

You Want It. I Want It. We All Want It.  
God Wants Us To Have It Too.

# THERE IS JOY FOR YOU



4 ESSENTIALS FOR GIVING GOD THE HONOR HE DESERVES  
AND GETTING YOURSELF THE HAPPINESS YOU DESIRE.

**Jimmy D. Brown**

THERE IS JOY FOR YOU

**You Can Help Out By Giving Away Copies Of This Document  
Or By Pointing Others To [JimmyBrown.com/joy/](http://JimmyBrown.com/joy/)**



**Free Daily Devotions (1-Minute Reads) From Jimmy Are Available At  
[FinishLineFaith.com](http://FinishLineFaith.com) or [Facebook.com/FinishLineFaith/](https://www.facebook.com/FinishLineFaith/)**

© 2023 Benchmark Publishing, LLC. All Rights Reserved. You may give away copies of this document to other people as long as you do not alter its contents, misrepresent it or charge a fee for it.

Scripture quotations are from the *ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®)*, Copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

## Introduction: We Are Invited Into Joy

It is defined in different ways. It is pursued in different ways. It is measured in different ways. But what every single human being wants no matter how it is defined, pursued and measured is this: happiness. What may surprise you is that God *also wants* us to be happy. Happiness is His idea. He invented it. And He invites us into the same type of happiness (real, full, ultimate, lasting joy) that is shared with Jesus, who promises to share it with us, if we will follow Him in faith.

Jesus said in John 15:10-11...

*"If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full."*

Many people see the commands of Christ as "restrictive rules" that are keeping the good stuff out of our lives instead of seeing them as "gracious guardrails" that are keeping our lives out of the gutter. When He tells us to do, say, correct, believe, feel, think or share something, it is not to take away our happiness, but rather it is to take away the things that are in the way of our full and lasting happiness in Him. God doesn't let us rule our own lives because we would ruin our own lives. Instead, He lovingly gives us commandments to safeguard our joy.

*SIDEBAR: Throughout this book I will be using the words "joy" and "happiness" interchangeably to mean the same thing. While some people make distinctions between the two, for the purposes of this book, I will not. To be clear about my meaning as I use these two words, let me offer this definition of Christian joy / happiness: It is a good feeling in our spirit and a gracious fruit of the Holy Spirit that comes from Christ rather than from circumstances. Let's unpack that a bit more to better understand my position on what God and we are after...*

*This good feeling can be described as delight, gladness, contentment, awe, pleasure, gratitude, bliss or some other sense of inner rejoicing. This good feeling is larger than, but includes, feelings of peace, hope, love, comfort, security, rest, assurance and other spiritual well-being. This good feeling cannot be manufactured by self, but is produced by the Holy Spirit as a fruit of His indwelling presence in our lives. This good feeling transcends all circumstances because it flows from our union and relationship with Jesus. This good feeling is an emotional experience of seeing and savoring the value and worth of Jesus, sharing all of the blessings and benefits that are ours because we know Him, and standing on the promises of God for us as His children. And here's what you need to know about all of this...*

## THERE IS JOY FOR YOU

No one wants you to be happy more than Jesus does. No one will make you happy more than Jesus can. But Jesus isn't primarily aiming at making you happy by getting you past a bad time or helping you have a good time. His goal isn't a happier you because He worked it out so you got the new job, got over the breakup, got through the illness, got to take a vacation or got the result you wanted. Those may be part of His blessings to you, but His main concern is your soul. He desires your happiness in being forgiven and free from the devastating consequences of your sin so you can know every pleasure of knowing God.

### CONFLICTING MESSAGES

We must trust that He is after our happiness, that He knows best how to bring about our happiness, and that what He tells us is designed to lead us into happiness. We must trust this instead of the deceptive, attractive wisdom and ways of culture. The message of the world is to *"do what you want to do and be who you want to be"* and this will make you happy. Only it... Does. Not. Work. The message of Jesus is *"do what I want you to do and be who I made you to be."* In doing so, we will experience His joy, and our joy can be full no matter what else is happening in our lives. Want to be happy? His. Way. Works.

His way is the only way to get what He and we are both after for our lives and from our lives. The words of my personal mission statement offer a simple summary of this mutual aim: *"I exist to know Jesus and make Him known so that God is honored in us and we are happy in Him."* The ultimate goal of our lives is for God to be glorified in our happiness. We don't have to choose between God being honored and us being happy. We have to choose between God's way and our way for getting there. His ways are perfect even when we don't think they are. Our ways are flawed even when we don't think they are.

Now, maybe you're wondering, how is God glorified through our happiness? There are at least three ways... First, He is glorified when we trust that He knows best how to make us happy, and we lovingly do what He says to bring about our happiness. Second, He is glorified when we thank Him for the good things He gives to us and does for us that make us happy so that He gets credit. Third, He is glorified when we treasure Him as our ultimate source of happiness by delighting not just in His gifts, but in Him as a good and generous and gracious Giver. Trust Him. Thank Him. Treasure Him. This is how God is honored in us and we are happy in Him.

What we need to understand is that our happiness does not depend upon us getting something we want or getting rid of something we don't want. Our happiness depends upon us getting Jesus and getting rid of anything that robs us of all that is ours because of Him. Regardless of what we have and don't have, what we get to do and don't get to do, who we are and who we are not in this world, when we look to Jesus to satisfy the longings of our hearts, we will be just that ... satisfied. Content.

## THERE IS JOY FOR YOU

Pleased. Happy. He is the source of our hope, rest, comfort, courage, security, strength, peace, purpose, provision and blessings ... all the things that happiness is made of.

The things of this world were not designed to bring you full and lasting satisfaction; that's why they never do. They leave you longing for something more, something different, something better. You'll look for it your entire life in people, places, pursuits and possessions, but you'll only find it in Jesus. He doesn't offer to get us that new job, new spouse, new vacation, new baby, new home, new personal best, new recognition, new bill of health, or new thing that we think will make us happy. He offers to give us Himself. Our satisfaction depends not on us having the things of this world, but on us having Him.

