January 31

The Corporate Anointing

“How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron’s beard, down upon the collar of his robes. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the Lord bestows His blessing, even life forevermore.”

Psalm 133

This Psalm was written on the occasion of David’s coronation as King over all of Israel. And what a struggle it was between the times he was anointed king by Samuel until the day of his coronation when he ruled over a united twelve tribes. It was David who united these warring tribes. David understood that harmony could only be achieved when they practiced the unity of their faith. These days of unity for Israel under David, and later his son Solomon, were without question the most glorious days of their history. Never has Israel possessed all of the land that God gave her except in these days. Even in our current time, Israel is but a shadow of what she was, despite her being in a united state.

There is a message in these verses for the church. For as the people of God united under one king in the Old Testament, so the people of God must unite today under the King of Kings. As they experience great glory in this unification in the Old, so we will experience a greater glory in the New. As they experienced a tremendous victory over their enemies because of unification, so we will enjoy freedom from the enemy’s control in the New.
January 1

The Image and Likeness of God

“Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

Genesis 1:26-27

The Genesis account emphasizes human uniqueness. All other aspects of Creation were called into being by God’s spoken word. Yet for man God stooped to personally fashion a physical body, and then gently, lovingly infused that body with life. God fashioned Eve from one of Adam’s ribs. Adam and Eve share the same substance. They participate alike in the image and likeness of God.

Consider. If I am made in the image of God, then I must have worth and value as an individual. It is irrelevant to compare myself with others if my essential being can be understood by comparison with God!

Consider. If others are made in the image and likeness of God, they must have worth and value as individuals, whatever weaknesses they display. When I understand this I will treat others with respect.

Consider. If we truly share the image and likeness of God, each must have a worth and value that is independent of gender, race, or social status. When I truly understand this, I begin to set aside the prejudices that drive so much human behavior.

January 30

The Anointing Brings Harmony

“How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron’s beard, down upon the collar of his robes. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the Lord bestows His blessing, even life forevermore.”

Psalm 133

Remember the television show M*A*S*H? It was based on an American emergency medical unit in the Korean War. This group of people was composed of some very different personalities. There was Hawkeye Pierce, B.J., and Father Mulcahy. There was Colonel Potter, Radar, and Hotlips Houlihan. They were always playing jokes on one another and arguing over different political views and the war. But there was always one thing that brought these characters together. It did not matter what particular argument was going on or what particular practical joke was being pulled, when they heard the sound of the choppers bringing in wounded, they always were united in the O.R.

In our day of hurting and wounded people, we cannot afford to be one more church that spends all of its time arguing over things that will not matter in the light of eternity. We must bring our differences together and allow the Lord to merge them in unity of the Spirit.

Just as Aaron, the high priest, was anointed on his head and the oil ran down his body, so the Holy Spirit descends from our great High Priest, Jesus Christ. Anointing always brings harmony.
All Power

“Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in Heaven and on earth has been given to me.’”
Matthew 28:18

The Roman Empire was at one of its greatest moments in terms of size and influence. The borders of the empire were larger than ever before. Truly the Roman Empire was operating in one of its finest hours. It was the most modern civilization the world had ever known.

If it were possible for the leader of this great empire, Tiberius Caesar, to have looked from his palace in Rome all the way to a distant remote mountain somewhere in Galilee where eleven men were gathered around their leader, and if he were able to hear what this leader was saying to these eleven men, there is little doubt that he would have laughed out loud. The leader said to His disciples, “I have been given complete authority...”

It took less than 400 years for Christianity to conquer the great Roman Empire. It is significant to see how a church of only eleven impacted the entire known world in such a short time.

How were they able to achieve this feat? It was through power - Holy Spirit, God-given power. We can impact our world because we have the same Holy Spirit living within us, thus the same power.

