She ended up marrying a fourth time. She found a recent widower, the man who invented Kings Island. What a gold digger. God help her.

Just prior to my stepmother's lawsuits, I found a lady who wanted to follow Jesus and she became my second wife. We actually met on a Christian dating web site. Her husband of twenty seven years had divorced her. She had two adult children and two grandchildren at the time. She has four now. The youngest, my new princess, is fifteen. My second wife was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis as we were dating. Not long after that, she was wheelchair bound. She said that it felt like someone had taken a twenty pound sledge and smacked her feet. We spent the next six years trying various medicines to help her. By the time we found the right combination, she had gained sixty pounds, primarily from the steroids that enabled her to function. She has since lost that weight and come down with stage four cancer. Out of the frying pan ... into fire.

While she was wheelchair bound, we were living about a three hour drive from her grandkids. Every other weekend we would visit them or meet them at a mall about halfway and spend the day with them. I remember having the grandkids take turns sitting in her lap in the wheelchair as I pushed them around the mall like a crazy drunk driver. The kids loved it. Sometimes her elderly parents, who lived close to her children, would come along. One rainy day when she was finally able to get out of the wheelchair and walk in the parking lot, she took two of the little grandkids by the hand and proceeded to stomp in every available puddle all the way into the mall. Her eighty eight year old mother looked at me with a frown and asked, "why does she do that"! I replied, "because today ... she can".

Funny what we take for granted.

About that time, one of our most cherished ladies decided to have an affair. Unfortunately for her, my CIA, KGB skills bested her. When she threatened divorce, I tied up the top three legal firms in the County and conflicted them out. I don't play fair. We weren't going to let her do to her husband and children what my first wife did. We supported her husband and eventually, she came to her senses. She had also been churched. Legalistic. But her husband had not. This event, while absolutely devastating to him, put him in a position to need God.

My wife counseled him daily. He was understandably a mess. We worked hard at helping him understand that throwing her away was not good for anybody. Not what God did for him at the cross. He made significant movements towards God at that time. As that couple began to heal, they found a local charismatic church with some good people in it that supported them. Just about that time, the husband was laid off from the manufacturing company that he worked for. His wife also worked for the same company in the front office. Unfortunately for her, she had the affair with the HR person, so they fired her. They had house payments, car payments, and no employment. The blue collar church members brought food, gave them some money, and perhaps most importantly, gave them emotional support. God bless them.

Problem was, the pastor was a wolf. But the couple, new to Christ, couldn't see it. They were taken in by him. They were deceived. That's what wolves do. We were trying to help them see the wolf for the

fraud that he was, but as we did that, we were falsely accused by them of horrific things. One misunderstanding on their part led to another. As we tried to correct their misperceptions, things got worse and spiraled out of control. Eventually, the couple cut off access. They had a police officer call my wife and tell her that if she attempted to contact them, that she would be arrested and charged. This was devastating. Many tears. Produced a re-focusing on God. It took that cherished lady off the pedestal ... and put God back on it.

Hard lessons to learn.

It took almost two years before we were able to see them again. In the interim, God supplied “neighbors”. We spent time and energy on them. God is good. Today, that “neighbor” is one of the few men in my life that I realize cares for me independent of what I can give him. Eventually, the couple recognized that we were not the monsters they thought. The fraud pastor is gone now. By the time he left, the couple was able to see at least some of the dangers we were telling them about. Things are good now with that couple. God is very good.

At a time when difficulties overlapped and overwhelmed us, we sought assistance from a couple who ran a home church. I had helped win the fella to the Lord many years earlier. He married a doctor and they had three children. He was a favorite of mine, and I hoped that his stability could assist us. But when we shared our difficulties with them, they went legalistic on us and rejected us. At the time, they seemed like our last hope to survive the overlapping ordeals. We were devastated. I suspect that this gentleman will be used of God in a might way. I long to see that day. God bless him.

As my three children became adults, each one was lied to by their mother. That creates significant challenges to adult relationships. My oldest son is married to a wonderful lady, and they have a son. They’ve been on the west coast until recently and are now on the east coast. We’re not on either coast, so seeing them is difficult. To their credit, they make one time a year to see us and let us see them and my grandson. We get one meal with them. They frequently send e-pictures of my grandson living life via a secure service. My son was church-ed, but what his mother did, what his friend the music minister did, stilted him. Understandably. As far as I know, he rejects the picture of Christendom that he saw. I don’t blame him. My hope is that God continues to draw my son back to Him.

God loves him far more than I ever could.

My younger son, who is most like me has, for unclear reasons, shut me out? He also married and has two sons that I’ve never seen. Not allowed. Because my siblings regularly see him and his children and post pics, my CIA, KGB stuff has allowed me to see their images and know their names. But God knows them infinitely better. I trust God. I wait for my time with them as the prodigal father waited.

My only daughter, my first princess, married a man after my own heart. But prior to that, she had routinely deceived me like her mother did. I suspect that she struggles with what to do to correct her errors. They rarely contact me, but I’m allowed to text them sparingly. She’s God’s daughter. He will do what He will do ... in His time.

I will learn patience.

As my second wife was concurring her RA, she started a store that sold our custom made furniture and home decorating things and Webkins. A few years later in 2008, the economy took a nosedive. We closed the store. I had no income and eventually we lost our house and had to vacate. But God had an unusual option for us.

Just prior to our eviction, a friend of our daughter at her church needed help fixing up a foreclosure he'd bought and had been working on for two years. He was married and had two young children and needed to finish the project and move from a small cracker box into this fixer upper that had four times the space. Knowing my carpentry and construction skills and my servant's heart, our daughter "volunteered" us to come up and spend a weekend helping out. She told him we'd do it for apple pie. She was right! They were planning a church wide help weekend. When I got there, I instantly realized that it would take the proverbial month of Sundays to get that project into shape. We ended up coming up the next two weekends in a row, but it was going to take months. Many months.

Then God presented the perfect solution. I called the young man and offered him a deal. We offered to come up and live in his partly gutted extreme makeover project and perform all the labor to complete the project for free if he would allow us to stay rent free. He took the deal with great joy. We spent the next nine months living in a construction zone. By the time we were done, the young man had \$120,000 in the project and the property appraised at over a quarter million. As we worked that project, we earned the right to speak into the young couple's life. We eventually did bible studies with them before work times at the house. That young fella is the second man who I know loves me independent of what I can do for him.

God won! Again.

When we completed that project, we again needed a place to stay. We had very minor income and were considering a very small apartment, but about that time my wife's father had fallen and broken his hip. Congestive heart failure caused the lack of oxygen that caused the passing out and the fall. At ninety five, he had to give up going out to the shed every day and building furniture. He was put on four liters of oxygen and constrained with a fifty foot hose for the rest of his life. His wife, at ninety four, struggled to care for him. Once again, God presented an opportunity. You guessed it. We moved into their basement and assisted both of them as they finish their earthly lives.

Her parents were churched. Sixty years. Legalistic. For years we had tried to discuss biblical things with her father. He was very bright. Perhaps genius level, but he'd change the subject and tell us that there are two things you don't discuss, politics and religion. But God had his attention now. We set up a baby monitor in their bedroom so that at night if they had needs, we could hear them in our bedroom in the basement and run upstairs to assist, which we did several times. One night, we heard him ask his wife if he was good enough to go to heaven? We knew that was God cueing us up. Shortly thereafter, we offered to help him understand the answer to his question. I started off by asking him if he knew the difference between the New Testament and the Old Testament. He admitted that didn't.

Sixty years?

So we started with an overview from Adam to Jesus. Took a couple months. We then studied through John, Galatians, Ephesians, Romans, Hebrews, and at his request, Revelation. By the end, he was wanting to study every night. His life had been transformed. He found the real Jesus. He understood God's grace. He died at home in his sleep at the age of ninety seven. What incredible patience God has.

Prior to getting his permission to share God's word with him, I wrote a piece called [Spiritual Battle](#). You'll read it later. It ended up describing to a "T" what God was going to do. I could see it, so I wrote it down.

We of course stayed on to care for his wife. We knew that when she passed the house was going to be sold and the proceeds divided between the three adult children, all of whom lived in the area. The house

was built by her father in 1957, remodeled three times, but still had little more than slum lord rent as a prospect at a sale. So over the next two years we did a major remodel of the house to increase the value at the sale. We put \$40,000 of our own money into the project, and all our free labor with the idea that we'd get it back when the house transferred at her mother's passing. We did major interior, exterior, and landscaping work. Turned it into a desirable asset. Her mother tolerated the dust and was able to see the finished project. She passed sixty days short of one hundred years old.

By that time, one sibling had decided they didn't want the risk of inheriting their third of the house and signed it away. The other sibling had passed on any real opportunity to assist either parent as they were finishing their lives, and because of that, their one third was rescinded. We had lived there rent free and simply done the right thing in assisting parents as they finished their lives. We never asked to be compensated, but God did anyway. The result was that we now live in that house, rent free. God knew all along the solutions He had for us. As we chose to serve people, God chose to see us through. His goal was to put us in positions where we had no other option but to trust Him.

This we have learned.

In 2012 I undertook a study that I'd been wanting to do for twenty five years. Eschatology – end times. I knew the basics, but I asked God to help me understand the specifics of what He was about to do so that I could better love people around me like my first wife, my adult children, my grandchildren, and so many church friends, since it looked like they'd be "left behind". Remarkably, God seemed to honor my request? Perhaps I had asked for the right reasons? What I discovered in that study was mind blowing. The basic timeline of major events that most of you know is solid. What God allowed me to discover were the details between and around those major events that none published have found. Those details made a huge difference in my perception of God's patience, His Grace, His love for us, and His capacity to work His will inside of our rebellious free will. I've been allowed to substantially discover the plan He's about to execute. One that's 180 degrees out of phase with what the professional end times nuts are telling you. They have it as backwards as one could ... exactly as God planned it. It's dramatically changed my life.

I look forward to the near future unfolding.

There is one rather unusual thing that I did that may have put me in a position with our Father to know the end times as I now do. When it became evident to me that my first wife left Jesus before she left me, and that she was perhaps terminally self deceived, not unlike Romans 1:24, I feared that she was at the proverbial "point of no return". So I made a request of our Father. In anguish for her eternal destiny, I asked our Father if He would substitute her eternity in Hell for my eternity with Him. I had been intrigued with Paul's similar words in Romans 9 where he wished that he could be accursed for his fellow Jews if it would cause them to gain eternal life. About two weeks later, I realized that God would not answer my request in the affirmative. I was not in a position to be a substitute. I had my own terminal sin issue. Only His Son was qualified. I suspect that the exercise was valuable though. Kinda like God asking Abraham to sacrifice his only son. Our Father was looking for the offer from me.

I had finally learned to love her ... and that was the evidence.

For a while after that realization, I hoped that our Father would somehow accomplish bringing her to His truth and therefore to Himself. That "hope" helped extinguish most of my sorrow for her. Much later, I came to realize that God doesn't need us to bring people to Him. He does a much better job on His own. None the less, He allows us to give it a go. I suspect that even with our best most sincere efforts, we

muck it up such that He has to work extra hard to get the task done. But He allows us to try anyway. To learn.

The other reason our Father may have granted me unusual insights is my very limited prayer requests. I've come to realize that most of the time, my requests should be only to know His will ... and then do it. What I want, what I desire, what I think should be done is all but irrelevant. It's His will, His timing that are eons superior to mine. I just want to know His will.

Prior to that revelation, here were my top ten prayer requests:

1. Lord, please bring those who don't know you into my life so that I can love them.
2. Lord, please bring hard to love people into my life so that I can begin to learn to love as You love.
3. Lord, please reveal to me my weaknesses and Your solutions.
4. Lord, please increase the spiritual risk in my life so that I'm forced to trust You even more.
5. Lord, please be about humbling me so that I can someday become a servant.
6. Lord, please grant me Your wisdom to replace my nonsense.
7. Lord, please show me Your glory.
8. Lord, please bend my will towards Your will.
9. Lord, please do whatever You have to in order to mold me into a person like Your Son.
10. Lord, please take everything and everyone away from me that You need to in order to set my path straight to You.

He has answered all of them ... over and over.

Lucky me!

My wife and I've been out here virtually alone way too much of the time. On the bright side, there have been a few good people who understand our plight and love us. But a very few. God bless them. Looking back over the "opportunities" that God allowed, it all makes sense. He was preparing me. He was putting me in the right positions to better grasp the love of His Son and the end time things that no others that I know of have. This was His doing all along. I chose repeatedly to run toward Him rather than from Him. He has molded me as He wished. I long for my training to take its course.

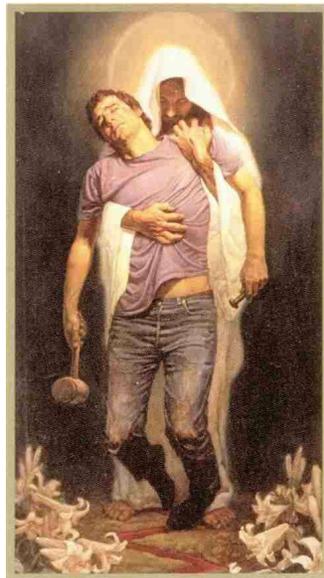
Through all of this, my wife and I have learned the concept of "paying for the right to serve". As an example, the adult kids had asked us if we could babysit the little ones so that they could get some time off and go to dinner and see a movie. They told us that they would pay us. We knew they didn't have much money so we told them that we would give them \$25. They said, no we will pay you. We said, all right we'll up it to \$50. They got it. We gave them \$50 for the privilege of watching the exceedingly precious grandchildren. We got the better end of the deal! Don't you see. Pay for the right to serve.

What would you pay for the right to serve?

One of the things that I've realized in all of this is to what extent Jesus went to in order to serve me. On the cross, He gave up everything. He paid the ultimate price. For what? To serve the very humans that put Him there. He paid for the "right" to serve me. His Father was well please and granted Him "all things".

About twenty five years ago I recognized that if I had been there at the time of Jesus, I would have put Him on that cross. I'd like to think that I'm like the apostle Paul or John, but the reality is that my base personality is by far and away most like Judas. Do it my way Jesus or else I'll force the issue. I'd of made a great Pharisee, a legalistic do as I say not as I do, crucify that blasphemer Jesus. I'd of made a good Roman. By nature, I'm brutal and arrogant. I'd of vied to drive the nails! Even as a member of the crowd that shouted "hosana" thinking they had their king, their deliver from Rome, when it was evident that He was a miserable failure, I would have shouted "give us Barabbas! Crucify Him!" Any way I attack the issue, the reality is, I'd of put Him on that cross. To my shame.

His response to me is the proverbial "beyond words". But if I had to try to put it into words, this old picture of me that I found in the attic would give you the first 1,000. It's a devastating picture!



Perhaps this picture describes His response to you as well?

Righteousness and mercy personified.

A working definition of grace.

Utterly unearned grace.

Indeed, at His name, every knee will bow.

This is the Jesus that I desire to serve. The one who I know loves me. The one who taught Michael to throw off John's attempt to worship him when John saw his glory which illuminated the entire planet!

I am **a fellow servant of yours**, Michael said. Worship God.

If I ever grow up, I wana be like that angel.

The disjointed chapters that follow are the thoughts and struggles and resolutions that I had all along the way. The questions. The answers. The found wisdom from our Father. I hope that you avail yourself of what God taught me the hard way. Choose to trust Him and learn it the easy way.

Please learn at my expense.

## Chapter two - Some stupid human tricks

### I wrote the majority of these when I was very young in Christ.

I did some dumb things as a young Christian, and I'd like to share them with you so that you don't make the same mistakes. It's the loving thing to do.

I had heard other Christians talk about asking God for patience. That seemed real spiritual and I knew that I was an impatient person, so I asked God to give me patience too. To this day, He never has answered my prayer for patience. He did however give me three kids and a wife? I'm much more patient now and I've stopped asking God for more patience.

I listened as some mature Christians talked about being "other centered". They called it Agape love. Said it was the opposite of self centered. The way God loves us. Said something about fixing our ingrown eyeballs so that we could be focused on the needs of others. That sounded reasonable to me too, so I asked God to help me focus on the needs of others and not myself. My eyesight became better, but God grew a nerve link from my eyes to my heart. Then my heart was routinely broken over the injustices I saw. I think Jackson Brown wrote a song about this phenomenon.