It is His joy that can be in us. Not a worldly joy that disappoints in the end, comes with regrets in the end, costs too much in the end, wrecks in the end, and will come to an end. It is a joy that exceeds all other joys in every way possible: it is offered freely, satisfies completely and lasts infinitely. And we can have it to the full. That means it is not lacking in any way. It is the most it can be. The most it can be in this world where problems and pain are present, and the most it can be in the world to come where problems and pain will be absent. When we are filled with His joy, we don't need to keep looking elsewhere for it.

*SIDEBAR: That said, of course, we are given many very tangible gifts of grace to be enjoyed because we know and belong to Jesus. These should serve only to intensify our joy in Him. God generously blesses us in countless ways throughout our lifetime: Good health. Good relationships. Good finances. Good accomplishments. Good possessions. Good experiences. Good things in all shapes and sizes. These may very well be good gifts of God for us to enjoy, but our joy is not dependent upon those things, nor should our joy terminate on those things.*

*What is going on in your life today? If something good is happening, it's a gift. If something bad is being handled, it's a gift. That sunset, steak and surprise text from your friend. Those are gifts. The trial you're getting through and the trouble you got through. Yep, gifts. Your ability, opportunity and community ... gift, gift, gift. The tears wiped away and the smiles of the day. Gifts on top of gifts. Beating hearts, peaceful sleep, acts of service, growing pains, friends that care, strength to continue, paid bills, lessons learned, fresh water, hugs. You can't look in any direction without seeing the evidence of God's gifts of grace.*

*But whatever secondary supply of happiness-creating kindnesses God chooses to bring into our lives for us to enjoy should serve to intensify our rejoicing in Jesus rather than diminish or replace it. They are not the destination; they are signs that point us to the destination. God intends for these blessings to be traced upward to the fountainhead of joy, namely Himself. We enjoy the pleasures of earth as a means of better enjoying pleasure in God.*

## **THE JOURNEY TO JOY**

So, how do we get there? How do we get to God being honored in us and us being happy in Him? By knowing and making known Jesus. God the Father desires that we have a relationship with Him that is made possible through God the Son. To know Him means personally, intimately, experientially walking with Jesus by following Him in faith to experience the incredible blessings and benefits of knowing Him and belonging to Him. This shared life with Jesus is a spiritual journey referred to in the Bible as a “*walk*” in which we go through life together with Him. The closer we are to Him, the more we will find real happiness in Him, and He will be honored through us.

As followers of Jesus, we take steps of faith (one at a time) in our day-by-day “*walk*” with Him. Wherever He leads, we follow in the same direction, one step at a time. While there are many places we will go and things we will do, there are four basic steps that every Christian takes from the beginning, and they never stop taking until they follow Jesus all the way home: Pray. Read the Bible. Respond to what God tells you. Help others do the same. These four basic steps all center on the Bible and can be restated like this: Read it. Pray it. Live it. Share it. The people of God are to center their lives on the Word of God. This is how we know, follow, enjoy and share Him so that He is honored in us and we are happy in Him.

As we turn to the Bible and turn its pages, we learn of His good plans for us, His gracious promises to us, and His guiding presence with us. Only when we regularly read and respond to the Bible can we be who we were made to be and do what we were made to do. If your ultimate aim in life is to be as happy as you can and bring as much honor to God as you can, there is no substitute for the nourishing, encouraging, strengthening, guiding, transforming Scriptures. We are to put into practice what we profess to believe as we walk with Jesus through the everyday details and decisions of real life. Certainly we will take mis-steps along the way; but if we belong to Jesus, He will never let us completely lose our way.

Let’s consider some basic practices for taking the four basic steps...

## STEP ONE: Read It

The first thing that needs to be said is that we'll be covering some basics for "*reading*" the Bible and not "*studying*" the Bible. There is a difference. Reading the Bible is about basic familiarity, comprehension and enjoyment. Studying the Bible is about a deepening of those things through more careful and thorough investigation. There is a place for both. For now, we are going to focus on reading the Bible. You will get a really good grasp of how to "*pray it*," "*live it*" and "*share it*" as you "*read it*" from cover to cover. And don't let that overwhelm you ... it's very manageable and enjoyable in bite-sized chunks.

Let's begin by answering the *what, when, where, how and why* of good Bible reading...

### **What Is It?**

Bible reading is simply seeking to rightly understand the author's meaning for which words were chosen and how they are connected in any section of the Scriptures. Even punctuation can be important. There's a big difference between "*let's eat people*" and "*let's eat, people.*" Though a humorous example, it illustrates the importance of not just what words were chosen, but also how they are connected, which brings about a specific meaning.

The key to reading the Bible is to *rightly understand* the meaning of those who wrote it under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Though you will not understand everything, there will be plenty of things in the Bible that you grasp immediately, and you will grow to understand even more over time as you become familiar with God and His way of relating to us through grace. As you read, there are at least four things that can be helpful in hearing what God wants to say to you through the Bible in that regard.

1. First, pray to God and ask Him to give you insight and instruction in a way that only He can. This is the most important part of reading to rightly understand. The. Most. Important. Part.
2. Second, choose a translation that is written at a level that is easy for you to read (such as the NLT). If you start out trying to read a Greek New Testament, you're not going to get far.
3. Third, get a copy of some good Bible study notes (such as the ESV Study Bible) that offer brief explanations for key verses. While nowhere near the same level of authority as God's words in the Bible, these can be helpful since God has gifted some people to teach His Word.
4. Fourth, start with what you do understand and avoid getting stuck on what you don't understand. You will never understand it all. Never. So don't let that stop you from

understanding some now and more later.