Attitude of Gratitude

"Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus."
1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NIV)

An attitude of gratitude puts everything and every circumstance in the proper perspective. It enables us to see the big picture and helps us to focus on God and His glory rather than on ourselves and our personal trials or triumphs. Such an attitude, openly expressed and lived-out, sends a powerful message to our family and friends: God is in control and I’m glad He is! We already know the ultimate outcome of life’s circumstances: "...in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28, NIV). If we forget this promise, we begin to take God for granted, and an attitude of gratitude is impossible. We can become self-focused and lose sight of what God is accomplishing in the greater scheme of things.

Baking a cake requires using a number of ingredients, which, if eaten by themselves, are mostly distasteful: flour, raw eggs, baking powder, etc. But, if these same ingredients are carefully blended together and baked for the right period of time, you end up with a delicious dessert. God is at the "mixing bowl" of our lives. Our "flour and raw eggs" experiences, however distasteful, are the ingredients of a wonderful creation. We can give thanks in all circumstances because of our faith in God, knowing that the end result of all our experiences will be a perfect blend for our good and His glory.
January 3

Direction In Prayer

“And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one.”

Matthew 6:13

Jesus taught us much about prayer in example and in word. “The Lord’s Prayer,” or as it could be known, “The Disciple’s Prayer” is a part of Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. It is the model prayer, and it gives us an outline of the subjects we should pray over.

At the close of the prayer, Jesus instructs us to pray for the Father’s direction for our day. It includes a healthy understanding of our enemy and his ability to deceive us away from the Father’s will for our lives. Satan loves to bring the child of God into the place of temptation and ultimately, after we have surrendered to temptation, to the place of bondage.

We should pray every day for God to lead us in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. Pray that He will give us daily deliverance from the enemy’s power and deceit. Yesterday’s deliverance was great, but we must depend on the Father to lead us daily. The enemy never ceases his relentless attacks. He plans and schemes to control us constantly. Therefore, prayer should be a vital part of our daily life.

January 28

Changed By The Power Of God

“As the body without the Spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.”

James 2:26

How do you know that your life has been changed by the power of God? When a person comes into a relationship with God through His Son, Jesus Christ, it is very obvious to the one who has received this new life and to the people close to Him. When God comes into your soul, you will know it!

Paul speaks of this in Romans, using Abraham as an illustration. What were his experiences concerning this question of being saved by faith? Was it because of his good deeds that God accepted him? If so, he would have had something to boast about. But from God’s point of view, Abraham had no basis at all for pride. For the Scriptures tell us, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” When people work, their wages are not a gift. Workers earn what they receive. “However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.” Romans 4:1-5

There is no contradiction between these verses in James and Romans. Paul stresses the root of faith, while James stresses the fruit of faith. Paul looks at our salvation from the Divine perspective, and James looks at it from the human perspective. The two go hand in hand.

Is your faith evident to those around you? Does your faith penetrate your character and actions? Can others tell that you love the Lord?
Power Of Love

“Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.”

I Peter 4:8

A woman named Beth was driving her husband Jim’s pride and joy, a little green MG. He had labored over this car for hours every Saturday for four years. He had wanted a car like this for almost all of his life. As Beth was driving, she saw a boy on a bicycle and swerved to avoid him. She heard the little car being crunched and the glass breaking. She was dazed when the police officer approached her and asked for her insurance papers.

She did not so much fear the wrath of her husband, for he was gentle and nice, but she feared the great disappointment he would have. She dreaded the hurt and anguish she would see on his face.

As she went to the glove compartment to get the insurance papers, she found them in a plastic package. To her surprise on top of all the documents was a white envelope with her name on it. She opened it and began to read: “Dear Beth, if you are reading this, you have probably been in an accident. Don’t worry. I pray that you are all right, and just remember it is you that I love. Jim”

Sheffield was horrified. They would have to go all the way back to Greece and start over again! He would go down in history as the man who allowed the flame to go out! His panic was unnecessary because a “mother flame” was present in a trailing van as well as a replacement torch. Thus he could resume his duty, and the Olympic flame traveled onward, restore it. Too many times we stumble and allow our flame to go out. But there is a “Father flame” who stands ready to light your torch today, and He will keep it lit.