One day a friend came to me all impressed that God had pointed out in the bible that Moses was the most humble man on the face of the earth and my friend was going to ask God to make him humble too. You'd think by now I'd have known better? Nope! I took it hook, line and sinker. I'm not sure if I'm humble yet, but I've built this nifty ladder to get up out of bed in the morning. Sometimes humble feels pretty small.

That same friend found another nifty passage in the bible where some really confused guy was asked by Jesus if he believed. Evidently that confused guy said that he believed, but then he asked Jesus to help his unbelief? My friend thought that was a great answer. I had to think about it for a couple of weeks. Having a mind like a steel trap, I wondered why, if this man already believed, did he need to believe more? I ended up guessing that there must be different levels of belief, so I asked God to help my unbelief too. I'm not sure if I believe any more now than I did then but I'm learning how to spell some new words like "hypocrisy" and "faithfulness" and "commitment" and... well you get the point.

I heard a man give a talk about taking spiritual risk. I remember at the end of his talk he asked God to increase the spiritual risk in his life and for God to increase His power to deal with the extra risk. That sound like suicide, but inside I knew it was a god idea. So I asked God to do the same for me. Since then, I found that sometimes people who won't take risks have a hard time understanding and accepting people who will. I guess it makes them uncomfortable to be around people who change things for any reason. I guess God must be answering their prayer for patience?

As a young Christian I used to pride myself on being Biblically correct. Translation, if you didn't see it my way you were wrong! Unfortunately for my fragile male ego and self confidence, I started listening to a very mature Christian teacher on the radio who I caught espousing tolerance in some areas of personal convictions. Can you believe it? He quoted some old guy who said something like "In essentials unity. In non essentials liberty. In all else love". Once again, I couldn't resist trying out this radical idea. Sometimes it's hard to know what's really worth arguing over. I found that when things are running OK, people will segregate to ridiculous degrees, but when times are desperate... well, those issues that we though divided the "real Christians" from the lesser Christians seem to get overlooked and were just glad to have anyone who claims to know the God who loves them. There aren't any atheists in a fox hole and there are no "inferior Christians" in a time of need.

I remember reading the bible where Jesus gave a class on internal values. I think it's known as the sermon on the mount? Anyway, reading that was probably one of the stupidest things I've ever done. It really messed me up! Jesus talked about the idea that if I even looked at a woman with lustful thoughts that God considered that the same as adultery. Can you imagine? Then I had to learn another new spelling word called "conviction". I tried everything I could think of to fix the problem. I asked God to take it away. I tried turning my head to avoid looking at some women, but that caused some problems when I was driving a car! I asked God to help me understand what was causing these desires in me.

After a long while, I thought about the blind and wondered, since they couldn't see, if they had any lust problems? Seemed reasonable, and I was desperate, so I talked to God and told him that if He had to make me blind to solve the problem, so be it! When I finished that prayer, I was rather surprised to still have my sight. I continued to struggle until one day while driving down the highway I saw a piece of stainless steel metal on the back of a truck mud flap and of all the stupid things, it caused me to lust! After a piece of metal!

Completely hopeless, I considered that I'd inherited a pre-disposition to desire the perfect set of curves be it on a woman or a piece of metal shaped like a woman. Was it an eye gate problem? I wondered if the Apostle Paul struggled with this problem? I didn't know for sure, but I remember reading that Jesus was tempted in all things and never sinned. There's hope! Somehow there had to be a way! So I asked God, how did Jesus do it right? And then it hit me! If Jesus created all things like John says He did, then he created women too. And if he created women, then I figured that He viewed them as his children and not as sex objects the way I did. I knew that if I ever had a daughter that I wouldn't lust after her. I could understand that.

So I asked God to help me see people as He sees them, as people and not as things. Ultimately that was the cure for my problem! It took several years to finally deal with that one simple passage I read. Looking back on it now, I reckon God really wasn't as concerned with my inherent lust problem as he was in driving me to recognize that He saw value in people differently than I did. Now I have special insight into how God sees us but it sure was an expensive fight!

I read in that same sermon on the Mount about the concept that God desires that we should not be anxious. That seemed idealistic, but in an honest review I realized that I was indeed an anxious person, so I set out to define what was making me anxious so that I could stop it. I quickly recognized that I was always anxious when I was driving a car? I was anxious because I was always driving over the speed limit and would have to constantly scan the horizon for state troopers. This was before radar detectors.

So I decided to pull one of the stupidest human tricks to date. I knew from Paul's letter to the church in Rome that we are to be in subjection to the governing authorities, so I decided that I would stop breaking the law and drive the proper speed. No need to be anxious about getting a ticket right? What a dumb Idea! Immediately I was in a dilemma. If I get out of bed too late, do I speed like normal to arrive to work on time? Or do I stay with my commitment to obey and arrive embarrassingly late? If I let one meeting run too long and hit the road to the next meeting running late ...? Well you get the idea. What a fight! I realize now that I broke the law in the past because I thought I was above the law, that I was "special". I used my laziness as an excuse to disobey, to do what God said would cause anxiety. I don't think God was as interested in what speed I drove as He was in my blame shifting and my false pride. Driving the speed limit wasn't as easy as I thought. It involved an entire life attitude change. Now I have to take responsibility for my actions!

I remember as a young Christian thinking that God was sufficiently a "part" of my life until I heard someone describe our relationship with God like a house. The idea was that we may feel comfortable letting God into the living room of our life, but would we let Him into the bedroom? Would we let Him

into the closet? I instantly knew that I had unintentionally denied God access to some of the rooms in my life. I pulled yet another stupid human trick and told God that He had my permission to go anywhere He needed in the house to make me more like His Son. I remembered something similar to this idea in the Old Testament where David asked God to search his heart. So I figured I'd try that too. What a crazy idea!

Working with tools gave me a further idea. I realized that I had pre-supposed my usefulness for God in only one area. Say as a simple screwdriver. But what if God needed a socket wrench? That kind of tool seemed too complex for me as a young believer, but I told God I'd be whatever tool He needed me to be. In fact, I'd be an all purpose tool if that's what He needed.

Some Jesus freaks I met talked to me about something they called the "means of growth". They said that the bible indicated there are five major areas to work on to grow as a Christian. Fellowship was one they mentioned, as well as reading the Word, and praying. They called these the "food" portion of growing. The other two they called the exercise part of growing. Said we need to do the exercise portion so that we didn't become overfed and fat. They are ministry and discipline. They mentioned that if a person wasn't involved in all the areas that their growth would be dramatically slower. Four out of five dentists would not equal eighty percent growth but may result in ten percent growth. Like a dummy, I made a run at being involved in all five areas! Have you ever had your family members see change in you so radical that it scared them? Ever try explaining why you spend so much time with Jesus freak kind of people? Unsatisfied with what they saw in me, one of my siblings gave me a T-shirt that says it all. The shirt says, "get a life but don't ask me where to look".

I listened to a man on the radio describe a fascinating experiment with baby Rhesus monkeys. The person doing the experiment wanted to find out how significant touch was in the development of baby monkeys. so he set up two surrogate mothers in adjoining cages. One mother was made out of wire mesh which had a nipple hooked to a supply of milk that could be activated as needed when certain baby monkeys needed to feed. The other mother was covered with terry cloth and a light bulb was placed in her to radiate some warmth. The milk supplies were controlled so that only certain babies could get milk from the wire mesh mother. The result was that all the baby monkeys played around the terry cloth mother. They climbed on her, patted her, and snuggled with her. The only reason the control group babies went to the wire mesh mother was for milk. When subjected to stress the wire mesh babies cowered in the corner screaming while the terry cloth babies ran to the warm mom. The man on the radio then asked the pertinent question. When we dispense the new milk of the word to baby Christians, do we do it as wire mesh mothers, or as soft warm terry cloth mothers?

I remember reading a couple of profound statements that Jesus made. He said that where a man's treasure is, there will his heart be, and we can't serve God and mammon. Once again, I did a dumb thing and decided to make His people my treasure and to serv God and give up the right to go for the brass ring. I think God is pleased, but Wall Street hasn't changed a bit. I look forward to Heaven where God will reveal to His children who couldn't resist the money, how proud He is of those who look so foolish now.

I heard a man say that doing God's work, Ministry, is a privilege not a right. I reckon that God could use simple rocks or a talking donkey or a burning bush to get His message out if He wanted to.

I heard a man talk about how in the Old Testament, God set up cities of refuge for people to flee to if they had been involved in an unintentional wrongdoing. That guy then mentioned that Jesus' Church is to be people of refuge to harbor and protect those who need mercy.

I found out that God rarely uses a man mightily until He **crushes** him thoroughly. For all the dumb things I've done, I hope God gets a good return on His investment!

## Chapter three – The Crushing

These were written starting from the time the divorce was being contested.

### Jesus said forgive

Jesus said forgive.

I forgive.

Jesus said love.

I am loving.

Jesus said give like He gave to the Church.

I am giving.

Jesus said pray for those who persecute you.

I am praying.

Jesus said consider other as more important than self.

I am considering.

Now I have been removed from my house.

I have very limited access to see my children.

My savings account is locked up.

I am being sued for divorce as though this was somehow my fault.

I may forfeit half of everything I have ever owned.

I may be forced to pay alimony for up to seven years to my wife who hates me, who cheated on me, and used me, and now is **discarding** me.

I will go bankrupt in six to twelve months if her suit is successful.

I will then be a “dead beat dad” who could be sent to jail at any time.

I wake up every day knowing that the person I love the most, actively hates me with everything she has.

I long for a kind word from her.

I long for a hug from my wife.

I know that my wife compares me to the best of any man she knows about, and I know that I don't measure up. The most brutal form of conditional love.

I feel very insignificant.

I feel unwanted.

I feel hopeless and without value.

I ask God to help me understand His will, His plan, so that I don't get in the way.

I wait on the Lord hoping that He will miraculously intervene?

Although I greatly desire to find a woman who will actually care for me, I know that if I did, I would, for this side of eternity, be cutting my wife off from completing our family again and I must not do that.

So I wait.

And I am empty?

Wanting to understand how it is that God may fill the void of no wife in my life?

Not understanding? Of all the animals God created, none was found to be a suitable help mate. Indeed.

Is my Eve un-needed?

Will I always remember the vanilla scent?

Will I always remember the good times we shared?

Where is the format C:\?

Am I blind?

Is God letting me reap the consequences for something I fail to understand as sin?

Is God dormant at this moment in history?

Will the children make the same relational mistakes as their mother?

Will they get to know the real Jesus?

Two of my most trusted male friends have deceived me?

Jesus said forgive.

I forgive.

Can I go home now?

I'm tired of playing.

## **If I go home now**

If I go home now, I forfeit the ability to serve along with the 144, assuming God was going to use living people. My adult children have one less data point for wisdom. Is my drive to stay and reach others “of value”? Am I delusional? Would the ones I desire to reach be better off with a professional? When it all comes down, are they more likely to trust someone they don’t know but who is literally from Heaven or someone they do know?

I’m tired.

Is help available?

How long do I have before I’m non functional?

The batteries are very low.

## **Low voltage**

At a time when my needed 3 volt battery is down to .1 volts, well meaning folks have managed to drain the last ounce. Yesterday the battery went dead, and the light went off. Overnight, and with some coffee this morning, I’m back up to .05 volts, and I need to buy some hope. I have only \$20 left, but possibly that’s enough hope to get me through the day? This morning, I want to buy some hope to help understand the insanely difficult issues around me. Not unlike someone buying a vowel on wheel of fortune when they have no more guesses on consonants, many days I just wish I could take my last \$20 and buy one day’s worth of hope. Possibly then I could understand how to solve the puzzle and get through the day.

The system diametrically opposed to God has relentlessly pummeled me. For 4 years now, I have been unable to earn enough income to pay all the bills. Working side jobs and minimum wage jobs has helped such that I’m falling behind at a slower rate than before. That’s about the only good news I have to share? Some see my lack of ability to earn income as a result of disobedience to God. They have a valid point of view that of course must be looked into, and I have, and I do, daily, exactly as the enemy wants.

The opposite possibility, strange as it may seem, is that God is actually pleased with me? So much so that He is willing to allow the enemy to battle harden me to become even more useful, even more insightful, even more humble than before.

There are a few young adults in my life that see it that way, possibly in their ignorance, possibly in their unvarnished reality check? There are some grandchildren and surrogate grandchildren that evidence that view, even though they don’t cognitively think it. One could say that they are just ignorant and easily fooled, kinda like the children that the disciples wanted to keep away from Jesus?

At any rate, this morning, I ask God to show me any area of my life that I can positively modify to become more like His Son. That is of course my goal. And I ask God to send me \$20 worth of hope today.

Not a demand, just a request.

## April 25

Tonight I go to bed realizing that I have a grandson evidently born on 4/19 but I don't know his first name? I'm not allowed to know.

“And they believed a lie rather than the truth”. The lies suit their notions.

Last evening, April 29, my wife found my grandson's name on face book. At least now I know it.

## Extreme pressure

A friend of mine had a son that for 13 years that never grew taller than 30 inches. The entire time the boy wore diapers (sometimes 30 a day) and had to be fed a puree to counteract reflux. He slept on his father chest every night so that if a problem arose dad could know it quick enough to take action and prolong the boy's life. The father rarely made more than \$25,000 a year. He and his wife also had two daughters to care for. The friend described how he felt from time to time. He had been in the navy on a sub earlier in life so he used a sub analogy that I unfortunately readily understood. He said that for much of the 13 years his life was akin to a sub hovering 2 inches above crush depth. Sometimes God seems unrelenting. Sometimes I wish the sub could just come up to periscope depth for a week or so. Wouldn't that be nice?

## Today I realized

Today I realized something as true that I had feared for years; that someone I cared for deeply for over twenty years is irreversibly self centered and therefore self deceived. I had hopes that this person would turn back to God, but it's clear now that isn't going to happen. I realize now that at best this person, if they live long enough to witness the rapture, will be left behind and will be bewildered as to why? Then all hell will break loose and unspeakable suffering will occur leading finally to a turning to God. At worst, this person has been “given over” by God to the things listed in Romans 1 and will spend eternity in hell.

What a loss? So many years of care and good times? For what? Could I have known? If I could have known, would I still have made the investment? Wow?

## Unique “Opportunity”

Because my first wife was so incredibly hard to love, I had unique opportunities to learn things that most gentlemen don't. For 20 years no good deed went unpunished. I was wrong and everything I said would be used against me. I realize now that if it hadn't been for her, I wouldn't have gone after the sanctification process as hard and as desperately as I did. I did all that I could to become more and more like Jesus hoping to be acceptable to her. Unfortunately, she wasn't looking for Jesus. None the less, I'm a better man for it now. I learned to love her and others “independent of their response”.

## Chapter Four – Struggling with needs

### So let me get this straight

God places His children on earth in a spiritual combat zone with almost no situational awareness that spiritual combat is ongoing. In their earthly suffering, His children, largely in a state of ignorance, make choices for “pleasure” (pleasure that appears to have been designed by the Father to be “sensed” by the children) rather than vaguely hinted at long term non earthly delayed gratification. This response is not favored by the Father and becomes a barrier to an eternal relationship with the Father.

So is it that the Father wants the children to acknowledge the designed capacity for pleasure ... and then abstain from it? Or does the Father want the children to find an appropriate age based “balance” of pleasure and delayed gratification? If so, where are the “knowable” parameters for the age based balance?

Could it be that any level of “need” for pleasure is inversely proportional to a lack of spiritual maturity?

Why would the Father create the opposite sex to be “desirable” rather than simply functionally necessary for procreation?

Why are some foods, colors, and visual scenes close to universally desirable (pleasurable) and some not?

Why are His children apparently programmed with something that they are not to submit to? Is it for the sake of “mastering” without “rejecting”?

If so ... where is the balance point?

### Who am I?

I know that I am born lost.

I know that even if I had not been born lost, I would have rebelled.

I know that I can demand nothing ... I have no inherent rights nor authority.

I’ve come to know that Jesus purchased standing for me.

I’ve apparently been given opportunities to learn things that many have not.

A few times I have stood alone .... perhaps because I was wrong and the odd man out?

Non the less, in standing alone, I’ve pushed on towards knowing the character of Jesus and setting my mind on emulating Him.

I’ve done sincere study and come to what would appear to be solid conclusions that are utterly unique?

I’ve searched for others who either corroborate or, with clarity, refute my findings.

I’ve found neither.