### ***When Should You Do It?***

The Word of God is like sustaining and satisfying bread for our lives (Matthew 4:4): we need it daily to remain healthy and happy. If we go without it, our well-being starts to decline ... we become hungry, we grow malnourished, we suffer unnecessarily, we starve. That is why it is so important that we read a little of the Bible every day so we can experience its power (Hebrews 4:12) to shape who we are and what we do. We will take in many other words throughout the day that will lose or gain influence in our lives in relation to how regularly we take in the Word of God.

Reading the Bible should be a priority over just about everything else in life. Over relationships, work, obligations, self-care, loving others, and even serving God? Yes, because the Bible will inform the way in which you do each of those things (and everything else). It will define and demonstrate what it looks like to live rightly whether at work, home, church, school, play or out in public. It will provide not only the instruction, but also the motivation, for handling all of life in the way that is best. The Bible will equip you and encourage you with all that you need each day. And as you read it each day, you will be reminded throughout the day of what God spoke into your life.

In light of this, one of the most important things you can do is set aside a specific time on your daily schedule in order to spend unhurried, undistracted time taking in the precious promises and plans of God. We schedule doctor appointments, staff meetings, kids' activities, car maintenance, workouts and date nights. While these are important things, how much more important is our relationship with God? If He is to be central to our lives, then He is to be central to our calendars. Find a time that works for you (preferably morning), even if it's just 5-10 minutes, and make this a regular daily rhythm. If you miss a day, restart the next day and maintain your schedule as regularly as possible.

### ***Where Should You Do It?***

There are two things to consider when it comes to the "where" of Bible reading: the place you go to begin reading the Bible and the place in the Bible where you begin to read. First, you will want to choose a place where you can read without interruption or distraction. Typically, this will be in a quiet space in your home where you can go to be alone such as a bedroom (inside) or patio / deck (outside). But, it's important to remember that any place you can focus on the words that God is speaking to you in the Bible will work, even if that's a crowded space such as a coffee house or commute on a bus. Some things that can help you "tune out" what is around you and "tune in" to the word in front of you include...

- Using a set of noise-canceling headphones.
- Turning on soft ambient music.



## THERE IS JOY FOR YOU

- Silencing your devices (such as your smartphone).
- Asking others to not interrupt you as you read.
- Reading the Bible aloud.
- Listening to an audio version of the text as you read.
- Choosing a time to read when you are most alert.
- Writing down distractions to address them later.
- Praying beforehand for God to help you focus.

After determining a place that gives you the best opportunity for focused Bible reading, it's time to decide where to get started reading in the Bible so you can ultimately get through all 66 books. Let's work backwards to find a recommended spot to begin: The whole Bible ... the New Testament ... the Gospels ... the Gospel of Mark. So, start with reading in Mark chapter one. Why do I come to this conclusion as a good place to start? Since who Jesus is and what Jesus does is the center of the Biblical narrative, starting in the New Testament makes sense because that's where we discover Him most clearly. The four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) are ideal because they tell us about the birth, life, death, resurrection and teaching of Jesus in ways that the rest of the New Testament does not. Finally, Mark is the shortest of the four gospels which enables you to make quick progress and gain some momentum in getting a rhythm of Bible reading established in your life. If you read just one chapter a day (about 5 minutes) for five days a week, you can read the New Testament in less than a year, before embarking on the Old Testament to finish the whole Bible.

Many people find that a "*reading plan*" is helpful to make steady progress reading through the Bible. A reading plan tells you what specific sections to read each day in order to stay on track to finish in a specific amount of time. Some popular plans include: Discipleship Journal, M'Cheyne's, The Kingdom, The Navigators, The Chronological Bible Reading Plan, and For Shirkers And Slackers. There are many more. A quick search at Google for "*Bible reading plans*" will yield lots of options and you are sure to find one that fits your schedule, experience and interest.

*NOTE: The Navigators 5X5X5 Bible Reading Plan is a good place to begin if you want to read the New Testament in a year. It takes about 5 minutes a day, 5 days a week. You can get a free copy at <https://www.navigators.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/navigators-5x5x5-new-testament-bible-reading-plan.pdf>*

### **How Should You Do It?**

Because this is Bible "*reading*" and not Bible "*study*," the process is simply to slowly make your way through the words on the page before you to see what it says to you. What can be helpful is to

## THERE IS JOY FOR YOU

observe who is present in the text and what is happening in the text. Specifically, I like to note things that I see in three categories: *upward, inward, outward*. First, in the “*upward*” category is what I learn about God from the text. Second, in the “*inward*” category is what I learn about myself and other people from the text. Third, in the “*outward*” category is what I learn about how I am to live out the text. In other words, I’m looking for how God and man relate to each other by grace. Ultimately, I want to know what it looks like for God to be honored in us and us to be happy in Him.

*NOTE: We’ll cover “upward, inward and outward” in greater detail later in this READ IT section.*

A few essential keys to “*how*” to read the Bible are these: *in faith, in submission, in delight, with prayer*. First, it is important we trust that what we read in the Bible are authoritative words spoken from God to us. We must believe them to be true. Second, it is important that we let those words govern our lives for how we think, feel, act and speak. We are to lovingly obey what God says. Third, it is important that we find pleasure in doing what we are instructed because we have hope in the outcome. We know that God is not after our begrudging submission; He’s after our joy. Finally, let us always pray before we begin reading the Bible, asking God to speak to us in a clear way and to give us faith to believe and do what He says.

### **Why Should You Do It?**

We’ve already established this, but it is worth repeating. The ultimate reason why we read the Bible is so God is honored in us and we are happy in Him. That’s what you are after in your Bible reading: an honored God and personal happiness. You seek to know, follow and enjoy Jesus through the Bible because that’s how you get to what both you and God want. You aren’t going to be as happy as you can be, and God isn’t going to be as honored as He can be, unless you regularly read the Bible, rightly understand what you read and respond in a way that gets to the goal. What’s the point of reading the Bible? The point is Jesus. The point is worship. The point is joy. The point is God being honored in you and you being happy in Him. Now and forever. Re-read the entire opening to this book, and you’ll see why you should read the Bible.