Don’t Let The Fire Go Out!

“Why is the house of God neglected? Then I called them together and stationed them at their posts.”

Nehemiah 13:11b

When the Olympics came to America several years ago, part of the experience was to see the Olympic flame. For every Olympics, a flame is lit from the eternal Olympic flame in Greece and then carried to wherever the Olympic games are being held. The flame made its way to Atlanta for the opening ceremonies by traveling all over America first.

Volunteers and heroes from all over America carried torches holding the flame from place to place. While the flame was passing through Tacoma, Washington, Harley Sheffield had the honor of carrying it on his bicycle. As he was crossing the Tacoma Narrows Bridge, the expansion grates on the bridge blew a tire out on his bike. The torch popped out of its holder, fell onto the bridge, and broke into pieces. The Olympic flame was extinguished.

Sheffield was horrified. They would have to go all the way back to Greece and start over again! He would go down in history as the man who allowed the flame to go out! His panic was unnecessary because a “mother flame” was present in a trailing van as well as a replacement torch. Thus he could resume his duty, and the Olympic flame traveled onward, restore it. Too many times we stumble and allow our flame to go out. But there is a “Father flame” who stands ready to light your torch today, and He will keep it lit.
The Birth Of A Dream

“Then God remembered Rachel; he listened to her and opened her womb.”

Genesis 30:22

Rachel was Jacob’s dream wife. They were very much in love. Like most married couples, they desired to have a child so their love could walk upon the earth. God listened to Rachel’s dream for a child, and He answered her prayer by giving them a son. Their dream became a reality named Joseph.

It is impossible to overestimate the power and role of dreams in human existence. Dreams have brought us lifesaving medical breakthroughs and soul-stirring revival movements. Some of our greatest athletic achievements are the result of a personal dream. The United States of America is the result of a dream of real democratic government by a group of patriots. Martin Luther King changed the course of a nation because he had a dream. Your world and “the” world can be changed because of the dream inside you.

These dreams are your daytime dreams – your vision, your hopes, your aspirations, and your desires. A God-given dream won’t go away. Search your heart and mind to get in touch with the dream God has put inside you. Then pray about it and take action! First Baptist’s dream to build a larger facility began in Habakkuk 2:3, “For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false: Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay.”

Power To Transform

“For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the Kingdom of the Son He loves.”

Colossians 1:13

One of our problems today is that we trivialize sin, satan, salvation, and the Savior. We have reduced sin to what we call minor complexes and simple problems. Satan is a myth, a joke, a cartoon character. In reality, he is the very real god of this world, the chief of an innumerable company of demons, the father of all unbelievers, the ruling monarch of darkness. Salvation has been reduced to a mere intellectual decision rather than a transformation of life. Our Savior has been trivialized to simply another religious leader.

In the New Testament, Jesus never asks for compliments or tribute from those who reject His claims as Messiah. He stands alone as the “only begotten of the Father.” He made the claims that “He and the Father are one.” He claims to be the only way to heaven. We may trivialize these things, but in light of eternity, it is not a trivial pursuit. The very word salvation stands for all God the Father has done to rescue us from our fallen condition. The New Testament presents our salvation, not as a mere decision, but a miraculous, supernatural deliverance! Colossians stands as a book that is a wake-up call to the powerful truths about our salvation. Never trivialize what it took to save you.
Powerful Jesus

“At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from Him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, ‘Who touched my clothes?’”

Mark 5:30

In chapter five, we have three important incidents in the life of the Lord Jesus. It is within the context of these events that Jesus revealed Himself as the powerful Son of God. In the first event, Jesus revealed Himself as more powerful than demons. When Jesus showed up, the demons immediately began to beg for mercy. With one word the demons left this man, never to return. We also see Jesus revealed as more powerful than death in this passage. When Jairus’ daughter fell ill, he sought Jesus out to come and heal her. But before they could arrive, the girl had died. Jesus, nevertheless, restored her life by the power of His word. In the middle of these two great revelations, there is a rather small incident where Jesus showed Himself more powerful than disease. It falls almost as parentheses to the greater event of the raising of Jairus’ daughter from the dead, but there are still some important truths about the touch of faith.