I've submitted my general findings to the wisest people I know with no response at all? Not yes. Not no.

I've exhibited servanthood in concrete ways to a few people. All but two have rejected me.

A few times I have been abandoned by those who profess to care for Jesus.

I treasure the child like acceptance of the remaining few who are not sophisticated enough to pronounce a final judgement on me. I hope that I do not let them down.

Who am I anyway?

Humans appear to be highly susceptible to self-deception.

I am a human ...

The concern is that I am self-deceived and therefore all but useless?

How do I know?

If the data I possess is in fact correct but top secret, what would God have me do?

Just wait?

Since the data would necessitate a change in my life, how can I not act on it?

Should I continue on as before the data but hold it in the back of my mind to be prepared if the data turns out to be right?

What if any legitimate needs do I have that I could reasonably expect other humans to attempt to meet?

If I were cut off from other humans, what would be my course?

In that case, how might God school me to know when I have it right or not?

Can I determine that coarse and bring it back into the realm of other humans around me?

Can I be "need less"?

Is that a legitimate goal?

Is that desirable?

If I could be need less, how would that effect people around me who are supposed to be recognizing legitimate needs and do what they can to meet them?

Act like I need the water from the well and let her draw it for me so that she senses accomplishment but don't actually need the water?

**Dear God don't actually ever need the water.**

And therein lies the dilemma.

Is it plausible to once again allow those closest to me to be aware of my so called "needs"?

God bless and protect those who are too young to know not to accept me. My last line of unvarnished encouragement.

Who am I?

I struggle to gain the answer. The silence is difficult. I have long admired Job in his ignorance never giving up on his God.

I think that I can at least take some comfort in the fact that I am “struggling”.

What a reassuring thing it would be to know that I have silence for now precisely because God has chosen to refine me in a manner like Job?

Who am I?

Could it be that I actually have it substantially right?

If I am substantially right and God is strategically silent for now, what is the future plan?

Even though I think I know ... how can I be assured?

Who am I?

### **If Adam was fully other centered**

If Adam was fully other centered, he would have had no need of a wife.

Perhaps something is off in our thinking of other centered?

Does “other centered” need a helper to be fully other centered?

How “loneliness” is filled is important. Apparently, the animals are not sufficient?

Based on the mental/emotional programming that God designed for humans, having more than one spouse is not other centered.

To have any emotional need is at risk of being self focused.

Why was God not sufficient for Adam?

To overdue physical needs like “eating” is not other centered.

If we see our neighbor in need and have the capacity to share, to help, and fail to do so, it is not other centered?

What happens when we have the ability to see more neighbors in need than we have capacity to remedy?

Are we at risk that in that case if we decide that since we cannot help all, we will not help any ...?

## Chapter Five – Lack of income questions

### Early this year when it was cold

Early this year when it was cold, I undertook a strategy of doing carpentry jobs to earn food money. To get the business started, I bid an outside deck remodel for \$10 per hour. I chose that very low rate in hopes of inducing the homeowners to start then (in the snow) rather than in the spring. From there, recommendations came in and I have averaged 20 hours per week at \$20 per hour. Between that income and my wife's almost 30 hours per week at Target, we have slowed the rate we are falling behind to almost break even. The bankruptcy filed on 5/12/11 is still unresolved. We have caught up to being only 3 months behind on the mortgage payment, but we are over a year behind on the line of credit. We haven't had enough money to pay the property taxes for a year. The cars need maintenance to keep them drivable and safe.

I set this course rather than walk off into the corn field, sit down, and wait to freeze to death so that I could go home. My hope was that somehow, I could economically hang on to 11/6/12. And even if I had no way to get to say 1/1/13, at least I would know that the cavalry was on the way and I could allow even more desperate economic circumstances to temporarily occur until the cavalry arrived.

On the early morning of 11/7/12, I was informed that the cavalry was not coming. I was on my own. So much for my strategy.

Now, it's getting cold again. I hope that as we start to once again fall farther behind on our mortgage payments in order to pay for the heat, that the lender continues to work with us? Who knows?

### The high voltage electric fence

The high voltage electric fence symbolizes economic persecution which can eventually terminate anyone.

People ask me "how are you doing"? A few are even smart enough to ask "how are you feeling? Here is a good explanation. I'm somewhere between 36" and 12" wide.

At first you don't even notice it is there. Most people don't. It's miles away. Too far to even notice. Then you do notice it as it closes in on you to a width of 100'. As you try not to panic and do all that you can to understand your situation, it closes in to 10'. When it gets to 4', desperation begins to set in. You may choose to try solutions that defy logic like trying to tunnel under with your bare hands, or strap yourself to a rocket to blast over, or try to find a way to short out the fence. As it closes in to 3', you realize that none of the previous wild thoughts about how to get out of the inevitable will work and only sheer cunning can save you. There is almost no room for any error at that width, not even the most minor. **Everything you attempt to do has to be perfect!** Eventually, as the fence narrows to 18", you stop fretting and thinking. This is the point where you realize that there is no longer anything you can do to survive. Only God can stop the fence now. Sensing that He chooses not to intervene, at 12" wide, you embrace your last few minutes .... then of your own will .... you grab both sides of the fence .... and go home.

## What to do

God's form of compensating people for their work in Heaven will be radically different from America's form of compensating. Look how He valued (rewarded) His Son's work? Jesus never owned any business, never took a cruise, never vacationed in Hawaii or even saw the Grand Canyon. He never had enough capital to even qualify for a business loan. Was at best underpaid, never received a bonus, never had a shot at sports or politics. He served. He loved. He gave of himself and he was rewarded in the short term with betrayal, virtual abandonment, ridicule, torture, and execution. Only after that earthly "reward" did Jesus realize His Heavenly reward. Now, He owns it all, and shares it all. Now all judgment is His. Now every knee will bow. He knew where He was from ... and where He was going. We know neither the way He did. To the degree that we are unable to "know" as He did, will we receive some compensation now?

The concept of "waiting" for a just reward is at best difficult. Others act and reap. We act and suffer and die then hopefully reap. How long is a person expected to act with no reward? 80 years? Is that doable, when most around him act and reap and then look at him as if he missed the boat? He will be at best misunderstood and at worst ridiculed. Is the wait compensatable? Is the "down payment" clear and sufficient? Are there "hints" that I'm missing? Is our "time" an aberration of how the "down payment" would have been otherwise perceived?

Mark 10 <sup>29</sup>Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake,<sup>30</sup>but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions ; and in the age to come, eternal life."<sup>31</sup>"But many who are first will be last, and the last, first."

## 80 years

If we are asked to wait 80 years to see return on investment, how do we continue investing with no capital?

I am trying to imagine any scenario that may work, farmer, truly Christian company, inventions, a resurgence of real estate, moving to where real estate is happening?

I am unclear on how I would either do better or have done better?

I passed up a chance at succeeding my father in his company when I made clear to him that Jesus and ministry were more important than obsessively pushing to earn money in real estate.

My home building company was advertised as Christian owned and operated. I gave low prices to two doctors to build their homes and was sued by one before I finished.

While employed at a Real Estate Development company, I refused to lie to a client and was fired.

I forgave and tried to rehabilitate my first wife.

I spent 6K and countless hours helping family remodel their basement only to be betrayed by them.

Three families who could easily have helped us have ignored us. It must be more than they can stand to deal with.

The dog being beat for bringing the newspaper comes to mind? If only somehow I had been more perfect?

It is very hard to conclude that I am anything other than a lowly pawn.

If true, I am unfortunately a pawn who knows way too much about knights, and rooks, and bishops. Oh to have been much slower mentally. Would I be more content?

Am I a wasted resource?

Am I so valued that 80 years of denigration will ultimately be worth it?

It is so funny to try and imagine earning enough income to actually have extra to have to worry about how to invest.

In part, I understand why Jesus only spent 3.5 years in ministry.

## Thoughts

I am being locked out of making a good living. What is interesting is that I had ever had an opportunity at all? Why. Why then, but not now?

When Jesus was doing carpentry, how important to him was it that the work be perfect? He knew that it wouldn't last and was irrelevant compared to ministry.

If you derive your income from taxes AND since taxes are not voluntary, are you profiting from coercion at best and extortion at worst? If a private school teacher gets paid by parents who choose to pay for their children's public education so be it. Is a public school teacher an accomplice to extortion?

Those who are allowed to succeed do so under the allusion that they earned it. God used Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Vanderbilt, Rockefeller, Carnage, JP Morgan, Edison, Westinghouse, Ford, Hughes, Gates, Jobs, and Zuckerberg ultimately to make His point that God is God and we are not. All of them mistakenly thought they earned it.

Who is allowed to be rich in this kingdom?

1. athletes
2. some artists
3. movie stars
4. movie producers
5. Illegal drug dealers
6. driven business men
7. airs
8. inventors who hold patents
9. people who sell to the government
10. people who work for the government
11. doctors
12. attorneys
13. politicians
14. pastors of large congregations who are not focused on Jesus

15. wolves in sheep's clothing
16. people who invest rich people's money
17. many public college professors
18. lottery winners
19. architects who want to make a name for themselves
20. kings, queens, princes and princesses.
21. dictators
22. tyrants
23. military junta
24. those who create places where people electronically congregate
25. those who control the land on which needed resources exist

Who is NOT allowed to be rich in this kingdom?

1. true Christians
2. construction workers
3. retail floor workers
4. most blue color workers
5. most people
6. lazy people
7. sick people
8. significantly mentally ill people
9. significantly handicapped people

Who will be rich in the eternal kingdom? Those who humble themselves and serve all.

Who will not be rich in the eternal kingdom? Those who are unjustly rich in this kingdom and the lazy.

When God puts you in a position where you have no material things to give your loved ones such that all you have to offer them is you, you quickly find out who loves you.

### **It Occurs to me**

It occurs to me that God knows how to make gold out of lead .... or out of nothing at all.

God sees the totality of the human condition and experience.

How does God view the actions of the upper crust relative to the vast majority of humanity?

Just like someone would buy a vowel on wheel of fortune to help figure out the word, today I wish I could buy some hope, just enough to figure out how to survive.

## See it clearly

I live in a world system where people who have more money than they need, struggle to find ways to **invest** the overage, while at the same time, billions of people don't have enough. Interesting paradox?

There are several theories as to why this paradox exists. Listing them from harshest and most arrogant to closest to the truth:

1. People with more than they need work harder than those who have need. This presupposes a uniform laziness on vast billion of individuals. While it may be true for some, it's not true for anywhere near all.
2. Another theory is that they work smarter. This presupposes either mental laziness or lack of God given capacity. While some hard workers may be mentally lazy, I suspect the number is few. If the issue is lack of God given ability, then the question is whether God is OK with His dummies being in need?
3. Some are just born in the right country. This may be substantially true and yet what is God's view on the responsibility of those "lucky ones" to assist the unlucky ones? Until the "information age" the people with more than they need may not have known the needy on the scale we know them today.
4. Some have made selfish choices, been caught, and are reaping the consequences. While this may be at least partially true, it's false for people like Bernie Madoff for most of his life.
5. Some willingly reject the true God in countries that are void of God. God then allows them the consequences of their actions. A good possibility, except how would one explain the wealth of the leaders of those countries?
6. Satanic forces are at work assisting the ungodly and hindering the godly. This seems to have the most credibility, but if true would indicate that the needy are always godly. Simply observing the verifiably lazy would indicate they are anything but godly.

Some hybrid of these theories may be the answer.

Some needy are lazy. Some are mentally slow. Some were born in a poor country. Some are reaping the consequences of their own actions. Some are needy because they willingly reject the true God. Some are needy precisely because they are godly.

To the degree that the wealthy understand that their wealth comes from God, the question is how should they live? Where is the balance between what they "need" and assisting others who legitimately are in need? The answer seems to be significantly more complex in light of our "information age". Ignorance must have been bliss years ago?

## Paid by honesty

Honesty – wouldn't it be interesting if we were all paid according to how honest we were instead of how hard working or smart working we were. It's been my experience that ninety plus percent of business owners are willing to compromise their morals and God's values in order to start or maintain their business. A little white lie here a little white lie there, cheating a client a little bit there, cheating your employees a little bit there, all adds up to a little bit higher profit for the owner.

We have a saying in America that if anyone works hard, they can be successful, that's total baloney, I know people who work extremely hard under the tyranny of a dishonest owner and who never get ahead. Never. So we hear the term working smart. We have to work smart these days. Once again that's just a by word for being craftier than your competition, cheat them before they can cheat you. There are valid points to working smart, don't get me wrong, but the main thrust of it is the Golden Rule. Dem dat has a da Gold, makes a da rules!

Wouldn't it be interesting if we were paid by how honest we were, which would include hard working if you are honest, which would include working smart if you are honest? But that's not how America was built. In America it is perfectly legal to under employ anyone so long as there are more workers than there are jobs. If a man with a family of three can't get a job making any more than ten dollars an hour, so be it. I think that minimum wage should be as some say a living wage, whether that's ten or twelve dollars an hour, I don't know. But it has to be enough for anyone who is willing to work honestly to support their family, at the lowest level maybe, but at least to support their family and six dollars or seven dollars will not do it. Now I don't have a problem paying six or seven dollars to high schoolers or young adults just coming out of High School who are not yet married and don't have a family to support. And I don't want to throw the economy into a tailspin by drastically increasing the minimum wage. But in some form or fashion we must be fair and honest to those younger men who are willing to work hard but have to support their families. Again, unfortunately in America, it's perfectly legal to under employ anyone so long as the labor market dictates.

### Time for ministry

Back in about 1979-80, the word from leadership was that if we could finish college and find a job that would perhaps only require 30 hours a week and learn to live meagerly, we would have more "time" for ministry. Sounded right. I suspect that as many of us began our secular working careers, we found that a minimum of 40 hours was required to "keep" our jobs and if we ever wanted to advance, 50 and 60 hours were going to be needed. Then many of us had children. Some of us wanted to even take a vacation with our families. Some of us wanted to have a vehicle that was actually dependable. Some of us wanted to raise our families in a school district that would give our children the best shot at succeeding when they graduated. Some of us had an opportunity to go "corporate". Some assisted in, then took over, family businesses.

The end result of all of this was of course the opposite of the goal. The goal was good but largely unattainable in North America at this time. I remember the expectation was that we should be teaching at least two and perhaps three times per week. Home church, small group, and perhaps main meeting, as it was called then. I remember thinking what it must be like to be able to fully discontinue a secular job and be able to come on staff full time? I remember the idea of passing a plate around was anathema. There were boxes "in the back" for those who could assist in the financial expenses that the fellowship had.

During my absence, things changed. My how things have changed? As I have returned, I find my age group of families have significant economic resources, overextended family schedules, and corporate anchors dictating how life will be lived on a short corporate leash. I find an "offering" at the newly named CT's and a 5% giving minimum in order to be a pseudo "member". I see facilities and building programs and staff and more staff and more staff...

I recognize now, looking back, that God manipulated my exit from Xenos at precisely the right time. That God again manipulated the difficult circumstances that followed, and that He has again manipulated the pseudo return to Xenos at this time. That time gap gave me a very unique look at the system and how

it evolved. I was the opposite of the frog in the water that was slowly being warmed and not recognizing it. I see the dramatic changes from the original goals. While I will always be grateful to God and to both gentlemen who started Xenos, I see now what I would do differently.

Strange? I remember the concept that all they initially wanted to be, was an underground church that stayed out of the limelight. Wow! What a reversal? I recognize that the original goal would have, by definition, been unachievable in that if the mission was successful, it would be noticed. The question then is, how do you handle the noticed success? In my opinion, the mission ended up looking far too much like a traditional denomination. I see now that if the mission could have had 20-year older wisdom than would have been possible at the time, that wisdom would have been better to make the structure more like what Paul did. Plant the local churches, encourage them, and let them go. The limiting factor now is the need to “hold on” to the home churches and to pay for the facilities and the staff, all of which is unfortunately counterproductive to the unlimited ministry that my wife and I have been so fortunate to experience.

At one time, I had a net worth of a half million. I know that’s not much, but it was a lot for me. About eight years later, that went to a negative net worth of a quarter million. My vocation has a significant amount of risk in it. I’m glad to say that at this time I’m finally up to a total net worth of -0-.

I own nothing.

I owe nothing.

I am Gods to do with as He pleases now.

Finally!