## **THE UPWARD, INWARD, OUTWARD APPROACH**

With that said, let’s revisit the “*upward, inward, outward*” approach to Bible reading...

In the “*upward*” category, we want to look for God so we can better know, follow and enjoy Him. It’s good to begin with God. Too often we read the Bible as if it’s about us, but it’s not. While there are promises made to us, instructions given to us, examples shown to us and truths proclaimed to us, the Bible is not about us. It is His story, and we are invited into it. It is His show, and we are offered a part in it. It begins and ends with Him, and any right reading and understanding of the Bible must see Him as central in all that is happening on every page. So, we begin by looking for Him on every page.

## THERE IS JOY FOR YOU

Specifically, we examine the text to see who God is, what God is doing and what God is after. We ponder questions similar to these... What is He like? What does He do? What does He want? We look for God's nature, characteristics and traits as a divine Person, such as His power, knowledge, presence, sovereignty, justice, mercy, grace, love and so forth. We look for evidences of His activity in the lives of those in the Bible (as He guides them, provides for them, corrects them, protects them, blesses them, loves them, etc.) and the similar way in which He has promised to work in our lives. We look for instructions and examples to follow so we can know what God is after so we can join in to be a part of the most important work in the universe as His kingdom comes through us and His will is done through us as it is in heaven.

In the *"inward"* category, we want to strive to see ourselves as God sees us. We often think too lowly of ourselves or we think too highly of ourselves. The only way to accurately see ourselves is through the lens of the Bible. That means two things in particular that we can look for: who we are in Christ and how we are not yet like Christ. The first exalts us when we are feeling unvalued, unwanted, unappreciated, unwelcome, unacceptable and unloved. The second humbles us when we are feeling self-important, self-sufficient, self-righteous and self-centered. Both of these realities are important to see because we are not who we used to be and we are also not yet who we will be.

When we read the Bible, we want to discover what God thinks about us. We let God describe us and define us in its pages so we don't deceive ourselves into believing we are people that we are not. We want to see what the Bible says about who we are, what has gone wrong with us and why we desperately need Jesus. We also want to see what the Bible says about who we were made to be and what we were made to do in loving God and each other. The Bible is a mirror that will reveal both the ugliness of remaining sin in us that needs confessing and repenting, and the beauty of Christ shining through us that needs celebrating and remembering. So, we look for promises, truths and instructions about our identities and lives.

In the *"outward"* category, we want to better understand what it looks like to live in a relationship with God and live out our identity in Christ. In light of what God has done, is doing and will do for us, what are we supposed to do? We don't just read the Bible to be informed, but to be transformed. The Word of God should change us. It should change how we think, feel, desire, speak and act. Its promises, its truths and its instructions should change us from the inside out as we believe what God says to us more fully in our hearts and apply it to more areas of our lives. In other words, we are to respond to the Bible.

Rightly reading the Bible will always require adjustments to our lives. God requires a response. A response that rests and relies on grace. A response that flows out of faith. A response that is certain of God's steadfast love for us whether we get it right or wrong. But a response, nonetheless. What kind of response? What are we looking for? Said simply, we want to know what God wants from us and for us. While there are countless practical applications, how we are to respond to the Bible will

## THERE IS JOY FOR YOU

fall into one of these categories: doing something, saying something, correcting something, believing something, feeling something, thinking something or sharing something. Yes, there is some overlap between the categories, but there are also some distinctions that make it important to separate them. Whatever we see as a response, we are to live it out in loving obedience to God, in firm dependence upon God, and in confident expectation in God to help us.

*NOTE: We will discuss these 7 responses to the Bible in greater detail in the "Live It" section of this book.*

You can just casually look for these three things ("upward, inward and outward") as you read the Bible and make a mental note of them. Or you can record what you specifically learn about God, us and how we are to relate to each other by grace from the current reading in a notebook, journal, app or computer document. I prefer the second option and find that writing a single sentence (or sometimes a fragment of a sentence) for each of the three categories helps me to "look" more carefully because I will be recording what I see in the passage I am reading. Perhaps an example would be helpful...

*EXAMPLE: Let's take Ephesians chapter 4. At the conclusion of it, verse 32 reads, "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." Responses to the "upward, inward, outward" prompts might look like this... Upward: God is gracious and has forgiven me in Christ. Inward: I sometimes struggle to forgive myself or others. Outward: I will forgive myself for {some specific thing} AND/OR I will forgive [some specific person] for [some specific reason.]*

## BECAUSE OF WHAT GOD HAS DONE

One other thing I like to do is link all three of these categories into a summary sentence by beginning it with the word, "because." Returning to the example from Ephesians 4:29, let's consider what it looks like to base what I need to do as a response on what God has done for me...

*EXAMPLE: Because I have been forgiven, I don't have to feel shame and guilt over my past and can forgive myself, and I should be forgiving of others like God has done for me, so I will graciously forgive [specific person] for [specific reason] as I model Jesus to this person and trust God to deal with this person's sin in whatever way He sees best.*

Do you see how that works? "Because" is who God is and what God has done for us (or, is doing / will do for us). Everything else that follows is about who we are as a result and what we are to do as a response. Because "God is gracious and has forgiven me in Christ" – that's who He is (gracious) and what He has done (forgiven me in Christ). "I have been forgiven" - that's who I am (a forgiven child of God) and "I don't have to / I should be / I will" – that's what I am to do.

**THERE IS JOY FOR YOU**

Now you make your own observations about these verses...

*Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. -  
Philippians 4:4-7 (ESV)*

What do you learn in this text about who God is and what God does?

---

---

What do you learn in this text about what God says of you and your life?

---

---

What do you learn in this text about what God wants for you and wants from you?

---

---

Make a summary sentence beginning with the word, "because" ...