This healing event shows us that we should not only have spiritual life, but we should also have spiritual health individually and in our corporate church body. Many have received salvation and have spiritual life, but are not well. Jesus says in John 10:10, “… I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” The way to experience spiritual health is the same way to experience spiritual life – that is to come into contact with Jesus.

What A Great Dream Looks Like

“He said to them, ‘Listen to this dream I had.’”

Genesis 37:6

In 1989, a movie called “Field of Dreams” was released. Kevin Costner played Ray Kincella, a 37 year-old man who had never done a crazy thing in his life until he heard a voice one day that said, “Build it and he will come.” You see, Ray had had a stormy relationship with his dad. As a rebellious child of the 60’s, he scorned his dad who loved baseball, refusing even to play catch with him. His father died before he could make things right. When he plowed his cornfield over and made a baseball field, everyone said he was crazy for following his dream, but through the magic of the movie he could be reunited with his father as a young man. The theology is certainly not correct, and the plot is nowhere near reality, but that is what makes the movies, the movies.

One thing is for certain; people will come to a place where their dreams can be fulfilled. God’s field of dreams is not in Iowa, but rather in the hearts of His people. How do we know what a dream looks like? This list below gives us a good description of what a God-given dream looks like:

A God-given dream will stir your passion.
A God-given dream will be humanly impossible to accomplish.
A God-given dream will make an impression on you for a lifetime.
A God-given dream will cause you to exercise strong faith.
Gratitude in the Face of Disappointment

"Yet the LORD, the God of Israel, chose me from my whole family to be king over Israel forever."

1 Chronicles 28:4 (NIV)

This expression of gratitude immediately followed the greatest disappointment of King David’s life. He had just learned from God that he would not have the honor of providing leadership for the building of God’s Temple. David had said in 1 Chronicles 28:2 that his heart had been set on building a magnificent dwelling-place for the God of Israel. Later, he describes the energy, enthusiasm, and unbridled generosity he had already invested in this God-honoring project: “With all my resources I have provided for the temple of my God — gold for the gold work, silver for the silver, bronze for the bronze...Besides, in my devotion to the temple of my God I now give my personal treasures of gold and silver..." (1 Chronicles 29:2-3, NIV)

After all of this sacrifice and preparation, David learns that he would not be the man to build God’s Temple. What was his response? What would we do in the face of such disappointment? His response teaches us one of life’s greatest priorities: focusing on the goodness of God. Instead of throwing a “pity party,” reflect on how wonderfully gracious God has been to you. That’s exactly what David did. Upon learning that he would not be personally involved in building the Temple, he reminded himself and others around him of the incredible honor he already enjoyed: "Yet the LORD, the God of Israel, chose me from my whole family to be king over Israel forever." (1 Chronicles 28:4, NIV)

Power For The Future

“Moses answered the people, ‘Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today...The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.”

Exodus 14:13-14

God’s power does not operate until we move beyond the realm of our possibilities. As long as we can do it in our own strength, there is no need for God to display His power. We must move beyond our abilities if a watching world will ever see the power of God. This feat is seen clearly in our text as the recently freed Hebrew slaves found themselves surrounded by impossibilities. Before them was a sea that could not be crossed. Beside them was a barren wasteland. Behind them was an enemy that desired to capture them and take them back to where they had been. In this difficult situation they had three options:

They could go back.
They could stand still.
They could go forward.

For the children of God, there is only one real option - go forward! As we move forward under God’s direction and by His power, we must be careful. Around us are many roads that can only lead to defeat and death.

Before us there is a future. There is a land that flows with milk and honey. This future is as bright and powerful as the promises of God that we find in Scripture.
January 23

Power!