I have skills that grant me earning capacity, but the deal seems to be that I never earn anything unless God allows it? For 8 years that concept drove me nuts and I worked very hard and very smart to do it my way to absolutely no avail. Now, miraculously (seriously, **MIRACULOUSLY!**) I trust God to provide in His time, in His way, at His level of economic support. He seems to do this on a “just in time” basis, yet He has never allowed me to starve nor freeze. At this point, I work about 10 hours a week at commercial real estate and most of the remainder of the waking hours in some form of ministry to God’s children. The very goal that I started out with almost 30 years ago, God has finally helped achieve. I came along kicking and screaming and fretting and doubting. God did it anyway. To God be the glory.

How God got me there is the interesting part? It took a combination of being improperly but legally sued by “family” members (my first wife and my wicked stepmother), a perfectly legal foreclosure by the lender for the home I designed, built with my own hands, and a unique “opportunity” to serve. The result was vacating the “owned” structure and moving 160 miles away to a busted down, three addition sort of farm house where we would live for the next 9 months rent free. In exchange, we were the designers and laborers for a major “remodel” for an absolutely wonderful young family who desperately needed the help. As that progressed, we realized what God had done. We quickly recognized that going forward being “gypsies” was most likely how we would finish out our lives. Once that project was complete, we then moved into my wife’s parent’s basement to assist her patents as they were 95 years of age and finishing out their lives with significant medical restraints. Her father passed about a year ago at 97. Her mother is still going today at 98. In order to make their 60-year-old house sailable once she passes to anyone other than a slum lord, we have once again engaged in a significant “remodel” project.

We are not sure about where God may “lead” us next? This from the guy who wanted to see the holes in Jesus’ hands. Imagine me using the non-engineering word “lead”? What a sense of humor God has!

When her mother passes, we may stay and use the house as a ministry house and reach out to among other things, the college students who are right in our area attending a branch of OSU. We have two adult children and 4 grandchildren right here that we should perhaps stick around to minister to? We may move to the Columbus area and rent an apartment and finally get more hands on involved with the fine folks at Xenos who have evidenced their love for us. God is good.

I see now, looking back, how God got us exactly where we wanted to be, where we needed to be, but where we had no earthly idea of how to get to? The wisdom I now ask for is how to help anyone else who wants the same thing to get there, hopefully without the extreme difficulty.

While early on it was I who thought I earned this or that, I recognize now that the only thing I have “earned” completely on my own, with no help whatsoever, is God’s righteous condemnation. Everything else that I have is pure Grace from God. Everything! That may have been one of the early step building blocks that God knew He could use to pull us along. I suspect the other was a “servant’s” heart. Right attitude, poor circumstances, so God changed the circumstances. Fairly simple actually when I look back at it?

So, I would encourage you, perhaps it’s time to get out of the warm, safe, dry boat, leave the other 11 sceptics behind and walk to Jesus. As Danna Key said, there’s more peace in the storm with Jesus, than in the boat alone. Even so, come Lord Jesus.

## Chapter Six – More than a pawn

### God can dodge bullets

God can move more feet per second than our fastest explosive.

In fact, God can de-materialize faster than the explosive can reach Him and re-materialize after the shrapnel and shock wave have passed Him.

God is never at risk of being “bought off”.

God allows some to be bought off by the enemy, but I can't think of a circumstance where He “buys off” someone who otherwise doesn't want Him.

God seems to allow an “unfair” fight. His children are bound by “other centeredness” while the enemy's children are given direct supernatural assistance.

If I am just a pawn, why am I still here? Why not play me, let me be captured and taken off the playing field so that a knight or rook or bishop can better position themselves for the eventual check mate?

Why is God waiting so long with so many close calls before he allows the enemy to off me?

Is there value in reserving His last few pawns until just before the check mate is assembled?

Is there any possibility at all that I've been kept in virtual secrecy and readied to suddenly perform a castling move and enter the real field of play with great latitude?

### Healing

Not unlike the movie A Beautiful Mind where he realizes that the little girl never ages, I'm mentally wrestling several things to the ground, trying to understand, trying to heal.

I realize now that there appears to have been a time or times that my first wife actually wanted me, times when she forgot that she was bound and determined not to care for me. That truth may not be important to anyone else ... but it's desperately important to me.

I have wrestled with how Jesus must of course “know” my condition in that He was betrayed as I was. The initial conclusion is that if Jesus had the strength and resolve to deal with it and proceed, so should I?

But I now realize that the little girl never gets older.

While He indeed knows my condition, I realize now that it's not because He lived it with Judas. Jesus was betrayed by Judas, but His hope was in His Father. **No destabilizing occurred.** Not one ounce! In fact, Jesus saw it coming. It was not a surprise attack. Also, Jesus was temporarily **abandoned** by His Father on the cross but not **betrayed**. He knew exactly why the temporary separation had to occur. I knew none of this in the way He did.

It's one thing to lose a loved one to death. It's more intense to lose a loved one to abandonment. It's devastating to lose the one you trust more than all, the one you are the most intimate with, to **betrayal**. It's a living death, abandonment, and attack combined in one event.

The realm of possible responses are:

1. Intense anger and unforgiveness - which indicates that the one angered never loved the betrayer.
2. Suicide - either physically or emotionally. This fails to recognize, as Jesus did, that God is the ultimate one who will never abandon .... even if all others do.
3. A deep struggle to nonsensically move towards God for understanding of the betrayer and the situation and the solution of forgiveness. The only way I can describe this is like a battered soldier crawling away from a bomb blast toward the medic. A combination of being in shock and on auto pilot. The only hope at that moment is that the soldier makes it to the medic before he bleeds out. But he must try.

Imagine the plight of Job? A man who was already pre-disposed to wondering if he had "done enough" to please God. [Job 1:5](#) When the days of feasting had completed their cycle, Job would send and consecrate them, rising up early in the morning and offering burnt offerings *according to* the number of them all; for Job said, "Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." Thus Job did continually.

Then it hits. Imagine his first thoughts; What did I do wrong? **Is this my fault?**

Consider the agony of Job who loved his children so dearly ... and then in an instant ... they're gone! Guilt? Oh my? If only I had presented more burnt offerings for the children?

Why is God angry with me?

Worse yet, imagine Mrs. Job's position; What have you done! You brought this on our house! My children are dead! The servants are dead! The livestock are dead. We are financially ruined! What have you done you bastard! For all I care you can just curse God and die!!!

Interesting that God initially allowed Satan to do as he wished except for one thing, he couldn't lay a hand on Job. His children were killed. His workers were killed. The livestock was gone. Why didn't Satan take Mrs. job?

You got it. Satan knew. Perhaps the most crushing blow of all was Mrs. Job turning on her husband in his moment of extreme need. Oh, how difficult that must have been for Job? Do you think he loved his wife? I think so. What an incredible man!

Of all the animals, none was found sufficient for Adam. Adam needed Eve. God designed it that way. He trusted Eve. He relied on her. I suspect that Job had done the same.

Imagine Job's plight?

And then it gets worse. His three "friends". Don't we all have friends like those. Well meaning, self-righteous, blind guides.

Imagine Job's condition towards the end. In physical torment, emotional anguish, mental confusion, abandoned by his wife, and berated by his friends. And yet he desires God. An amazing man! So amazing that, prior to John the baptizer, God specifically mentions him as one of the three greatest men ever. [Eze 14:14](#) *even though* these three men, Noah, Daniel and **Job** were in its midst, by their *own* righteousness they could *only* deliver themselves," declares the Lord GOD.

[Eze 14:20](#) even though Noah, Daniel and Job were in its midst, as I live,” declares the Lord GOD, “they could not deliver either their son or their daughter. They would deliver only themselves by their righteousness.”

As we know, Job’s friends had it all wrong. They displeased God. [Job 42:7](#) It came about after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, that the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, “My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends, because you have not spoken of Me what is right as My servant Job has.

As Job forgave and prayed for those men, **healing** began. What an astounding picture of Jesus.

As you know, God blessed Job with twice what he had lost ... except for children. Ten for ten. What must it have been like for Mrs. Job to humble herself and bear children again? She must have been convinced that Job still loved her, still wanted her. Perhaps she leaned her place before God?

Do you suppose that she taught her three daughters to respect and support their husbands?

Betrayal by a beloved spouse is perhaps the most devastating blow the enemy has in his arsenal. One designed to ultimately undermine the victim’s love for God. Those who survive are special indeed. They are now bullet proof. The enemy has helped create the very entity that he is incapable of ultimately defeating. This “special” person could no more deny God than deny gravity. This “special” person becomes extremely dangerous. The enemy has created a monster, a Frankenstein. The enemy took a calculated risk towards early destruction of a potentially valuable player and lost. Now the enemy is doing all that he can within the rules of engagement to correct that mistake.

Can you imagine God giving the enemy permission to initially attack, as He did with Job, knowing that my ultimate response would be similar to Job’s? Is it possible that my crushing will become useful to God? My training is not with bullets or fists, but with truth, God’s Truth.

I think I found my \$20 of hope.

### Handy capped by God

A few people in my life think that I’m really smart. Shows what they know. I tell them that for most of my life I thought that I was average at best. I realize now that I’m slightly more gifted than that. Still, at best, I would describe myself as only slightly above average. I do this because I see the mental horsepower of my three adult children, all of which are easily capable of making me look like I’m sitting still. If that wasn’t enough, I look at the grandchildren. WOW! These kids are just flat bright. Their capacity to learn, to remember, to connect, and to figure out how to get into trouble is amazing. That I get an early opportunity to guide and direct them to Jesus is such a privilege. Shortly, my only advantage, the wisdom gained sheerly from my chronological age, will be eclipsed by their fantastic little minds and I will be on the tipping point of irrelevancy ... or trusted advisor (even though on my **very best day** ... with a triple venti in me ... I run at half their speed).

And yet, God seems to have used my two mental weaknesses (severe memory recall issues and significant “dual processing” difficulties) to His advantage. I tell people that I have a perfect memory, but almost no memory recall. Interestingly enough, that forces me to work hard at remembering a very few number of very important things and then “deriving” all the rest. Most of you are not “gifted” in this way. You actually “remember” data. Unfortunately, in your “remembering”, you may miss “connecting” the data. In my lack of capacity to recall data, I have an advantage over most of you. I have to look hard for small bits of data that are the most significant, then build from those. Further, my lack of capacity to dual process like most women do effortlessly, causes me to be extremely “focused” on one thing at a time. It’s the only way I can function.

Guess what happens when you get a fella who is slightly above average in intelligence, and a “focused” driver? Well, you get an individual who’s not content with routine explanations of how life works. You get a person who’s driven to dig in and find out for himself what’s true and what’s false. You get a doubting Thomas who looks weak ... right up to the point where he puts his finger in Jesus’ wounds and finally and forever connects the dots and acknowledges irrevocably that Jesus is indeed Lord. Then you have a fella ready to give everything for what he **knows** to be true. You have a dangerous fella. The enemy is aware of this phenomenon.

### Sabbatical

By the time I graduated from school, I was working physically hard at least 40 hours a week. At the age of 24, I had an opportunity to “work” by thinking, rather than lifting. I spent the next 30 years doing that work. Sometimes 60 hours a week. Sometimes for three days in a row with a polyphasic sleep program. I have worked hard ... for a long time.

At the age of 20, I was coming to know about God, about being “other centered”. My work ethic fit hand in glove with “serving”. I’ve been working on becoming a servant for the last few years. My capacity to do physical work is diminished now. My value is in thinking and perhaps teaching. Kind of like Forrest Gump when he’s finally done “running”, I’m rather tired now, and I look forward to “going home”. Not unlike a student in the last few weeks of their senior year, I’m thinking about putting the study down and trying to enjoy life. For about 35 years, that concept was forbidden in my mind. Now, I’m warming up to it. In fact, the more accurate comparison is a soldier who’s going off to war in a short time wishing to enjoy all the things and people around him that he can, knowing the difficulty of the mission ahead. I would like to get off the churchianity merry go round and enjoy life for a while.

I have a sense that I have permission to do that.

## Chapter Seven – What I’ve learned

### Final Authority

I have learned that most people are their own final authority. Some may claim that parents, the police, the courts, or even the constitution are their final authority. My findings are that unless their final authority is God’s word, then when push comes to shove, all the so called authority goes out the window leaving only self. And self is a bad place to be when push does come to shove.

### Tell me when I say something that is not 100% accurate AND true

1. God created all things.
2. Therefore – God created me.
3. God sustains the entire universe.
4. Therefore – God sustains my life. I have no sustaining capacity on my own apart from God.
5. In Adam’s sin, all died spiritually.
6. Therefore – Even if I had never committed any sin, I was born condemned.
7. Therefore - the only thing that I have ever “earned” all on my own, without anyone else’s help ... is condemnation.
8. Therefore – every good thing that I have is a pure gift of grace, completely and utterly unearned and undeserved.
9. If at this moment in time, God has chosen to continue to sustain my life, AND recognizing that every good thing that I have is a gift of grace, completely and utterly unearned and undeserved, then all I that have, and all that I am ...is owed to God.
10. Therefore - my “purpose” is inexplicable .... outside of “in service to God”.
11. To the degree that my “purpose” is anything other than “in service to God”, my purpose is misguided, reckless at best .... catastrophic at worst.
12. Therefore – Humble is the goal and Pride is the enemy.
13. The one in the “Kingdom of Heaven” that is the greatest is the Humble Servant of all ... Jesus.
14. The next thing I should do is ask God to help me be more like His Son.

### Love

I’d like to share a definitive definition of God’s love for us, and by implication what should be our love for His children. I stole this from the good folks at Xenos Christian Fellowship:

The giving of one’s self,  
In every area,  
For the good of another,  
Independent of their response

## Changing Focus

Possibly the fastest way to break a self focus is to have to serve others. When we have no time to contemplate our difficult plight due to being consumed with ministering to another, self tends to fade like a bad habit.

## Concept of marriage

My first wife fell in love with the concept of marriage ... not me. At some points she may have needed me. At others she may have appreciated me, but mostly she used me. Before you assign shame to her ... asses your own heart.

No matter how I tried to love her like Jesus loves her, she ultimately rejected me. I realize now that she wasn't looking for the real Jesus in me. She was in love with a concept ... one that turned out to be tragically flawed. She rejected the real Jesus long before she rejected me. None the less, the rejecting was devastating. I had unfortunately relied on her. I had trusted her. I had confided in her. I had been vulnerable with her. I had done those things that today's concept of marriage indicates we should do.

Silly me.

She has always been and will always be forgiven. I'm thankful for the time I had with her. She will always be my first wife. The question is, if we tend to fall in love with a false concept of marriage with a spouse that we can see, how do we avoid falling in love with a false concept of God that we cannot see?

## Pursuit of Christ

When one in the marriage pursues happiness and the other pursues Christ, the eventual outcome is predictable. It's only a matter of time until the gap between the two paths widens to the point that the one pursuing happiness will abandon or even betray the one pursuing Christ.

What then does the one pursuing Christ do?

When both pursue happiness the chances of staying together are decent, but the imminent meeting with the Father becomes problematic.

When both pursue Christ, the journey will be very difficult. Initially the sanctification issues, willingly entered into, are tough hurdles. If the couple is successful in that venture, persecution begins.

I understand now the admonition from Jesus to his scribe John to "overcome".

The false reasoning that, a grace filled God has as His highest priority our happiness, is a magnificently placed lie. Reminds me of the garden. The one pursuing happiness will inevitably see the problem as the one pursuing Christ. They are "Hollier than thou". They are not "fun loving". They are rigid. They are "always right". The blindness never allows the pursuer of happiness to see that it is they who are the problem. Then the imminent abandonment, first of Jesus, then the spouse. It always occurs in that order. Nothing the pursuer of Christ can do to change the outcome. God alone opens the eyes to see.

## Having Jesus as your husband

I've had the occasion to think quite a bit about becoming a better husband by becoming more like Jesus. The idea seems obvious ... doesn't it? After all, wouldn't any wife want their husband to be more loving, more patient, more caring, more respecting of their time, more of a family man, more spiritually focused, a better leader, etc.? We husbands do seem to get the list from time to time. And we should endeavor to love our wives as Jesus loves. No doubt.