---

---

## STEP TWO: Pray It

*You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. – James 4:2b-3*

God delights to give His children the good things they ask from Him. Why then are there times when we don't get what we want in life? One reason is simply that we aren't asking Him for good things. That could mean that we aren't praying at all, and we don't get what we ask for because we aren't asking. That could mean that we are praying, but what we are asking for isn't good for us to get. Whether it's the wrong thing, the wrong track, or the wrong time, God loves us too much to say "yes" to all of our requests that we would regret in the end. When He acts differently than we asked, it's always an upgrade.

*SIDEBAR: Perhaps you are wondering, "what is prayer?" In the interest of keeping things simple, at its most basic level, prayer is "talking to God." This can be verbally or silently, by yourself or with people, at a regular time or a random time, in a church or in your home. In other words, you can talk to God anytime and anywhere.*

Prayer, as with all of life, should be about God being honored in us and us being happy in Him. Prayer is not a hotline to heaven we use to override His will so He will give us what we think will make us happy; it is a lifeline to heaven we use to ask Him to show us His will and make us happy with what He gives us. Prayer isn't about filling up our kingdoms with what we think will make us happy; it is about being filled up by all He offers in His kingdom so we can actually be happy. You can be sure of this: the prayer that "works" is the prayer that "wants" all that God has for us in Jesus. His honor. Our happiness. That's what prayer is all about when we pray rightly.

Thus, it is important that we pray for the right things in the right way at the right time. That's why Scripture is a good starting point for what we talk to God about because the Bible will always lead us into praying rightly. In other words, what we say to God should be in alignment with what God says to us in the Bible. It's never a right prayer to ask God to help us do something He has already told us not to do or to give us something He has already told us we should not have. It's always a right prayer to ask God to help us do something He has already told us to do or give us something He has already told us we should have. So, that's why one of the basic steps of the Christian life is to "pray it." Letting the Bible inform how we talk to God about everything will help us pray for the right things in the right way at the right time.

### ***Praying For The Right Things***

Praying for the right things is helped by using God's words to us in the Bible as the basis for our

## *THERE IS JOY FOR YOU*

words to Him in prayer. We look at the Scripture and then ask Him for help to do what He requires from us, we ask Him to do what He has promised to us, and we ask Him to accomplish what He has willed for us. If we read a command, we pray for His help to obey it. If we read a promise, we give thanks that He will keep it. If we read an outcome, we pray for Him to accomplish it. Whether we pray for ourselves or on behalf of others, the point is the same: we want to pray in agreement with what God says in the Bible.

### ***Praying In The Right Way***

Praying in the right way would include talking to God as described and demonstrated in the Bible through what it tells us or shows us about prayer. This can be directly as it speaks about things specific to prayer (such as how Jesus taught us to pray in the *"Lord's Prayer"* from Matthew 6:9-13), or it can be indirectly as it speaks about things relevant to all of our lives, including prayer. If we read instructions about prayer, we follow them. If we read truths, promises and instructions about other things, we apply them to prayer. Further, we apply them to a specific *"right thing"* we are currently praying about. A verse reminding us to *"trust in the Lord with all of your heart"* becomes a prayer for God to help us trust Him with a specific thing in our lives that is a concern for us. This is praying what we read.

### ***Praying At The Right Time***

Praying at the right time means promptly and persistently talking to God as a priority. First, we talk to Him in a timely manner about things that happen throughout the day where waiting until later would be too late. Second, we talk to God on a regular basis every day as an essential part of our relationship with Him. Just as all other relationships thrive on spending time together in meaningful conversation, so does the one shared between us and our Heavenly Father. A healthy rhythm is to pray before, during and after we read the Bible. He speaks to us through the Bible. We speak to Him through prayer. The time we have set aside to *"read it"* can also be used to *"pray it."*

## **THREE PROMPTS FOR PRAYING THE BIBLE**

Let's turn our attention to the practical side of prayer. What steps do we take to pray the Bible? While there are many ways to do it, what I suggest is using three one-word prompts that are easy to remember: rejoice, repent and request. We read the Bible and REJOICE over what we discover about who God is and what God does, and who God says we are in Christ and what we get to experience because of Christ. We read the Bible and REPENT at what we discover about the sinful ways in which we are not living as the people we were made to be and not doing the things we were made to do. We read the Bible and REQUEST God's gracious help to rightly respond to what we read. In other words, all three are aimed at talking to God in order to make this happen: Him to be honored in us and us to be happy in Him.

## THERE IS JOY FOR YOU

*SIDEBAR: Take note that the “rejoice, repent and request” of prayer are directly related to the “upward, inward and outward” of Bible reading from our previous section. There is harmony between what we hear God saying to us and what we say back to Him.*

### **Rejoicing**

To rejoice at what we read in the Bible is to celebrate God and how He relates to us by grace. We talk to God about things we learn about Him – that He is good, powerful, kind, wise, present, sovereign, gracious, loving and so forth. We talk to God about what those things about Him mean to us – that we can know, trust, follow and enjoy Him and that He will forgive us, guide us, bless us, comfort us, refresh us, provide for us, empower us, deliver us and satisfy us. And we feel gladness over these things. We... Rejoice over Who He is by praising Him. Rejoice over what He does by thanking Him. Rejoice over His promises by believing Him. Every time we read even a verse from the Bible, we should look for the good news of who God is and what God does for us in Christ, and then let our hearts rejoice over it.

### **Repenting**

To repent over what we read in the Bible is to confess our sin when we see things we did that we shouldn't have done and things we should have done but we didn't. We talk to God about what is going on in our hearts and minds that caused us to break His commandments, doubt His promises and dishonor His Name. We say to God: I did it. I regret doing it. Help me not do it again. Lead me to something better to do in Christ. And, in doing so, we receive grace. God gives us both forgiveness and freedom, both pardon for our sin and power to not sin. Because you and I live in the “messy middle” period between when we met Jesus here and when we will meet Jesus in heaven, we have an ongoing struggle with sin. There will rarely be a time when we read the Bible in which our sin is not exposed. So we talk to God about our wrongs and ask for His gracious help to get it right.