“...His incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of His mighty strength, which He exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the Heavenly realms...”

Ephesians 1:19-20

One of the greatest needs in the church today is power; not political power, not manipulative power, not fleshly power, but heaven-sent, Holy Spirit anointed power. The source of all power is the Word of God. The Bible tells us in Romans 1:16, “I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.” The Bible continues to state this truth again in I Corinthians 1:18, “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”

If the Bible is the source of all power, and there are lots of copies out there, then why are there not more changed lives? How is it possible to read the Bible and yet be unaffected by it? The root of the issue is what you define as truth. Do you believe that everything in the Bible is true and that it is from God? For the Christian, power and truth are inextricably linked together. Paul says in Ephesians 6:17, “Take the Helmet of Salvation and the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.” God gives us the power through Scripture. Consider today’s devotional a challenge to memorize a new Scripture verse. Then you can claim the promise of its power.

January 8

A Memorial for Gratitude

“These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever.”

Joshua 4:7b (NIV)

Joshua had instructed the people to carry large stones from the bed of the Jordan River and place them on the Canaan side of the river. Arranged together, these stones provided a memorial of God’s power, provision and purpose for the children of Israel. The Israelites would periodically return to this place, Gilgal, to express their gratitude for victories won in this new land. Significantly, they were commanded to bring their children with them on these occasions.

Carefully read Joshua 4:19-24. When the people of Israel were obedient to God’s instruction regarding these twelve stones, it provided a great opportunity to teach and instruct the next generation. “He said to the Israelites, ‘In the future when your descendants ask their fathers, ‘What do these stones mean?’ (Joshua 4:21, NIV). A child’s natural curiosity opens the door for a parent to testify of God’s remarkable power. Parents should lead their children back to the place where God has demonstrated His timely provision. It may be a story, a place, or even a picture, but whatever it is, let them see it over and over again until it becomes a defining moment in their lives and a monument to God’s grace.
January 9

Communication of Gratitude

"Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you"

Mark 5:19 (NIV)

Jesus spoke these words after casting demons out of a man from Gadarene. His command was simple: Go and tell others what I have done for you. What a powerful reminder this gives us of the need to express our thanks to God. Not just in private thanksgiving; but also in public acknowledgement of God’s goodness.

All believers face the danger of forgetting "how much the Lord has done for us." When this occurs, we may grow timid in communicating gratitude both to God and to man. Communicating gratitude is important for several reasons:

1. It makes us more reliant on God. Romans 1:21 (NIV) tells of those who “although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him.” Thankfulness occurs inwardly, in what our heart expresses. Glorifying God happens publicly, in what our mouth confesses. Public expressions of gratitude strengthen one’s commitment to God while counteracting our human tendency to self-sufficiency and self-reliance.

2. It has a profound impact on those around us. Family and friends need to hear that our successes are not of our own making, but that we are beneficiaries of the goodness of God. Take the time to express your gratitude to God in the presence of a friend or family members.

January 22

How Much Is Too Much?

“She broke the jar and poured the perfume on His head.”

Mark 14:3b

The story of the Bethany anointing is one of the few stories of Jesus’ life that is contained in all four of the gospels. So impressive was this event that it was indelibly written upon the disciples’ hearts so that they never, ever forgot this act of devotion. Mark uses it as a prelude to the passion events. It contrasts the hatred and rejection that Jesus was receiving at the hands of the rulers and the people. This act of worship and devotion stood out as an act of love that the Lord deserved from all, but was only given by a few.

May this deed be received as a call to worship for us today. May this deed make us ask ourselves the question, “How much is too much?” This woman’s act set a standard of sacrifice, which none can better, but all can match. That alabaster bottle was very valuable. It was worth a year’s wages. Plus, it was to be saved for the most important occasion of one’s life. What is the most extravagant thing you have done for the Lord? What can we learn from this Scripture?