But I got to thinking that many wives also want a "fun loving" husband and a "surprise me" husband, perhaps even an "impulsive" husband. Not sure about that part of Jesus' character? I suspect that the one that many wives would not like is that if their husband had the perfect character of Jesus, he would by definition **never be wrong**? How would that go over? Some husbands aren't tuned in to their wife's "thinking" or "emotions". They sometimes ruin the moment by having to be told what she's thinking, what she's feeling. Alas, the perfect Husband will be able to track with her even though she says nothing! Just what she's always wanted! A husband whose intuition for her is as though he could **read her mind**!

But what if he can read it 24/7?

So many wives sincerely desire God. Their passion for Him is wonderful. Imagine if they had a husband that, because of his Christlike character, they desired in a like kind way? Is that doable? Is it possible? Does a wife want in a husband what she desires in Christ? I suspect not? Christ is their savior and Lord. Their husband is a goof ... on a good day.

So why as a husband should I pursue the character of Christ to be a better husband? I don't suspect that most wives want Jesus as their husband? Won't they have a surprise coming in the near future?

Men, on the other hand desire Jesus for differing reasons. Not typically in a passionate way. Men recognize the gap in their general character compared to Jesus. The smart ones pursue making change. With the assistance of the Holy Spirit, some men make significant progress. So many character flaws to put behind us. Such a long road to His perfection. That we will not complete the process before we pass is inevitable, but upon meeting Jesus, we can begin to continue the process. He's no threat to a man.

I can only imagine how difficult it will be for women as they first meet their Savior, their Groom for the first time, having never concurred the earthly dilemma of wanting an "everything husband" only to find out that the "everything" they wanted never did look like Jesus?

## Patience

I'm fairly thick .... but I think I figured it out?

For those unfortunate young souls who come to know the Lord and recognize that they should ask Him for patience .... God sends children. We're now off to the races! Patience here we come!

For those tired 30 something souls who recognize that one dose of patience isn't enough and sheepishly ask Him, (on faith) for more .... God allows a spouse to decide that the one asking for patience is unlovable at this time.

For those maturing middle age souls who recognize that there is yet some semblance of impatience left to be eradicated and ask Him for more, knowing He will surely answer .... God lets die the impatient ones' lifelong dreams and holds out that Heaven is the rightful place to see them realized.

Best I can tell:

Patience is learning to deal with the sleepless nights and endless attention that children demand.

Patience is letting go of the dream .... even the dream to succeed for the Lord .... recognizing that this "now" is not the final act. That it's only scene one, the testing ground, boot camp .... in preparation for the "real thing" in Heaven.

10 minutes to type, 18 years to realize.

### Non Verbal Communication

One of the things that I've learned when I had small children was that I really enjoyed being a human jungle Jim and playing with the little ones. I remember watching God wire their young brains. I was astonished at their capacity to learn! It was far beyond mine. What became evident was that as they were learning to talk, to communicate, that largely I was the dummy. They could mostly understand me and what I wanted them to do or not do, but at times of frustration I couldn't clearly understand them and what their need was.

One thing I did finally recognize was one of their non verbal communications. Before they could get a cohesive sentence out they would toddle over to me, look up at me and raise their arms in the air. Cool! Even the idiot that I am could understand that their gesture was clear .... pick me up dad. I'm a slow learner but I can be taught!

Then they grew and eventually they didn't even want me to be the human jungle Jim. The non verbal communication turned to teenage "eye rolling" and unfortunately, I understood that all too well. In some senses, the younger days were easier, less "complex"? When I met my second wife, her grandchildren took to me instantly. They are such a joy to interact with. They are so quick! I actually taught some algebra to the 11 and 8 year olds last week. We have four grandchildren now, and to my delight, each one as a youngster did the same non verbal communication to me as my kids did. Pick me up!

Watching this phenomenon, especially after all the loss that I've had got me to thinking that God was giving me a picture and once again patiently waiting for one of His "slower" sons to finally catch on. And I finally did. What interested me in the little one's gesture was that I had "seen" this picture somewhere else? But where? But What?

And then it came to me, it was in church? I've been in churches where people who are worshipping God (singing, praising, yielding) raise their arms exactly as my toddlers did. What was the similarity? Then it came clear. When you think about it, it's all too obvious. When my toddlers looked up at me and raised their arms, that non verbal communication meant several things. It initially meant pick me up = hold me. But by implication it communicated so much more like:

I need you  
I want you  
Please accept me  
You are acceptable to me  
I love you

Wow! Now think of the adult in church? Are they not in a non verbal way communicating the exact same thing to their Father?

I need you  
I want you  
Please accept me  
You are acceptable to me  
I love you  
Hold me

Then a few seconds later the really devastating thought hit. Beyond the adult yielding themselves to their grace filled God in worship, I had seen this picture of outstretched arms before.

WOW!

Of course! It was on the cross! It was Jesus. It was Jesus using the identical non verbal communication to us:

I need you  
I want you  
Please accept me  
You are acceptable to me  
I love you  
Hold me

WOW! I will never see a small one raising their arms the same anymore. Just like God's rainbow constantly evidencing to us that He will never again destroy all life, the little ones raising their arms is a constant living picture of God's incredible desire for us.

### **Having children is supremely illogical and irrational**

I fully realize that having children is supremely illogical and irrational. A parent has no assured capacity, nor authority to modify a lack of capacity, to meet the child's physical needs. The parent has no assurance that the child will in any way care for them .... let alone God. Statistically "most" children will reject God. Yet the parent is compelled to in every way care for the child regardless of the child's response to either the parent ... or God.

It is now apparent that God has designed an unovercomable urge for most women to bear children. While at the same time He has designed an animal like instinct for men to crave mating with a woman. The two combined fully irrational drives tend to produce offspring. This must be God's general will. That parents complete His will in this area under His guidelines is therefore critical lest the offspring be terminated, abandoned, neglected, abused, or ignored. We are to love them as God loves us.

As new parents, we have a maximum difficulty learning curve. As we have more children, portions of the curve flatten. It appears that few of us are in any way qualified to be parents until about the time that we become grandparents. However, about that same time, the parents are still up against that steep learning curve in trying to parent their adult children. Parenting a 30 something is in many ways more difficult than parenting teenagers. I threatened in jest one time to send one of the 30 somethings to their room, to which they replied, "oh please would you? I could use some quiet time." As the adult children approach 40 something, they begin to realize the hell they put their parents through and actually welcome the parents help and advice.

When the grandchildren were young, I had the good fortune to be able to spoil them in a way that I was unable to do with their parents when they were young. I had a little more money to spend on them, and lots more time. As the grandchildren approach adulthood, I see yet again one of my mistakes. The spoiling partly held them back from assuming adulthood. I once commented to their parents that they seem to be holding on to letting others do for them rather than assume responsibility for themselves, in other words they were “spoiled”. The parent rightly looked at me and exclaimed “well who spoiled them!”. Indeed. I did. Guilty as charged.

I recognize now that if I have the good fortune of great grandchildren, my goal will be to spend a little less on getting them “material things” and work hard on spending all the more “time” with them.

### **To whom much is given ...**

I recognize that a potential dual application is possible relative to the verse indicating that “to whom much is given, much is expected”. I can now understand that to also mean that, to whom God allows or gives much “trouble”, God then expects positive growth and wisdom and capability. In His allowing the trouble, He recognizes we are capable of bearing the trouble as we trust and rely on Him. And He is sometimes pleased to crush us. I heard Chuck Swindoll quote someone who said that it is unlikely that God will use a man mightily until He crushes him thoroughly. Unfortunately, I agree and understand. I’m not yet to the point where I welcome it.

In a similar way, I’m encouraged by Peter indicating that those who are suffering in the flesh have ceased from sin. While I would never claim to be without sin, I recognize that in general, sin issues are less and less of my life as ministering to others is more and more. Unfortunately, ministry sometimes brings persecution. Persecution causes us to either backtrack into self, or to press on recognizing that we are now at risk. Press on toward Jesus!

### **Power**

Many years ago, a knife or sword could kill a man. When the Chinese invented gun powder, a man with a sword was dead meat to a man with a gun. In the 60’s an actor on Star Track with a phaser out did the man with a gun. Today, Neo simply stops the bullets in midair. God “dropped” Ananias and Saphira on the spot. Any time He wanted, Jesus could have dropped anyone threatening Him with any man made weapon. Imagine Jesus as he was being arrested by men with mere swords. That’s power!

### **Capacity!**

I have realized that to be effective in ministry that I have to pay attention to certain levels or “capacities” in my life. If I’m low on financial capacity, then I have no time. If I’m low on time, then no service can be rendered. If I’m low on emotional energy then I’m not as capable of serving others. These days I try to keep my financial, emotional, and time capacities as full as I can so that I can serve more effectively. That means saying no to some spending on self. Saying no to some who just “have to have my time”. Saying no to some black holes who would suck every ounce of emotional energy out of me if I’d let them. Usually if two of the three capacities are OK, then I can be effective. The enemy is well aware of this truth and of course militates against the storing of those capacities. Rope a dope and rabbit trailing are common techniques used by the enemy to sucker me in to losing time and emotional capacity, but the most devastating is when the enemy prohibits the refilling of financial capacity.

## Change

It occurs to me that most of us have to grapple with a change in lifestyle as we go from being in school to being in the work force. We have to make a change from constant learning to productive doing. The focus is remarkably different.

In a similar way, all of us who are known by God should begin to make adjustments in how we live in a world all but devoid of God, to an existence centered on God. What is important to most today, primarily externals and temporals, will most likely not be the focus when we are in the direct presence of God.

I wonder if the change from this world to the next will be even more stark than the change we encountered going from education to work? How might we prepare now to lessen the shock? Jesus said that John was the most righteous among men and the least in the Kingdom. Wow! I have a long way to go.

Mat 11:11 - "Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen *anyone* greater than John the Baptist! Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

## Putting it together

The older I get, the more I realize how different I am from God. That's a good thing. While I struggle to understand why His thinking and positions are better (by definition they are) than mine, it helps me to struggle to understand His thinking and strain for His character. Early on, the issue was moral character. Lots of modification was needed. Changing from predominantly self centered to the goal of fully other centered. Having made substantial progress in the personal arena, lately it's been waking up to His strategies for the big picture stuff.

Here's one example: As a grandparent, I realize more than ever the preciousness of the children. I long to nurture their minds and characters. I see many of the mistakes I made as a parent, sometimes too strict, sometimes too lenient. With the grandchildren, all the pressure is off. So much more wisdom to draw on. I suspect Grandchildren are yet another form of God's grace in that most of us don't deserve a second chance to parent. I think that most of us would risk our lives to protect a little one from anyone or anything that could severely harm them. More and more, I see all little ones as "my neighbor" and worthy of protection and care and adoration and encouragement. Having shared that, I realize that if I were God ... there would never be any children's hospitals.

No chance in hell!

And yet there are children's hospitals. Those hospitals deal with diseases that kill and cripple and confuse the little ones. They deal with the accidents and abuses heaped on little ones. God is so much bigger than I am! He finally gets me to a position of being willing to give all that I am for other, especially the vulnerable, then He confronts me with His willingness to allow suffering on a scale that is so far over my head that I can't get even a small handle on it. To be sure, my position is wrong. Finding out why it's wrong proves to be difficult. Clearly, I'm missing some big pieces of the puzzle.

I know that the suffering of the children may end up affecting so many others in a positive way, but I can't bring myself to make that sacrifice. Not yet. I just can't bear to observe the little ones suffering even when I know it will ultimately lead to positive outcomes for others. God help me understand.

## The view is great

My dad taught me the game of chess when I was a young boy. I enjoyed it and played it marginally well. As a young man, the person who led me to Christ taught me three level chess. Far more challenging. I did poorly at that. My teacher was genius level and ended up working for NASA. He did well. The only way I could begin to compete with him was to look straight down through all three translucent levels and see what would have looked like a regular one level board.

I was reading that there are two types of mazes that one could try to find their way out of. One that if you take say your right hand and run it along the walls, you will eventually find the exit. But using that method with the other type of maze will effectively lead you in circles. The only hope for that type of maze is to be lifted up over the maze walls so as to take a peek at where the exit is, then go back down and try to make your way there.

I've been fortunate in learning about God such that from time to time, He seems to grant me a look down through the man-made series of chess boards and view more clearly His simplicity. Sometimes God lifts me just high enough out of the maze of human confusion to view the direction of His solutions.

I'm grateful to God for these great views, but I'm having a difficult time trying to explain what I see to those still viewing the multi-level Christendom boards from the side ... or still stuck in the maze of denominationalism and can't find their way to the real Jesus. At this time, few are interested in what I've seen. The rapture will change that of course, but I wish more would explore now ... before the distress occurs.

## Inverse proportions

The people closest to you are the easiest to forgive. When those who you barely know but whom you rightly assume will treat you fairly fail to do so, they are very hard to forgive. Hard to pray for. Hard to love as in "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you". This seems counter intuitive in that someone who you barely know may do wrong by you only one essential time and you have great difficulty, while a longtime friend or spouse may have wronged you more severely and over a longer time and yet you tend to forgive them and make every attempt to work the issues out. Depth of relationship is key.

If you do love your spouse, you will not "throw them out" if they fail you. You will be grieved, hurt, feel betrayed, and perplexed, but you will not have any compunction to retaliate. If over time your spouse remains unrepentant and by their actions bring risk to the marriage, then you may reluctantly ask them to leave for a set period of time or until the risky behavior changes for the better. I can tell you that you will know more abandon them than Jesus abandoned you.

There seems to be an inverse proportion with **worldly self esteem** and **identity in Christ**. The most gregarious individuals out there are also the most insecure. The most secure in Christ are often barely noticed and rarely rattled. I see it like a scale where the more weight of "worldly self esteem" one loads on the side of the "true self", the lower that side of the scale sinks. Conversely, the more weight one loads on the "identity in Christ side", the more the "true self" on the other side is lifted. Lifted towards God.

Again, I see an inverse proportion of anger and compassion. The more a Christian lets go of anger towards an individual, the more true compassion comes flooding in to fill the void and balance the

equation. I see no place where anger is gone but no compassion is present. By design, compassion fills the void even if we don't immediately desire it. In knowing that, a solution to anger and bitterness towards someone is always at the ready. We must choose.

### **I never knew you?**

For years I've wrestled with Matt 7:21-23. I've never performed miracles nor cast out demons? Why should I think that my fate would be any different from those who did? How is it that God would proclaim "depart from me. I never knew you"?

I have an analogy that I hope helps illustrate the issue. I voted twice for George Bush. Over the years, I came to significantly understand his thinking. In fact I could generally predict what he would do. Imagine if I had a flood destroy my house and in the interim I decided to go see my good buddy George for a temporary place to stay. I knock on his door and when he answers and says "hello can I help you" I say "George good buddy, it's me Steve", could I stay with you a few days? To which he replies "I'm sorry but I don't think I know you"? And I would counter with "well I've seen you hundreds of times on TV. I voted for you twice. I even donated money to your campaign"! To which he would again say, "I'm sorry but I never knew you".

In the same way, many sit in church and hear about God, some sing, some give money, and some even serve on boards. The problem is that they only know "of Him". In fact most Christians no more "know God" than they "know" George Bush. To know Him is critical. To know of Him is worthless.

## Chapter Eight – Churchianity

### The bubble

Not unlike in the Truman show, we churchers have allowed the professional clergy to create a fictitious societal bubble ... and then trap us in it. Complete with extra biblical concepts like ecclesiastical furniture, membership requirements, liturgies, worship services, responsive readings, and on and on. While these things may not all be inherently harmful, they're nothing more than 2,000 years of modified traditions. Living in the bubble, we tend to think that either everyone lives like us, or that only our way is "correct". Any portion of either position is unfortunate ... at best.

It gets worse. Unfortunately, most of us churchers not only live in the small bubble of our local congregation and our denomination, we also live inside a bigger bubble of the most myopic people group God ever created, Americans. We Americans are utterly consumed with ourselves. We are after all the center of the world. And New York is the world's most important city! We typically either watch CNN and MSNBC ... or Fox. We rarely view the BBC. Why should we?

As Americans we live in a bubble.

As Christian Americans we live in a double bubble.

As members of some denomination inside of Christendom ... inside America ... well you get the point.

Trying to help anyone inside the bubble(s) recognize that they're even in a bubble, is best characterized by the dilemma in the Matrix. Inside is the dream world. One you can't detect. In the movie, Neo had a suspicion that something was amiss. Perhaps you do as well? Like the movie, it's very hard to simply "tell" someone about the bubble. The mind resists that with all its energy. Like the Matrix, most people have to be shown what the bubble is, and what it's like outside the bubble.