### **Requesting**

To request something about what we read in the Bible is to ask God for help in living out what we just read, in ways that apply directly to our current situation and season of life. In other words, we don't ask for help in a general sense, but rather help for a specific thing. Generally, we should do, say, correct, believe, feel, think or share something that He tells us. Specifically, we should respond in one of these ways in a particular area that is a current part of our lives. For example, we don't just forgive in a general sense, we forgive a specific person for a specific thing. Knowing we are unable to do any of these things apart from God's encouragement and empowerment, we ask Him for grace to do what is needed. Our request is simple: help me to want and do what You want me to do. In other words, give me the desire for what would please You and give me the power to do what would please You. In doing so, I trust that, ultimately, You get honor and I get happiness.



## THE PRAYER THAT NEVER FAILS

This kind of prayer includes some important characteristics. First, there is *loving obedience* which is always our right response to what we read. That means we seek God's help to do what we are supposed to do. Second, there is *humble dependance* which is what makes it possible for us to rightly respond to what we read. That means we seek God's help because we cannot do what we are supposed to do apart from Him. Third, there is *confident expectance* which is the certainty that God will enable us to do what we read. That means we seek God's help with assurance that He is ready, willing and able to supply what we need in order to do what we are supposed to do. This is the prayer that never fails: Your will be done in my life as it is in heaven.

Perhaps an example would be helpful. Let's return to the verse in Ephesians that I referenced earlier in the "read it" section. Chapter 4, verse 32 says, "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." Here is an example prayer that is in line with this verse using the "rejoice, repent, request" prompts...

*Heavenly Father, You are a forgiving God, and for this I praise You today. My heart is filled with gratitude and love for You because I am undeserving of such forgiveness, and yet, You have given it freely to me. What a good, good Father You are! Even though You have forgiven me much and forgiven me often, I find myself harboring ill-will and unforgiveness towards someone who has offended me. I know You have commanded me to forgive, I know it is sin for me not to forgive, and I know it is time for me to let this go. So, I ask for You to work in my life... First, I ask for forgiveness for my unforgiveness. Second, I ask You to heal my hurt so I can stop holding on to it. Third, I ask for a fresh joy in and appreciation for my salvation so that it might replace what I've been feeling. I know that You are not being honored in me and I am not being happy in You when I feel bitter towards others. So I ask that You would do this work to change my heart. Thank you for such grace! In Jesus' Name, amen.*

Did you recognize the three sections? What words from above are from the "rejoice" category? Which ones are from the "repent" and "request" categories?

Let's return again to the excerpt from Philippians that we looked at earlier. This time, you write out a line or two of things you can say to God in prayer as a response to what He says in the Bible...

*Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. -  
Philippians 4:4-7 (ESV)*

Use the following mini-worksheet to record your answers...

## THERE IS JOY FOR YOU

REJOICE: What do you see in this text to praise, thank and/or believe God about?

---

---

REPENT: What personal sin do you find in this text that you need to confess to God?

---

---

REQUEST: What from this text do you need to ask God to help you with in a specific way?

---

---

*NOTE: Of course, you don't have to write out your prayers (though you can do so if you choose). This exercise is simply to get you looking at the text to think about ways in which you can "pray it."*

While our mini-worksheet above included questions related to YOU personally, you can (and should) use the same kind of "rejoice, repent, request" prompts to talk to God on behalf of others. For example, *"Heavenly Father, I thank You that my sweet wife, Paula, can come to You with her anxieties. You are so good to give her a place to run to in time of trouble. Praise be to Your Name! You are the calm refuge for her when her heart is raging with worry. Thank you! Though she knows that she has no reason to worry and has been commanded not to worry, she is struggling right now. I ask that You would help her to give these concerns to You and that You would give her Your promised peace in return. Would You make Your presence known so that she feels that You are near and that she is safe. In Jesus' Name I pray, amen."*

## A HANDFUL OF COMMON PRAYER QUESTIONS

While there are many more things that can be said about prayer, this isn't an in-depth exploration of the subject. There are plenty of great resources available when you are ready to get more ideas and insights. One that I recommend is *A Praying Life* by Paul Miller. For now, what we've covered in our time together is a great place to get going or go deeper in talking to God on a daily basis. Still, before we move on to the "live it" section, let me give some very short answers to a handful of common questions about praying...

## THERE IS JOY FOR YOU

1. *Who should I pray for? You should pray for anyone and everyone that God brings into your life or into your mind. This would include people from your inner circle of closest loved ones all the way out to complete strangers you meet and world leaders you'll never meet. (See suggestions below).*
2. *How can I stay organized in my prayer life? Many people find that using a "list" is a good way to stay organized for who to pray for and what to pray for them. Consider creating categories of people in "concentric circles" that you pray for daily, weekly and regularly. (See note below).*
3. *How long should I pray? It isn't about quantity; it's about quality. The advice that I was given and have long held as my own standard is to "pray until you pray." That is, whether it takes a minute or an hour or something in between, talk to God until you have really talked to God about all that is on your heart.*
4. *What if I don't feel like praying? Pray anyway. A good starting point would be to talk to God about the fact that you don't feel like talking to Him. He knows it anyway, and He isn't going to turn you away. Ask Him to remove what is hindering you and rekindle a desire in you. Then, "pray until you pray."*
5. *Do I need to bow or close my eyes? The bowing of our heads and closing of our eyes in prayer is to show respect and to shut out distractions. While certain positions can be helpful, they aren't "required." You can talk to God anytime in any reverential way that focuses your attention on Him.*
6. *Do I talk to God about small things or big things? Both. There isn't anything so big that God can't handle it nor anything so small that God doesn't care about it. It is good to talk to Him about the circumstantial and temporary things. So do it. But it's even more important to talk to Him about the spiritual and eternal things. So do it even more.*
7. *Why should I pray? The argument is: Since God is sovereign and going to ultimately do what He wills, why should I pray? There are many reasons to pray such as... He commands it, He responds to it, He factors it into His plans, He changes us through it, and He delights to hear from us.*

**NOTE:** John Piper has a really good primer on prayer, including how he prays in "concentric circles." Reat it online at <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/devote-yourselves-to-prayer>

One final thing about prayer. Consider adding these to your "daily", "weekly" or "regularly" lists...