Real love is always extravagant.
Extravagant love is always criticized.
Jesus always comes to the defense of those who are criticized for being extravagant in their devotion towards Him.
Discover Your Destiny…Like Joseph

“…when he saw the carts Joseph had sent to carry him back the spirit of their father Jacob revived.”

Genesis 45:27b

Today’s story is about Andrew Singleton. He had an I.Q. of only 55. But his parents dreamed for him. They dreamed that he could somehow enjoy life as a teenager. Although he was enrolled in special need centers for most of his life, when he was 19, his parents put him in regular high school. He attended special classes there and endured a tremendous amount of pressure while adjusting to his new environment. His parents desired that Andy would be accepted and have friends there. Eventually, Andy did so well that he was able to participate in some mainstream classes.

On graduation day when Andrew’s name was called, his parents watched in amazement as the unbelievable happened. All 192 of his classmates rose to their feet and soon the entire crowd of spectators joined them. His classmates began to cheer for him and to call out his name. It was a dream come true.

When we get to heaven we will also celebrate a dream come true. Until then, God will keep us revived. Jacob was living with a spirit of poverty until he saw the wagons. When he saw the riches from Egypt from a son he had thought dead, he was revived.

Gratitude as a Form of Worship

“The people rejoiced at the willing response of their leaders, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the LORD”

1 Chronicles 29:9.

First Chronicles 29:9-20 is one of the greatest expressions of worship found in God’s Word. After you have read and reflected on this passage, take some time to consider the significance of being in partnership with God. Recognize Him not only as the senior partner but also as the sole financial backer of your life’s venture. David was completely captivated by the reality of this, and as a result, his leadership influenced others to contribute in the same spirit of sacrifice and praise.

Relative to your situation, plan a worship time with your family that includes the following three features of true worship.

1. Gratitude: The recognition that all we have has come from His hand. We are but channels through which the work of God is carried out.

2. Sacrifice: Sacrifice always involves cost. It has little to do with how much one gives. What is more important is the measure of one’s sacrifice. Did it truly cost us something? When it does, then we have set aside something and made it sacred.

3. Praise: The distinction between gratitude and praise is this: Gratitude is appreciation for what God has done, praise is appreciation for who God is.
January 11

When Your Dream Is Delayed

“When comes that dreamer!” they said to each other. ‘Come now, let’s kill him...Then we’ll see what comes of his dreams.”

*Genesis 37:19-20*

Joseph found out what every dreamer finds out – not everyone is happy about your dream. Joseph found out that people would envy your dream, conspire against it, speak against it, and even attack your God-given dream. Joseph’s brothers put him in a pit and then sold him as a slave to go to Egypt. Don’t you imagine that at that time, Joseph wondered just what in the world God was doing and if his dream would become a reality?

Remember that every God-given dream must die a human death. That is, every dream from God will come to a place where it is impossible to accomplish the dream in human ability alone. God is sovereign and His timing is perfect. Remember Habakkuk 2:3b, “It (our plan to build) will certainly come and will not delay.” Therefore, when we run out of resources and get to a place where we realize that the dream cannot happen unless God steps in, then God alone will get the glory when the dream is accomplished. His ways are not our ways, and He does not delay a single day.

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January 20

Discover Your Destiny...Like Jacob

“When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, ‘Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it...and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God’s house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth.”

*Genesis 28:16,22*

We continue our look at Jacob’s encounter with God. Because of this experience, Jacob went from being characterized as a taker, to being known as a giver. It was all due to meeting the living God personally. Look at the God he met:

God is a Dream-Maker. God came to Jacob with a dream for a glorious future. God always puts dreams about the future in our hearts. Jacob awoke to a wonderful truth. Beforehand, he did not know that he was at the house of God and the gate of heaven. God delights in giving us dreams and then seeing them come to pass.

God is a Promise-keeper. God reveals Himself not with just a generic name for God, but the covenant name of Yahweh. God is a God who makes promises and keeps them. He does what He says He will do.