Not unlike Neo, my wife and I got "flushed" by God. It was just about as traumatic. The mental anguish as we tried to reckon our new reality made us nauseated just as it did Neo. It took time (years) to recognize what God was showing us. Now outside, it's simple to see. We're glad to be free.

Outside the bubble, there is no such thing as "denomination". Someone once asked the question "Is Christ divided"? There is no such thing as a "worship service". The highest form of worship is loving God's children. Any of them. That act brings the highest possible honor to Him. Songs and skits are often dynamic, none of which are wrong to do, but not in any way mandated in the NT. It's nothing more than our "tradition" ... inside the bubble. Outside the bubble, there is no such thing as a "head pastor". Just Jesus. Outside the bubble, there's no need for a "south campus". Those are typically the egos of the "head pastor" gone amuck.

Outside the bubble, there is just the church ... and she "is". She needs nothing. She just is. Just as a tree is. You don't have to "manage" the tree. It does what trees are supposed to do. It is after all, a tree. The church is after all, the church. The church is by definition, all those around the world who are "known" by God, those who desire Him. There may be a small handful here in one congregation and another handful there in another congregation, none of which have any real power because they're in their own bubbles and don't connect with each other regionally, nationally, or worldwide.

After the church comes out, those who subsequently come to be known by Him will, by definition, know each other. For the first time ever, the new young “church” will be unified and powerful. God will break our self created bubble(s).

The good news is that from outside one can re-enter, as in the Matrix, and love folks trapped inside. We don’t even need a land line phone! God moves us about ... at His will.

### If God is:

Why so hidden?

Why create five empirical senses then choose to use none of them to evidence Himself?

Have we lost a “sense”? I see no evidence of that in the bible???

Is “faith” a severally diminished 6<sup>th</sup> sense?

Why would God create a category of life that is so devastatingly mentally inferior to Him?

Why the game? Adam to Noah to Abraham to David to Jesus to???

Why not deal with the issue at the onset? Why allow 7,000 years of human suffering?

Are we who love God born to suffer while we observe the wicked prosper and enjoy life?

Was not our rebellion beyond predicted and actually desired, so as to make some cosmic point?

What is the point here? What are we to learn? What kind of experiment is this?

Why the allowable human suffering? Why demand that we, on the other hand, “love”? Love even our enemies?

Have we missed something?

Is the parent observing the child toddling towards a busy road OK with doing nothing so as to use the child being hit by the car as some cosmic lesson for other children?

Are we not in fact “our brother’s keeper”???

Are we not obligated by the grace of Jesus the Christ to eternally serve all others ... in gratitude?

Did Paul forget to mention a few “aspects” of love in I Cor 13?

Why are such relatively high levels of demonic interferences allowed, while a corresponding level of Holy Spirit assistance often denied?

In this end time, are we left “on our own”?

Will the end justify the now? How can one gage that? On the speech of a historic figure 2,000 years ago?

From 400 A.D. on, why has the “church” failed so miserably in its misrepresentation of God?

Why did God not step in and correct and correct again and again until we substantially got it right?

**Based on these currently unanswered questions, how shall we then best live for God today?**

### Non biblical theology

Is it really “Doctrine”?

Or is it “tradition”?

Or is it nonsense.

I’m cognizant that we shouldn’t throw the baby out with the bathwater, but I am interested in throwing out the bathwater. As I wrote out the weird practices that the modern church engages in and hold onto with a death grip, it occurs to me that none of it is properly derived from the bible. None. Some is not even remotely found in the bible. That’s not to say that anything we choose to do “has” to be derived from the bible, but how do we know if it pleases God if we have no biblical basis for it? Perhaps it does ... but how can we know?

I recognize that there’s a portion of the bible that’s characterized by “Thus says the Lord”. Portions of the first five books and the prophets, the words of Jesus, and the book of Revelation. All other portions are not “Thus says the Lord”. I may be out on a limb here, but I don’t put as much stock in those portions as the direct dictations from God. Those non-dictated portions may be 100% God’s will. I suspect they are? But like those portions, what if there’s other wisdom that’s not contained in the bible? Can it be equally valid? I suspect it can, but how can we know?

I recognize how far we’ve strayed from the directives Jesus gave His initial eleven. My concern is that in our drift to **add** things that never were, we’ve correspondingly **deleted** things that should have been?

I often use the analogy of our modern day colloquialism of “don’t judge a man unless you walk a mile in his shoes”. Imagine 2,000 years from now the “church” finds that saying, resurrects it and starts taking up an annual ritual of walking a mile in another mans’ shoes as a sign of “non-judging”? Have we not done the same with many of these things? Have we not outdone the Phrases?

When one simply reads the Words of Jesus or grasps the big picture of the entirety of the “thus says the Lord” in the OT and especially the future picture dictation in Revelation, the message of how we are to relate to God is childlike simple. “Come to me” He says. Everything else is dealt with in the mind of God. Sin was never going to be the final barrier. Not for Adam. Not for Abraham. Not for Paul, and not for us. The question is, do we desire Him? If we do, He’s been patiently waiting for the prodigal to return. Once returned, we can engage via the HS to deal with the residual sin issues. If we don’t desire Him, He has an alternate existence prepared.

How we “do church” today is about as off as it could be? “Church” consists of those who desire Him. Those who are “known” by Him. It’s not something we “do”. Missions is something we do, but we’ve

relegated that to the professionals (we think their nuts), but as long as they take our money and work in our stead, our consciences are soothed.

I like the verbiage “to have and to hold”. It’s appropriate in marriage and in real estate. But when it comes to the work that we do in introducing people to Jesus and discipling them, the mantra should be just the opposite: “to have and to let go”. That’s what should have happened as a continuation of Paul’s work. His was never to hold. He was never the “head pastor”. Paul was about letting go so that the individual could go get others in any way they deemed strategic for their culture. How did we mess that one up so bad?

That is the bath water that I wish to throw out, contaminated with the sludge of “tradition”.

### **Pursuit of Happiness**

I think that one of the ills of our society is that we have taken that third inalienable right to a ridiculous extreme. I’ve heard the term “Let me self-authenticate all over you” and that’s largely what we did in the eighties and some into the nineties. We’ve become a little better at hiding that now, but the same types of things are going on.

The church seems not to have addressed this issue either, in fact it seems to have acquiesced to an awful lot of it in the form of materialism. As long as we are not singing, dancing, chewing or going with girls who do, we’re OK. But I’m afraid that much of the difficulties and compromising that’s going on in churches today is due to the very same issues of pursuit of happiness in the form of materialism. It’s sort of like a silent killer that very few congregations want to talk about. As the Lord said, it’s important to clean up our own house first before we can go anywhere else and make an effect in other circles or societies. Once we get the church understanding it has bought into this lie of an inalienable right to feel good, we can then help others understand it. Our adversary the devil, the enemy, has been brilliant in its marketing and sales of this issue. The subtlety is remarkable, and it’s been weaving its way into our society for the last fifty years. America is so prosperous when we want to have a home built, we actually consult someone to design the house which usually makes an artistic statement both on the exterior with the choice of exterior materials, be they brick, wood, stone, siding, stucco, shingles and certainly on the interior in how we decorate with carpet, paint, furniture, wall hangings and such. I suspect that the vast majority of the world has little concern about making an architectural artistic statement with their house and are more concerned whether the roof keeps the rain out or the walls keep most of the cold out. But we in America are so accustomed to material success we don’t even think twice about the fact that we actually consult a professional to help us do the artistic design portion.

We who know the Lord need to back up and recognize these types of things are going on in our lives. While I’m not suggesting that we move out of our homes, I am suggesting that we become aware of when we are simply pursuing our own personal happiness versus how our Lord taught us to live by pursuing the good of another, true agape, biblical love.

## Taking Jesus' hand.

Two weeks ago in our small group discussion, Todd tried to do what Paul says is healthy by confessing his sin to us. We didn't take it very well. Two days later an event happened that put into perspective for me what went down.

The weather was bad and getting worse. The kids had been off school way too long. Yet another ice storm was moving in. Time to go to the grocery and stock up on a few items. I accompanied my wife because of the treacherous driving conditions. I held her hand to steady her as we walked through the snow and ice into the store. The wind was blowing, and it was cold. As we were ready to enter the store, she remarked that her hair didn't look right. It had been a tough few days and now the cold wind was undoing what was left of her hair due.

I completely missed the point of the comment. It's a man thing! I was concerned that she felt in any way unacceptable to me? So I responded "It's OK, I love you no matter what". Wrong answer! She said the right answer would have been to say, "no dear, your hair looks wonderful".

Being the slow man that I am, it took me two additional days to figure out why my answer was incorrect? She wasn't as concerned about whether I loved her unconditionally or not. She was about to walk into a store with hundreds of people who would potentially judge her? Now I get it!

Fascinating!

Most of us want to hold Jesus' hand in our personal walk with Him. When we realize that He's about to take us into the public arena, we look at him and say, "but I'm unclean". He looks back and says, "I love you no matter what". We respond, "isn't there anything you can do to mask my true ugliness?" He again says, "I love you no matter what".

Two weeks ago, Todd took Jesus' hand and boldly walked into life. Nervous about letting people see him for what he really is. We responded, "Oh no! put the mask on. We can't bear to look!" Did you see him hang his head when that happened? Did you hear the frustration and despair in his voice?

If you choose not to let Jesus escort you hand in hand into the arena of life, that's OK, but please be considerate of those who try?

## Chapter Nine – Analogies – Stories

### Sharing the “gospel”

So, let me get this straight...

According to you, there is this “God” who is somehow 3 persons .... but one God, and who you say created everything including supposedly me, but chooses not to reveal himself empirically (Of course? Why would he do that?), and because He’s perfect .... and I’m not, that I have a “Sin” problem? And even if I had lived a perfect life, I would have been screwed by what you call a “sin nature” from my father Adam? That’s not my father’s name?

And to fix the “sin problem” all I need to do is have something you call “faith” whatever that is, and ask this God who I can’t see or hear, to accept the forgiveness that God’s son AKA the Lamb of God, somehow “purchased” for me while He was dying a “substitutionary death” on a cross about 2,000 years ago in which His blood, evidently the blood of the lamb, somehow “covers” my sin? Sounds sick! And if I do that, I’ll somehow be “born again” and “healed” in that somehow His stripes (was He in prison?) will heal me? Didn’t know I was sick?

Anyway ... then somehow a 1/3 part of God called some sort of spirit or ghost or something, somehow comes to live “in me” and will somehow “guide me”. Sounds like the movie Alien! But you also say that if I do all this that somehow, I’m in Jesus and Jesus is in me? Multiple Aliens! And oh, by the way, Jesus is at the “right hand” of the father and therefore somehow so am I? And finally, that I’m supposed to “follow” this dude that died 2,000 years ago?

Sounds like a cult!

I think you’re out of your mind!

Perhaps during the last 2,000 years, you’ve lost something in the translation?

If only God just wanted me to want Him. That I could do.

### Royalty in our presence

Hey Hank, stop walking so fast. Look over there. Isn’t that the carpenter we had come over and fix our broken chairs about 4 years ago?

Hard to tell Gladis? He looks pretty beat up.

I think that’s him Hank? Remember, he did such a good job of fixing our chair that we had him make that custom hutch. He did such a good job, inlaid wood and all. He knew so much about different wood species. Youda thought he grew the trees himself. Oh I hope that’s not him? He was such a kind young man and so respectful. Why would the Romans execute him? What in the world could he have done to deserve this?

What’s the inscription over his head?

It says that he's "king of the Jews". What does that mean?

Well imagine that Gladis? King of the Jews! You mean to tell me we had royalty in our house .... and didn't know it! That can't be our carpenter.

I'm telling ya Hank, that's him!

Well Gladis, he may have been a good carpenter but he seems to be a lousy King?

Well that's true? Whata we gonna do now if another chair needs fixing?

### **Spiritual Battle**

There's an old man that I desire for you to rescue from inside the enemy's camp. This will be a 7 week mission. Are you up to the task?

I fear that I have not sufficiently prepared for a long term mission with a senior subject. I was preparing for a much younger mission Lord?

Perhaps you should expand your studies in the future?

Indeed Lord, but I'm not confident that I can perform as you wish for this mission?

Good. You'll be forced to rely on Me.

Yes Lord.

Do you have your weapon?

Yes Lord.

I see that it's well worn and tattered. Well done. You should Lock N Load with the over 70 clip.

The dignity clip?

Indeed. Every third shot is one of dignity as my servant Paul wrote to his son Timothy. You will find the old man broken down and sitting in a recliner. During the past 95 years the old man built a shroud of pride to protect himself. On my command you are to take advantage of this high ground vantage point and fire two shots directly at the old man's head. The first shot will crack the shroud. The second shot will shatter it but will not harm the old man. Then you will wait for my command to fire the third shot.

Yes Lord.

On my command, take careful aim and fire the third shot right at his heart. Immediately after that shot, the old man will recognize for the first time that he is all alone .... and naked. The HS will cloth the old man with my Son. Once clothed, the old man will want to stand, and stand he will, because I will make him stand. When he stands you are to run to his rescue. The HS will lay down sufficient cover fire. Tell the old man to bring nothing. I neither need nor do I want his money. I do not need him to attend any meetings. I do not need him to do any works. My Son completed all that the old man needs. All I want is the old man .... as is.

You are to escort him from his prison in the enemy's camp directly to Me. The old man is on oxygen and his heart and lungs are frail. He will only be able to take 30 steps before he will need to rest and catch his breath. When he rests, patiently wait with the old man. Don't move to the right or the left. You will hear bullets whizzing past your ears and mortars exploding all around you. Stand perfectly still and I will protect you.

The old man will struggle with his new identity and sometimes appear disoriented and begin to stray off course. Correct his path towards me with great care and humility. There will be others along the way who will mean well, but are not executing My will for the old man. Dispense truth to each one of them and keep moving. Any questions?

No Lord.

Very well. Prepare yourself now. Trust in My Son!

On My command.

GO!

### **I live like a King**

Get this. A few days ago, I actually had not one, not two, but three full meals! I know. I know. That's impossible! Who gets to do that! Oh, and it gets better. Not only did I get three full meals, I got to choose anything I wanted to eat for each meal! Anything at all. And you'd think once I chose what I wanted, it would be rationed right? Nope! No limit on the amount! Can you imagine?

I told you. I live like a king.

As if that wasn't the end of the earth, I went over to this metal looking thing with a spout and turned a handle at its base and believe it or not, water magically came running out the spout! Seriously. No pumping. No hauling. I know this sounds incredible, but when I turned the other handle, hot water came running out. Just like that! Can you believe it! Hot water! I didn't heat any of it. It was already hot?

I told you. I live like a king.

Just when I thought life couldn't get any better, my friend took me over to a metal box about the size of a coffin. Only, it was standing up and had doors on the front. He told me to open it up and grab us a couple cold ones? So, I opened the door and inside it was very cold, and there were containers of cool liquid ready to drink. Bet Solman in all his glory never had one of these babies!

I told you. I live like a king.

Yesterday, I actually traveled 900 miles from where I was in the snow, to a place with a sandy beach and an ocean. But it didn't take three weeks. I did it in two hours! Can you believe it! I'm as mobile as the wind!

I live better than any king ever did in the bible.

Even though I'm sure it's undeserved, it looks like God's blessed me?

Last night I asked Him what I could do to thank Him?

He said the best thing I could do is to learn to live like a servant.

What an odd request for a man who lives like a king?

### What do you see

How about the man who came to Jesus at night? Perhaps afraid of being seen by his colleagues. He wanted to know who this Jesus was. When asked about re-birth, he became confused and Jesus seemed to have expected more from him since he was a “teacher of Israel”.

What do we see?

A man hampered by public opinion. A man afraid to break free from unsubstantiated tradition.

What did Jesus see?

One of three men who would take him off the cross and place him into a tomb ... and that in broad daylight.

What about a man who exited a boat during a storm only to sink in unbelief. A man who claimed that he would go to death to defend Jesus ... and then failed to do so. A man who cut off the ear of the slave of the high priest with a sword. A man who denied that he knew Jesus at a most inopportune time.

What do we see?

A man who all too often acted before thinking, perhaps disproportionately driven by emotion and not truth. A man who vacillated uncontrollably.

What did Jesus see?