*Spouse, children, parents, extended family, co-workers, neighbors, teammates, pastors, leaders, church members, missionaries, casual acquaintances (hairdressers, doctors, insurance agents, mail carrier, etc.), government leaders (local, state, national, global), enemies, teachers, social media contacts, and so forth.*

## STEP THREE: Live It

The Bible makes it clear that living out what God says to us isn't optional; it's essential. Here's just one example from James 1:22...

*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*

The point is very easy to understand, isn't it? We are expected to rightly respond to what God tell us. If we think just knowing the Bible is enough, we're thinking wrongly. In fact, we're deceiving ourselves into believing something that isn't true. The truth is, we need to live out the truth of God's Word. And if you think about the progression of our time with the Bible, "living it" naturally follows "reading it" and "praying it." Because we have heard from God and talked to God about what we heard, it makes sense that we would next do something about what we heard rather than living unaffected by it.

*Sidebar: Don't forget, we're after something here ... God's honor and our happiness. Being a "doer of the word" is what will lead us to what we are after. If we seek our happiness (and His honor) apart from "doing" the word, then we are most assuredly deceiving ourselves.*

Do you remember what I said earlier about following Jesus being described in the Bible as a "walk" in which we take steps with Him throughout our lives? We don't take these steps all at once; we take them one at a time. And the Bible is what shapes which steps we take. "Doing the word" is taking a step in following Jesus because the Bible is always going to instruct us in how to go where He is so we can be with Him and join Him in what He is doing in this world.

### WAYS TO RESPOND TO THE BIBLE

In fact, one of the primary goals of our time reading the Bible is seeking to understand what our next right step is. In a general sense, our next step is to obey Jesus. This will often involve us starting something we should be doing or stopping something we should not be doing. And, of course, we should also continue to faithfully do what we are already are doing which we see affirmed in Scripture. Following Jesus in this loving obedience will include taking a next step to do, say, correct, believe, feel, think or share something specific that is a right response to what we read. Let's consider what each of these might mean for us...

*NOTE: While there is overlap between these categories, there are also distinctions within them that set them apart from each other.*

***Do Something.***

This simply means that there are many instructions we are given to follow that will result in God being honored in us and us being happy in Him. Things in this category can include both “do” and “do not” entries which require us to intentionally act in order to lovingly obey. Remember, we don’t do in order to be saved; we do because we are saved. Our doing always follows what Jesus has already done for us, and depends on what Jesus has promised to do for us.

***Correct Something.***

While the first category includes starting or continuing to act in a way that is right, sometimes we need to stop acting in a way that is wrong. This category calls us to repent of things in which we have not been lovingly obeying God in order to remove things from our lives that are robbing Him of His honor in us and us of our happiness in Him. Being confronted with sin isn’t easy, but what is helpful is to remember this: Biblical correction is always an invitation into something better.

***Say Something.***

This is a sub-category of “do something” in which the doing is to open our mouths and communicate something to God and/or other people. Saying something to others would include encouragement, evangelism and edification as we seek to speak the truth in love to them. Saying something to God or about God would include praising, thanking, commending, applauding, pointing to and talking about Him in a favorable way. Of course, sometimes the “correct something” would be to address things from this category such as complaining, gossiping and bragging. The more we tell the wonderful things about God to ourselves and others, the more He is honored in us and we are happy in Him.

***Believe Something.***

What fuels the doing and saying and correcting and other responses? Believing the promises of God that we read in the Bible. This is especially true when we are instructed to do hard things, or we are in hard circumstances, or we are dealing with hard people. Faith in God’s promises to help us, forgive us, deliver us, do good to us, strengthen us, guide us, work for us, be with us and welcome us into His presence forever is absolutely essential if we are going to persevere in such a way that He is honored in us and we are happy in Him.

***Think Something.***

The Word of God should also inform and shape how we think about all of life. It is a lens in which we see what is right and wrong, true and false, good and evil. We are to let scripture, not culture,

## THERE IS JOY FOR YOU

determine how we should think about the things of everyday life in this world. What God says should form our position and perspective on whatever He speaks about. Any other contrary guiding life principle or philosophy is flawed and fatal in the end. It is impossible to honor God and find happiness in Him by thinking wrongly about sin and the way it taints everything it touches. We are to think as closely to the way God thinks as we can.

### ***Feel Something.***

It may surprise you to know that an emotional response is often commanded in Scripture. We are instructed to rejoice, love, be content, hope, fear not, be at peace, not covet, be grateful, weep and so forth. God does more than command the will; He commands the emotions. And, of course, the more we "*feel something*" as we are instructed in the Bible, the more we will really be happy in God which will result in Him really being honored in us. We'll save HOW to obey the command to feel something for another time. The important thing to note here is that sometimes a proper response to the reading of God's Word is to have your feelings stirred.

### ***Share Something.***

Finally, a way to respond to what we read in the Bible is to pass it on to someone else. This is different from "*say something*" in that we aren't always necessarily instructed in the Bible to speak to other people. Instead, as part of our commission to make disciples, we are told to "*teach them to observe all that I have commanded you.*" Since He has commanded us to do, correct, say, believe, think, and feel things, then our responsibility is not only to obey them ourselves, but also to teach them to others so they too can obey them. Then, He receives more honor from more people, and more people find more happiness in Him.