God is a Word-Giver. He speaks. The verse says, “and He said.” God reveals Himself clearly to His people through the Bible, which are His oral words in written form. Jacob had been stumbling around wondering, until he heard the voice of God.
Discover Your Destiny...Like Jacob

“When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, ‘Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it...and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God’s house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth.’”

Genesis 28:16,22

Today’s passage finds Jacob running from the consequences of his actions and falling asleep at a place called Bethel. While he was asleep, God revealed Himself to him in a personal way. It was then that the God of his fathers became his personal God too.

Before we see how this destiny moment changed his perspective about giving, let’s look at the point where God showed up in Jacob’s life.

God reveals Himself when we are at the end of ourselves. Jacob’s scheming and trickery had brought him nothing but failure and rejection. When he stopped running and fell asleep at Bethel, he had nothing. It is when you are at the end of your rope that God reveals Himself to you in a personal way.

God reveals Himself when we are alone. God uses the times we are alone to reveal Himself, for usually, that is when He has our undivided attention.

Jacob was forever changed at Bethel. When God became personal to him, he immediately vowed to give God a tenth of everything. This personal encounter with God changed Jacob from a taker in life to a giver. Personal encounters with God result in changed lives.

Don’t Stop Short Of Your Dreams

“The Lord was with Joseph and he prospered.”

Genesis 39:2a

In 1930, two young brothers named Dick and Maurice McDonald moved from New Hampshire to California to pursue the American dream of being successful. After a few failed ventures, they struck gold when they opened a small drive-in restaurant.

You might think, yes, the rest is history. But, in 1954, a man by the name of Ray Kroc came into the picture. He saw potential that the brothers did not see. In 1961, Kroc bought the exclusive rights to McDonald’s for the sum of $2.7 million – now with 21,000+ restaurants worldwide, the rest of the story is history indeed.

The lessons learned from this story are:

♦ Don’t pull up short of your God-given dream.
♦ Don’t allow someone to out-dream you.
♦ Don’t allow someone else to finish your dream.

Christians look to Joseph as the role model for dreaming big. Genesis 39 holds important lessons for all dreamers that can keep us from stopping short of our dreams are:

♦ Know that God is with us (verses 2, 21, & 23).
♦ Know that God is aware of our actions (verse 9).
♦ Know that God can make the bitter things in life sweet (verses 21-23).
Can You Trust God?

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.”

Proverbs 3:5-6

There are two ways people live their lives as they pass through this world – either remembering God or forgetting Him. They either acknowledge His presence and live their lives in dependence on Him, or they pay no attention to His claims on them and live a life on the basis of their own understanding and abilities. The question we must ask ourselves today is, “Do we trust God?”

The very nature of this question produces two possible meanings: First – “Can you ‘trust’ God?” That is, is He trustworthy? Can He handle the decisions and the problems in your life? Secondly – “Can you trust God?” That is, do you have the ability to trust Him?

These verses reveal some important things about trusting God:

♦ The matter of trust is an all or nothing thing. Notice how many times the word “all” is used.
♦ The command to trust precedes the promise. Blessing comes after trust is expressed.
♦ The promise is conditional. Unlike many of the unconditional promises in the Bible, this promise of direction is given only to those who exercise trust in God.

Discover Your Destiny…Like Rebekah

“Drink, my Lord,’ she said, and quickly lowered the jar to her hands and gave him a drink. After she had given him a drink, she said, ‘I’ll draw water for your camels too…”

Genesis 24:18-19

Chapter twenty-four of Genesis details the marvelous narrative of the servant of Abraham who seeks out a bride for Isaac. This unnamed servant, when looking for a bride for the Father’s son, had one characteristic in mind that she must possess. It was not natural beauty, even though Rebekah was naturally beautiful. It was not strength, even though she was strong. The servant was looking for a person who had the spirit of giving, for a giving person would bless the son, Isaac. When Rebekah gave him a drink and then offered to water his camels (which might take hours, by the way!), he knew that he had found the one for Isaac.