A man with passion who left 11 others behind in the warm, safe, dry boat to attempt to walk to Jesus. A man who left 9 behind to attempt to follow Jesus through His trials and conviction. A man who again left 6 behind in the boat to swim to shore, desperate to attempt to make it right with His Savior. A man who said “Lord, you know all things, I love you as a brother”. A man who would ultimately lead the reimagining 10.

And how about a young up and comer who perhaps stayed in the background as he observed Jesus teaching in the Synagogues? A man who was advancing beyond all his peers, “circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless”. A man strategically excluded from the original 11.

What do we see?

A man who would actively try to stamp out the Church.

What did Jesus see?

The secret weapon that not even Satan recognized. The man who would write almost half of the new testament. A man who would take the good news to the known world.

Imagine Jesus viewing Paul, perhaps even making eye contact, not saying a word to anyone. All the time knowing who Paul was ... and what he would become.

Oh, that God would grant us to see more as He see.

Finally, a town in the center of the known world at the time. Comments of her were as follows:

**Luke 13:** 34 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *the city* that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen *gathers* her brood under her wings, and you would not *have it!* 35 Behold, your house is left to you *desolate*; and I say to you, you will not see Me until *the time* comes when you say, ‘BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!’”

**Luke 19:** 41 When He approached *Jerusalem*, He saw the city and wept over it, 42 saying, “If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. 43 For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side, 44 and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation.”

What are we seeing here?

Jesus lamenting how He longed to pull in and protect the City and His children. But that City and her people rejected Him. Jesus weeping, not for Himself, but for the City, His children, who because of spiritual blindness failed to recognize Him.

What did they see?

Business as usual. Herod’s remodeled temple. A formidable wall around their precious City. A confused man who had illusions of being God.

What did Jesus see?

A City, a people, His children, who if they were relatively young in 33AD, would be slaughtered 37 years later ... some as they were pregnant. Why? Why did Jesus see this tragedy as He approached the cross? In His own words because “[they] did not recognize the time of [their] visitation”.

Imagine how things could have been different if they had known about and been anticipating their visitation? If they had welcomed Him as their Messiah ... our Messiah? There would have been no need to falsely arrest Him, falsely accuse Him, falsely condemn Him. No need to torture Him. No need to murder Him.

Lord grant us clear vision for our next visitation.

## True Worship

Imagine a high school football game where two very proud parents attend to watch both their seignior daughter cheer and their junior son #63, a starter on the football team. It’s seignior night and as mom and dad accompany their daughter on the field and to the microphone, the daughter exclaims that she wants to thank her folks for being so supportive and loving. And that tonight, she not only cheers for the team, but for her parents as well. The crowd has a collective sigh as the remark sinks in. The proud couple takes their seats as the game starts and are immediately honored by all around them. Comments of “wow, what a great daughter you have”! And “you two must have done something right”? “You must be proud”!

As the game proceeds, several times the announcer is heard to say #63 Smith on the tackle. From a couple rows behind the proud couple a friend blurts out “your son is on it tonight”! The father turns to acknowledge the comment from one of his friends. A couple sitting next to the proud parents ask “oh, is

that your son too”? Yes the dad replies. He’s a junior this year. The couple says “you must be proud of him too”? Yes the father says. He always looks after his big sister.

At half time the band takes the field and does a “tribute to parents” theme in which the cheerleaders do specific cheers set to music for their respective parents. The couple is filled with pride and humbled at their daughters acknowledging them. The couples around them are all mentioning how remarkable the daughter’s praise for her parents is. They all wish their daughters were like that!

The game ends with the home team wining and after the coach has a word with the boys, the team starts to head from the 50 yard line towards the locker room. The cheerleaders are still doing their cheers on the other side of the short chain link fence as the marching band is finishing their music on the field. Just at that moment a gunshot is heard right around the area of the cheerleaders? In panic, the crowd closest to the field bolts. The cheerleaders stand there in confusion unknowing of what’s going on ... or what to do? Most of the football players race towards the safety of the locker room.

The proud parents stand in horror trying to see what’s going on, when they here another shot ring out! As they look towards where their daughter is, they see three full grown men in black hoods moving towards the cheerleaders and specifically their daughter. Yet another shot rings out fired in the air from the head intruder to clear the crowd. Two of the muggers attempt to grab their daughter but she eludes them temporarily, so they pick up one of the other girls who had dropped to the ground in abject fear. The proud parents are horrified. They’re up high in the stands and can’t possibly get down there quick enough to help.

Just then they see #63 in a full rage run coming back towards his sister. As he is confronted with the fence, he leaps with all he has right over it, diving right at the mugger with the gun. As he tackles the thug, the other two muggers let the first girl go and come to his assistance, and pull #63 off. With that distraction, the remaining cheerleaders start running. So the muggers again go towards the proud parent’s daughter who is standing in horror watching her brother take on three full grown men. Their son, seeing that he is outnumbered then drops down on top of his sister to protect her. The other two muggers do all that they can to remove #63 from the girl, but #63 has a death grip on his sister and the mugger can’t pry him loose. The one with the gun walks up to the pile and demands that #63 move or he will be shot. He refuses and the mugger aims the gun directly at him and prepares to fire. Just at that moment security drops the mugger in his tracks with a single shot. The other two let go of #63 and the girl and get down on their knees with their hands in the air.

The proud parents are out of their minds! Confused? It all happened so fast! But it seems to be over? Thank God it’s over? What just happened? What were those men after? What was their son thinking! He could have been killed! Thoughts racing a million miles an hour as they race down the stand to their beloved children. All four fall on their knees, arm in arm, and thank God for His protection.

Which form of “worship” do you think the parents are most grateful for? The daughter’s overtures were magnificent, but the son, the son was willing to give his life for his sister. No higher form of worship available.

To sing, to dance, to perform skits are outstanding! No doubt God pokes Satan in the ribs each time one of His children performs this loving worship. But when one of Gods children offers their life for another, God crushes Satan.

No higher form of worship!

## I serve a God who

Knew that if Eve ate the fruit .... the holocaust would occur. WWII would occur. That Stalin would rule. That slavery would be accepted. That His Son would be beaten, tortured, and killed on a cross.

Is OK with human suffering on a scale the boggles the mind.

Chooses not to evidence Himself empirically.

Designed stimuli that would be animalistic .... then asked us to ignore it.

Designed emotional need .... and allowed it to be met illegitimately.

Designed a physical body that both self heals and decays.

Designed an earth that has temperatures incapable off supporting 7 billion people close enough to the equator that force civilizations to zones that can kill them.

That allows disease to ravish His creation.

Could heal anything He wishes any time He wishes.

Tolerates intolerable inhumanity from man to man.

Asks us to know Him, obey Him, and desire Him, without ever meeting Him.

Is OK with 2,000 year old writings about His Son as evidence that we should desire Him.

Knows how to make gold out of non gold .... or nothing at all.

Asks me to be “in the world” without perpetual certainty of the needed resources.

Designed humans with such inferior thinking capacity that the gap between us and Him is virtually infinity.

Allows His angelic enemy that humans cannot empirically sense to torment humans.

Often allows greed and sin in reprobate individuals to go unchallenged to the extreme detriment of the elect.

Allows children to contract cancer and suffer and die.

Allows man to murder over 3,000 unborn children a day in North America alone.

## Joseph's lineage

So let me get this straight? The biblical lineage for Joseph, the stepfather of Jesus, is as follows:

Abraham was an admitted liar

Isaac was a chip off the old block

Jacob was even worse, a conspiring deceiver liar

Judah was an incestual adulterer with his deceased son's wife Tamar who played the harlot

Salmon's gentile wife was Rahab the harlot

Her half Jew son Boaz took a Moabite wife in Ruth

¼ Jew David had a close friend murdered, then took his dead friend's wife, Bathsheba

Solomon had untold wives and concubines

Solomon's grandson x 12 Joconiah, was so wicked that God disqualified his offspring from ever sitting on the throne

Other than that, Joseph's lineage was a pure and stately?

## Who is the most valuable in Heaven

The tallest who can throw a ball through a hoop?

The left hander who can throw faster than anyone else?

The largest who can block for a run?

The shortest who can ride a horse?

The artist who prostitutes in song?

The very bright who learn how to trick the not so bright?

The preacher who has learned about "harvest"?

The child of the successful who is handed a business?

The legal who profits from others misfortune?

The medical who profits from uncontrollable illnesses?

The politician who hoards power?

The inventor who holds on to a paten?

The drug dealer who has no care for his victims?

The criminal who sees everyone as a mark?

The wall street who invests “others” money?

The general with the most guns?

The humble Servant of all?

**Matt 18:1** At that time the disciples came to Jesus and said, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" **2** And He called a child to Himself and set him before them, **3** and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." **4** "Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

**Matt 23:11** "But the greatest among you shall be your servant. **12** "Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.

**Mark 9:35** Sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."

### **“It’s the economy, Stupid!”**

Yea, .... I guess it was? And now? Now, it’s time for harvesting!

See “stupid”, it’s not Bill on trial? It’s America!

Americas’ values are on trial and it’s time for her harvest. And what’s she brought in? Truth ... or Lies? Does she desire the bitter Truth ... or the sweet lies? Tough choice for a soft people?

It’s one thing to bring a criminal to justice.... It’s a whole other thing to bring America’s moral vacuum to justice! God seems eerily quiet. As though He’s letting out just enough rope for us to hang ourselves???

Amazing to me.... to have two thirds of Americans who know Bill lied.... and yet they want him to go on as their President?

“News flash!”

Date line 33 AD.

In a dramatic turn of events, the whole town turned out to choose between two men. One reported to be a self proclaimed king, blameless and full of truth and righteousness. The other, a known criminal who enjoyed a 72% approval rating. In what appeared to be a unified voice, the crowd called for the release of the criminal and the execution of the Truth. When asked by the judge one more time to choose the Truth, they cried out “crucify him”! Give us Barabbas! The judge washed his hands of the matter, handed over the Truth to the executioner and proceeded to free Barabbas.

America today is similar. Crucify the truth and anyone who dare bring it! Give us Barabbas! At least as long as Barabbas has some giveaway program for us to take advantage of? Stick our fingers in our ears and our heads in the sand. Spin the rhetoric as needed to justify the ends.

I heard a great line from the Impeachment hearings. “If the law is against you, argue the facts. If the facts are against you, argue the law. If the law and the facts are against you, argue like the devil!” Indeed... like the devil?

I wonder how Barabbas felt after being released? Knowing in his mind he was about to die? Then for no apparent reason, given life? Did he watch as Jesus died on the cross in his place? Was his heart moved? Did he repent?

I wonder how O.J. felt as he was declared not guilty? Is he grateful? Will he repent? Will he change?

I wonder how Bill might feel if he's found not guilty? Will he be grateful? Will he repent? Will he change?

Before you condemn the other guys... how about you? Are you grateful? Is God teaching you something important in this mess? Will you repent? Will you change?

After all... "It's the Economy stupid!"

### **Eternal Focus**

Imagine the following interaction with our Father:

Why are you here before your time?

I had an opportunity to serve one who had the virus. I contracted it and suffered for a little while and died.

As did My Son. He took on the virus of your sin debt, suffered and died.

Well done my good and faithful servant. Enter into My Kingdom.

It's time we shift focus from temporal to eternal.

### **Pride**

Some men are born with great intelligence. Some men are born with great strength or height. Some men are born with great musical skills.

To all these men we assign unnecessary value. They didn't earn it. It will cause pride in their lives that will partly block their vision of the true God.

Those of us who are born with none of those special things are the blessed ones. We have to depend on God to live. We have closer to an unvarnished sight of Him.

Pride blocks spiritual sight. Diminish a man's false pride ... and increase his spiritual vision.

## Chapter Ten – End Time

### So ... what now?

How did Jesus handle the time between knowing who He was and what He would do and the time when He finally acted? Apparently, the neighbors didn't see it coming? He must have been seen as a fair and knowledgeable man. He had an episode at about 14 for all to see? Wouldn't his neighbors have suspected? His mother? His siblings? His local synagogue?

How did He deal with everyday issues as just a wise human before He took authority? Did the furniture He built have perfection? After Joseph died, how did he step up as the oldest? Did He run the business? How did he feel when He was in town and saw Saul/Paul ... but never said a word?

Why not start at 20? Why not wait until 60? Why 34?

And what of the end time things I know? Clearly, they should be kept low key if not secret. My attempts to share them with anyone who could run with it have fallen flat. I suspect that's God intervening. Jesus knew how long he had to wait. I don't.

What if I'm ill or demented? How could I know since I have none to corroborate my findings? If I'm correct, why would God have allowed me to know what most others cannot?

If I'm correct, what now? What shall I do with my new wisdom? How can I use it to God's advantage?

Whatever the answer is, it apparently does not involve enlightening others about the end times. It must have to do with how we live now?

How do I assist people who aren't tracking with me on the urgency and severity and special place of the Wilderness and the destruction of The Great City?

The professionals collectively share their ignorance and God seems well pleased to let them stay where they are? That simply confirms my thought that America's myopic weakness becomes her greatest strength ... at the right time.

What is hoped for or even expected from me having been given this knowledge? Has it changed my priorities in life? Would I have continued to pursue real estate if I hadn't known? Did the knowledge put me in positions of learning that I otherwise would of have had?

Is it enough to see God's giant plan and His grace and His patience and go on building furniture as it were? As Jesus did?

Who does one consult about such things?

## God is not dead

I'm thinking about the movement revolving around the God is not dead movies? I don't know why we have a need to indicate that God is evidently still alive? Seems to me that if God was alive at one time, and created all things, and then died, we'd be in a world of hurt? Seems to me, the issue is whether there is a God at all? I guess the bad news for some is that if there is a God ... they're not!

I've observed that church going individuals champion the movement partly to counteract the nonsense they see on our campuses and in most of our media. I surely understand their frustration that their view on life has been ridiculed. The movies and the movement allow them to cheer for what they perceive as the "truth" about their "religion". From their point of view, making a plausible argument that God does exist is a good thing.

But it occurred to me that from God's point of view, most of us making the argument don't live substantially different than those who make the opposite argument? We certainly intellectually accent to the concept that God exists, but I'm afraid that we tend to live our self-focused lives as though He's asleep? Perhaps in some sense, God is dead? Oh, we clean up well on Sunday and all, but isn't it true that most of our lives would be indistinguishable to the Angels watching this whole thing go down as measured against those who hate God? Our overt materialism and our poorly hidden hypocrisies show our true nature. On a scale of 1-100 the "God is dead" folks may well be at a -0-, but are we very far past 10? Really? We play "church" just like I use to play war as a kid. Fake guns and arbitrary rules that change as needed. Arguing about whether I shot one of my playmates before he shot me. It was silly then. It's tragic now?

It's been about 2,000 years since humanity's seen any Sid Roth supernatural stuff, so I can understand that today, God's more of a "concept" than a personal being. Thanks be to God that He soon will rectify that incorrect perception. When those who are known by Him go home all at one time, those of us who remain will finally be confronted with our mediocrity. What a difficult reality check that will be. I read ahead in the book to the last few pages and discovered that many will come to Him because of that distress. Thank God! I wish we would have done it earlier rather than later, but His love of us, His pursuit of us is strong ... even in a time of distress such as the one that's on the way.

Soon we can drop the intellectual debate over the issue of God being dead or alive. Empirical evidence of Him being "living and active" is just around the corner. His grace is astounding!

## Defeating Goliath – Induced "faith"

To me, a doubting Thomas, "faith" is what you're left with when you run out of empirical and forensic evidence. I try to calculate the costs of most things. So I wondered, how did David know? Reason and logic and science said that Goliath was undefeatable? None of the professionals in the army thought otherwise? Perhaps even the King had his doubts? So how did David know? Did God give David unusual "faith"?

Eleven men stayed behind in the safe, warm, dry boat. How did Peter know?

Science tells us that there may be as many as two trillion galaxies. My bible tells me that God created and sustains all of them. Scientific conclusion - I serve an immensely powerful God. No faith needed there. With Covid, science and medicine and logic and reason tell me that I should "keep my distance". My

Father indicates that the highest possible rank in His kingdom is that of “servant”. Who wins that dilemma?

Depends on my “faith”?

How did David know?

It was the lion and the bear ... the ones God allowed.