♦ The Holy Spirit as well waits in the background until He sees the spirit of giving in you. Then He pulls out the riches and gives you revelation of the Father’s plan.
♦ The Holy Spirit is watching and waiting on your response to the opportunities to give in your life.
♦ Rebekah was willing to give. She was going to the well to take care of her needs. It was her water, but she gave it away.
♦ Rebekah was willing to go beyond the ordinary. If you are willing to go beyond the ordinary for God, He will go beyond the ordinary for you.
Discover Your Destiny...Like Abraham

Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.
Genesis 14:20b

Chapter fourteen of Genesis records for us a significant event in the pilgrimage of Abraham. This godly man becomes a warrior as he joins in defeating four kings who have united against five kings of the valley. War would not have interested Abraham, except for the fact that Lot, his nephew, was captured and taken into captivity. Today’s text picks up with Abraham returning as a conquering hero. His high esteem, already in the eyes of others, has gone higher. He is now known throughout the land.

At this point in his prosperity, he is faced with a significant choice. In fact, his future destiny hangs in the balance of this choice. This choice is a spiritual battle, and it is a greater battle than the physical one he just fought. Will he become worldly with all these material possessions, or will he become rich in God’s eyes because he is a giver?

Life is all about making the right choices. In this Bible passage, Melchizedek is a picture of Jesus Christ. With that in mind, you can see that Abraham made a wise choice by giving back to God a tenth of what God had given him. In your prosperity, which comes from God, do you give any back to Him? Spiritual growth will result from worshipping the Lord through giving.

A God You Can Trust

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.
Proverbs 3:5-6

God expects His people to trust Him, and He is a trustworthy God! We were created to live our lives in dependence upon Him. Our knowledge is incomplete, our wisdom is inadequate, our power is ineffective; thus, we need our Creator. Sin in its very essence is failing to trust God. These verses in Proverbs tell us how we are to trust Him.

We are to trust Him entirely (verse 5). God wants us to trust Him “with all of our heart.” That means everything from our salvation to physical, mental, and social needs. That includes trusting Him with our families, marriages, jobs, relationships, finances, abilities, weaknesses, health, accomplishments, and failures.

We are to trust him exclusively (verse 5). God commands us not to depend on our own understanding. Why? Because it is fundamentally flawed with an infection of sin. God is truly omniscient. He knows it all from beginning to end. So follow His leading from His Word, prayer, and Godly counsel. He is on your side, so trust Him!

We are to trust Him uniformly (verse 6). In all we do, in every decision we make, we are to trust His wisdom, not just with big things, but also with the little things.
Learning To Trust Him

“Trust in the Lord...Fear the Lord...Honor the Lord”
Proverbs 3:5-9

In order to receive the blessing of God, we must trust Him. Trusting God is not some mere token confession you make from time to time. Trusting God must be complete, total, daily reliance upon the promises of God. Every day you will face the choice of relying upon your own understanding or trusting Him.

You and I must choose to trust God. When you come to those places in life where the line is drawn and the question is “Can I trust God?” your answer determines whether you grow beautifully or shrivel spiritually. The issue is, “Which am I going to choose?” When God told Noah to build the ark, it had never rained. Noah chose to trust God. Abraham left everything behind because he chose to trust God. Joshua was faced with a decision, and he said, “Choose today whom you will serve...but as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord.” Do you have this kind of trust in the Lord?

You can prove your trust in Him. Trusting Him is real when you acknowledge Him, when you depart from evil, and when you honor the Lord with your time, talent, and treasures.

A Prayer For Direction

“Therefore, you must study the Bible and be a person of prayer. In Psalm 119, almost every verse refers to the Scriptures. Verse 133 is a prayer for direction. The Psalmist here pleads for guidance from the Word of God.

Have you ever considered that God desires to guide every step you take? He desires to guide not only the big steps in your life, but even the mundane steps you take every day in the kitchen or your workplace. He will also guide you to the friend who needs encouragement, the neighbor who needs Jesus, and the co-worker who needs a witness of God’s love.