For many, this virus is their lion or bear. For a few of us, it’s just another arrogant pagan who’s no match for our God, one that needs to be publicly defeated so that others will gain strength and join the battle. Having run out of empirical and forensic evidence, my logic tells me that if I go and serve and contract the virus and perish, I win. I get to go home. If I serve and don’t contract the virus, God gets the glory. I can’t lose. Apparently, God snuck in “faith” when I wasn’t looking? Imagine that? An engineer with faith? I thank God for the lion and the bear. This goliath is no match for the God I serve.

David knew.

Many of us think we have faith. We say that “with God all things are possible?” But with this virus, as the rubber meets the road ... do our actions betray us? We’re told, indeed commanded, to keep our distance. We’re told that it’s an “invisible enemy”. Indeed. So are the heavenly forces opposed to God. Most have a “fear” of this virus. My Presbyterian friends have a great catch Phrase that applies here.

But God.

The difference today is that unlike the Jews who wanted to defeat the Philistines, we’ve fully surrendered and are begging the enemy to just let us live in slavery. If anyone stands up and defeats Goliath ... few will follow.

With this virus, God sent an unanticipated pop quiz. The vast majority were asleep at the wheel and failed it. Soon, God will send the anticipated, indeed longed for, midterm report card. We’re sure we have an “A” going. We go to church, we pay our tithe (sometimes), we serve on the various committees. We pray at most meals. We vote republican! However, the grade we’re about to receive is not a passing one. We will be left behind. This is God’s grace in action. The midterm report card gives us time to “improve” our grade to a passing one, one of “servant”.

## Gating

I think about what it must have been like for the Angels as they watched Jesus pick His twelve? Did any of the Angels question the addition of Judas Iscariot? Were the Angels frustrated at the slow pace of learning? Did the angels question the lack of higher education of the eleven? I can imagine that after the first few failures of those original twelve, that a group of Angels might have approached the Lord with a recommendation of a young up and comer named Saul? To which God may have replied “Yes, Saul will do well, but for now, he will be our secret weapon. Our adversary won’t see it coming”.

I think about the fact that if the rapture had happened at the cross as Jesus commended Himself to His Father and died, Paul would have been “left behind”? None of which would have rattled our Father. His plan is always superior. God knew how and when He was going to activate Paul. In that vein, I’m confident that God knows what He’s doing with those who we desperately love who will be “left behind”.

Imagine several million Pauls being unleashed in harmony by the opening of the starting gate of the rapture?

Thinking about Churchill Downs, I'm intrigued at how the trainers "gate" the horses one at a time in preparation for the front doors of the box to fly open and the race to start. Some horses go into the small space with ease. As the doors close behind, it gives them no alarm. Some horses severely resist entering the confined space. The trainers sometimes have difficulty closing the doors that lock the horse into the starting position. Some horses thrash about in the box until the front gate swings open.

It seems to me today that God is "gating" people at His pleasure, for His will, to be released in His time. I suspect that we're close to the so called "rapture", an otherwise "random" moment in time where God will bring home those who at that precise moment in time, are known by Him. It appears to me that God is well pleased to "gate" in a stationary starting position those who will not be known by Him at that same moment in time. He's positioning them for the incredible race to be run as the front gate of the rapture swings open. Those gated people will then start to run a three-and-a-half-year race designed by God. The finish line for those in the race is becoming known by God and therefore being prepared for the mission of the second three and a half years. No greater love ... Jesus said. Some will cross the finish line in a matter of weeks. Some will take the bulk of the first three and a half years.

With that in mind, the "gating" seems to be staggered. Not unlike a race, some individuals who are suspicious in their own minds that they are not truly following Jesus and are therefore capable of running the race in record time, will be "gated" at the front of the start line. Some who are more self-deceived pew sitters will be gated further back, and some who call themselves "Christians" but are not in fellowship, will be "gated" the farthest back.

Our era, our time, is like no other. Perhaps the reason some of those we love so much refuse to move forward, is because God is "gating" them for His designed plan. They may be God's future Pauls? If we can determine that to be the case, then our approach to those persons, our patience with those persons can change. Perhaps we can love them knowing that God surely must have bigger things in store for them than we had imagined. As it relates to each one of those individuals, we can still agree with Paul's realization that "love hopes all things", but we can have the wisdom to be patient and know that God will execute His plan, in His time. And He will do it flawlessly.

If all of this is correct, it should allow us to focus on those who *are* willing to move forward and be all the more loving and patient with those who are not. It occurs to me that God has stones prepared to cry out on command. He has donkeys able to speak His truth. He has bushes that burn ... but are never consumed. He surely does not need us to further His plan. I think rather that He tolerates us trying and mucking it up, and trying again, and again, and again. He's allowed us to "wax on, wax off" over and over and over, for His purpose of refining us. To make us more like His Son. To train us for the main event, the spiritual combat at the end with His adversary. Surely, He would be more efficient without us, but He chooses to allow us to try to love ... as His Son loved.

## It was the music

I was doing research on the net about Father McKenzie and came across a music video of the Beatles performing Hey Jude. As I watched, it brought back good memories. When it was over, other videos were suggested. I watched Yes perform Roundabout with Geddy Lee. Incredible! More good memories. That led to a video of Eric Johnson Performing cliffs of dover. By the end, I had remembered what excitement life held ... at one time.

Back then, life was in front of me. Composing and playing music was fun, meaningful, a joy. Now, most of life is routine and frustrating. Now, life's mostly responsibilities with very few creative opportunities. My wife and I are at that sandwich portion of life where we have the responsibilities of directly caring for our elderly needy parents, her mom is 99, my mom has early onset dementia, and still trying to parent 30 and 40 something adult children as well as a hand full of teenage grandchildren. Quite a grind.

Thinking back, I realize that I've slowed way down. Perhaps much of that is good? But I wish I could move fast again if I wanted to? Back then, I knew everything. At least I thought so. I had a dad to lean on when things were confused. He was clear. Unfortunately, he passed away 15 years ago. Now I'm the one folks come to for clarity?

How did that happen?

I know a lot. Certainly, I know how much I have yet to learn. I know enough to recognize that I never did "know it all" when I was young. It was an illusion ... but it was a fun illusion. I see my teenage grandkids exhibiting that same fun illusion. On the one hand, I want to gently set them straight like my dad did for me. But on the other, I wish I could go back to that time for a week or so myself.

At 57, I have real estate business partners older than me who sometimes look to me for wise business decisions. How did I ever become the smartest guy in the room? It just doesn't seem right? Twilight zone stuff?

40 years ago, I looked forward to what the neighborhood gang was going to do once the weekend got here. Today, I have one challenging project after another to "look forward" to. Those projects seem like the fishes and the loves, they never seem to run out. I unfortunately became rather good at design, carpentry, construction, and development. Someone always needs help. Even in semi-retirement, I keep too busy with donated time for folks who I would never ask for compensation. Folks who couldn't afford it anyway. When it comes to construction projects, I try to get a 50 something body to do 30 something work. Most days the body hurts. Most days, the mind wanes by 2:00. I'm tired.

There's a certain sense in which I've enrolled myself in a prison. Not that it's wrong, Jesus seemed to indicate the greatest will be the servant of all, but like a prison, I have severely restricted privileges, a routine that only rarely can be modified, and the same locational surroundings that almost never change. It seems like the creative person I remember being is long gone. It's as though I'm a well-hidden secret, waiting for release to the public. Kinda like Joseph was as he was waiting for someone to put in a good word for him. I have the same sense that at any moment my mission could go from confined and mundane ... to wide open and exciting. Most psychologists call this narcissistic. Perhaps they're right? Wonder if they'd of said the same of Joseph?

The music reminded me of better days. Perhaps to some degree, ignorance was bliss. Being responsible rather sucks at times. God's granted me what appears to be quite marvelous insights into what's shortly to take place. Rather than looking forward to the weekend like I did 40 years ago, I now look forward to the beginning of the end. If God chooses me, it'll be by far my most challenging mission. I hope I have

the energy to serve? The kind of idyllic energy I had at 20. Perhaps He'll grant me a new body? Wouldn't that be cool!

### **Half baked**

It appears to me that God would prefer to fully bake all who He eventually receives, sometimes with the heat of persecution. It seems our goal is not so much to accept or reject Him, but rather to come to know Him, desire Him, shed self, and put on His Son. This seems to be a process ... not a momentary decision. The human experiment is evidently not a Simon says, mother may I, hocus pocus recital, but rather a proof type test of which system will prevail: (A) We, like Satan, govern ourselves – the evidence being amassed indicating that it fails, or (B) we submit to God and His governance. This evidence gathering is apparently not being accomplished so much in “decisions” for Christ as it is in lives lived in an outpouring of biblical love. His received Grace overflowing to those around us. Eternal evidence.

It does seem plausible that if for whatever reason a life is artificially cut short, God will not reject the otherwise half-baked individual, the unborn and a child who dies or is killed at an early age. But when it comes to God removing only His loved ones all at one moment in time (rapture), I suspect that He will only take those who are fully baked.

The ingredients are on the counter, but it's not a cake yet. It will be ... but not yet. The batter is mixed and in the pan, but it's not a cake yet. The mix is in the oven, but it's not a cake yet. It's not until we are pulled out of the oven and are fully baked that we are complete and ready for our next assignment. Those who still have oven time, I suspect He will leave. Not because they are lost. Not because He loves them less. Not because they are “not known by Him” (yet), but rather because He desires that they complete their process. They are special individuals indeed! Think about it? The ones who survive the Tribulation will habit the beginning of the Millennium with Jesus. I suspect that like He did with Paul, God is reserving remarkable individuals to reign with His Son.

### **Audience participation**

These days, audience participation seems to be key. I made an observation that the individuals who insist that we all “participate” are really desiring us to “conform”. I noticed that they are highly independent, and simultaneously fully conformist. This seems to especially true around college campuses.

At our school, in our factories, in our corporations, and even in our local Christian congregations, “participation” is demanded. Sporting competitions hand out participation awards regardless if serious effort was made or not? The goal is to get the widest possible “participation”.

When Jesus came the first time, it was rather difficult to have known the timing. Even the small handful who understood the timing, missed the dual appearances of the Suffering Servant and later, the King. When I think about the first coming, I recognize that the audience participation for the first three and a half years was sparse. By the end of it, three knew Him intimately. The rest of the eleven knew Him very well. The seventy knew Him. Five thousand knew of Him. But that was about it.

It occurs to me that with the second “appearance”, we can more easily know the time. We have significantly more data available to determine that general time. The secret is out. No need for the Father to cloak it to the same level as was done with the first appearance. Interesting, that for the first three and

a half years after the second appearance, the audience participation rate increases dramatically. This time, millions will become known by His Father and participate, in mass, and in concert. All this without Him being here the way He was the first time.

With that in mind, His strategy to pull that off becomes intriguing? The first time He mentored eleven who were complete by the end of His time. The next time He will have one hundred forty four thousand ready day one. What a remarkable contrast to the first appearance? How do the one hundred forty four thousand prepare for the moment? Is He readying them even at this time? While I can only speculate, God is already at work. Discovering His plan and His will then become profitable.

Is God desiring of you to be one of those participants? Could you be ready day one?

Some of you are intrigued by that thought?

What's your next step?

### **Were there not ten healed**

#### **An opportunity to serve in the end time.**

Our current time is kinda like a woman who just knows “it’s time to deliver this baby”. Many of us sense that the rapture is very near. As we look forward to that day with anticipation, I hope to encourage you to look beyond that day. What is it like one day after the rapture? One week after? Consider those who will be left behind? Perhaps people you love? What of them? If you have children or grandchildren, are you OK with some of them being left behind? What about your spouse? What about some of the folks you fellowship with? You may escape the tribulation, but what if you’re made to observe those you love endure it? Did we assume that God will shield us from having to view their plight? Are we throwing money at foe ministries that tell us they’ll reach every tribe and tongue and nation ... so that we can go home sooner? Are we like the ostrich not wanting to see what happens when we leave? Are we understandably so spiritually tired of this world that we say Maranatha to all?

Did we really think it through?

Jesus asks the question “were there not ten cleansed”? The one that returned did so because he, like the others, noticed that he was “healed”. Jesus’ question casts light on the response of the 90% rather than on the 10%. The response of the 10% is evidently expected. Jesus asked the rhetorical question to make the point that only a percent of the healed are mindful enough to recognize what’s really happening. They’re responding as designed. The 90% have perhaps a little catching up to do? Are you one of the 10%, a “tenth”, a “tithing”, the “first fruits” ... of the harvest? (Rev 14:4)

I suspect that God’s given us a picture from my favorite story in the old testament of what we could be doing for those we love that might become left behind. Before I tell you the story, let me make my case that God sometimes uses OT stories to point up NT events:

Sacrificial lamb – Jesus became that perfect lamb. (Jn 1:29)

Passover – God’s judgement passing over us because of the sacrifice of His Son. (I Cor 5:7)

In the cloud and in the sea with Moses – Picture of baptism. (I Cor 10:2)

Drinking from the spiritual rock – Jesus is the life giving water. (I Cor 10:4)

Jonah 3 days in the fish – As was Jesus in the earth. ([Matt 12:40](#))

Looking to the lifted up bronze serpent – Jesus on the cross. ([Jn 3:14](#))

Noah in the ark – Picture of salvation. ([Heb 11:7](#))

Now for the story that I suspect is helpful in realizing what we can do now to prepare for those who will be left behind, the story of Joseph interpreting pharos dream and taking action. Joseph was given information from God about the future that none other had. None knew a seven year famine was in front of them. God revealed that fact to Joseph only. Joseph's charge was to "prepare" for that event. Because Joseph was allowed to make those preparations, Egypt survived the seven year drought. God's grace was bestowed on a people who were not pursuing nor desiring Him. But in that salvation, the people who did desire God, the house of Jacob, were also preserved. So it is now. A people who not only don't desire Him, but flaunt their independence from Him and murder the most innocent, will be preserved.

A three and a half year drought is eminent. For those of us who desire Him, what if any preparations would God desire us to be undertaking for those who will endure the drought? Most major media ministries are focusing on the future drought/tribulation. All of the internet prophetic web sites see it as eminent. The word is out in every form. It's now universally expected ... and soon. Fascinating how God has used those outlets to bring it all to light, yet the vast majority of them will be just like the King in Egypt and the those who don't desire God, they'll be left behind to go through the drought itself. You probably disagree with that. Time will shortly tell.

Perhaps a portion of the known world perished in the drought that Joseph had been made aware of. They had not known it was eminent and had not made provision for it. They were "business as usual". So it appears to be in the next drought. Many will perish because they were "business as usual". ([Matt 24:36-39](#)) But those who longed for God were preserved to populate Egypt ... initially in freedom. Yet their freedom turned to slavery. Why? Should they have returned to the promised land when they could? Did the wealth and ease of Egypt trick them?

Think about those who will be "preserved" in the coming drought. Although they'll be initially left behind, they'll come to be known by Him and populate the next kingdom, the next 1,000 years. Even with Jesus at the helm, will the same fate become some of them? Apparently, it will. Amazing to me, but that's what God indicates. ([Rev 20:8-10](#))

Jesus warned the Jewish people that because they did not recognize the time of their visitation, calamity would result ... 70 AD. ([Lk 19:44](#)) He had evidently expected them to be in the know and anticipating Him. Today, many are anticipating Him, but for what reason? So that they can cease from their works and join Him in paradise for seven years? So that they don't have to endure the coming drought?

Were there not ten healed? Why do only 10% return to glorify God? ([Lk 17:17](#)) The 90% are still "healed" but fail to return to "glorify God". What is their mission? As far as I know, they'll be the only New Testament entities in "paradise" who will not endure death to get there. They'll have glorified bodies, healthy and capable. Imagine their zeal after seven years as they return with Jesus to begin the next kingdom? Having passed on the drought "opportunity", how much more will they excel in the millennium.

Some knew the timing of His first coming, but they missed Him because they were selfishly looking for an end to Roman domination. So today, some will miss Him because they are selfishly looking for an out from the domination of the world system run by Satan.

Joseph stored up grain to sell to the whole world. That grain produced the bread that kept men alive. We should be storing up God's **words**, His truths, the ones Jesus said we should "live by". "Not bread alone" He said.

Perhaps several years of bounty before the three and a half lean years of famine. Store up now while we can.

The "wilderness" - will be the new Egypt that preserves not only the Jewish race, but so many of the persecuted who are followers of Jesus the Christ.

My desire is to harvest and then store up the "grain" that will be so desperately needed starting within minutes after the rapture.

Would you be willing to help me in this work?