## **ONE SIMPLE QUESTION TO ASK AND ANSWER**

In order to "*live it,*" we must ask and answer one simple question: *How does God want me to respond?* What does He want me to do, correct, say, believe, think, feel or share? God knows us – who we are, what we are like, what is happening in our lives, our strengths, our weaknesses, who we know, where we are in our spiritual journey and what is coming up next for us. And His Word is to act as a powerful transforming, guiding influence in our lives to work all of that together for our good. So, prayerfully asking God to provide that answer for us as we read the Bible is an essential part of understanding what He wants us to do as a response to what He says to us through Scripture. But, we must take note...

Sometimes our next step will be obvious, while other times it will be unclear. Sometimes our next step will need to be taken immediately, while other times it will be taken in the future. Sometimes our next step will be directly stated in what we read, while sometimes it will be indirectly related to

## THERE IS JOY FOR YOU

what we read. Sometimes our next step is one in which we change our ways, while sometimes it will be God changing us. Just as there is variety in WHAT we might do to lovingly respond, there is variety in when, where and how we are to respond. Ultimately, we need God to prompt us by bringing something into our minds, hearts or lives that will make the outworking of what we read clear to us. And He will.

What needs to happen next after we sense the response God is prompting in us is to get something specific on the schedule. That has two parts... First, we need to be as specific as possible about what needs to be done. It's not "*cheerfully give,*" but rather it's "*cheerfully give \$100 to the Christmas mission offering.*" It's not "*don't be anxious,*" but rather it's "*don't be anxious about the upcoming visit to the doctor's office.*" It's not "*do all things without grumbling,*" but rather it's "*clean the house today without grumbling.*" Second, we need to schedule whatever it is that we are prompted to do. This is important because knowing what to do and doing what you know are NOT the same thing. One of the reasons why we often neglect to live out the Bible is because we don't take the time to do it. We intend to. But we get busy and distracted ... and we forget. Do you know what we typically do each day, week and month? Whatever is on our schedules and calendars. Therefore, we should make it a priority to put what God tells us into our planning.

Again, you won't always know exactly what God wants you to do immediately after reading the Bible. That's not the point. The point is to look and listen for His prompting. If you sense it immediately, great. If you don't, that's okay. He'll lead you in whatever way and time He sees best. So, don't pressure yourself into thinking you can't close your Bible and walk into your day without having something concrete to put on the schedule. Sometimes you will; sometimes you won't. The important thing is to look to the Bible for how to live your life and immediately take action on what you know you should do. God will take care of everything else.

## GOD CHANGES US THROUGH SPEAKING TO US

In fact, this is worth noting: God will often change you through the reading of the Word without you even noticing it as it is happening. He will change the way you think, believe, feel, act and speak automatically as the Spirit of God takes the Word of God and remakes you in Christ. That doesn't mean you are to be passive in living out what He tells you; it simply means that He is already and always at work inside of you. And He will not stop until that work is done (Philippians 1:6).

*SIDEBAR: Did you notice that all of the "live it" category is directly related to the "outward" section of the "read it" category and the "request" section of the "pray it" category? Everything we are talking about in this material works together with the Bible as the central piece of knowing Jesus and making Him known so that God is honored in us and we are happy in Him.*

As we begin reading the Bible with the intent of looking for ways to live it out, letting God "*speak*" to

## THERE IS JOY FOR YOU

us about His intentions through the words on its pages, it's important that we understand a few essentials that make this enjoyable and make this doable. Without them, we will not want to try harder to do as God desires; we will want to give up trying at all. Therefore, these essentials ultimately cause us to depend more on our God than we do on ourselves. There are five phrases that summarize them: *by grace, through faith, in power, with love, and for purpose*. Let's take a quick look at each of them...

### ESSENTIALS FOR LIVING IT OUT

#### ***By Grace***

First, it is essential that we properly ground our doing in His grace lest we begin looking at God's Word as a "*religious rule-book*" of joyless laws to keep. We don't work for our salvation; we work out our salvation. We don't work to get into the kingdom; we work once we are in the kingdom. We are graciously accepted and enabled by the work of Jesus. His work saves us before we do our work. His work guides us to do our work. His work gives us power to do our work. His work makes us happy to do our work. It is all by grace. Let us remember... Whatever the will of God calls us to do, the grace of God will cause us to do. Grace isn't opposed to effort, but it is opposed to us trying to earn what we have been freely given.

#### ***Through Faith***

Second, it is essential that we take our next steps through faith especially when our faith journey requires us to go to hard places, have hard conversations, do hard things, endure hard circumstances and deal with hard people. Part of faith is responding in obedience. We trust what God says, we trust He will help us do what He says, and we trust that He will be pleased when we do what He says. Part of faith is receiving what God does for us. We trust what God says, we trust He will do what He says, and we trust that we will be pleased when He does what He says. Real faith includes believing in the promises of God and living out the purposes of God because we trust Him. We will confidently do what God tells us to do when we are confident in what God tells us He will do. Every step we take is a step of faith.

#### ***In Power***

Third, it is essential that we rely on the power of Christ working in us and not attempt to live out the Bible in our own strength. What does that look like? At least three things... One: It means we prayerfully ask Him to provide the ability to do what He requires. Two: It means we confidently take the next step trusting that God will supply all we need to do what He requires. Three: It means we humbly look to God to produce the result He intends from us doing what He requires. That is, we acknowledge we can't do anything without His help, we take steps trusting He will help, and we only



## THERE IS JOY FOR YOU

do what we are supposed to do by His help. We work hard, but He empowers it. We bear fruit, but He produces it. God does all of the things that only He can do and enables us to do all of the things that He purposes for us to do.

### ***With Love***

Fourth, it is essential that we do all that we do with love for God and others. “*Loving*” is the adjective that should describe the doing: *loving* obedience to God, *loving* service to others, *loving* affection for all. If we do it out of duty, we’ll be resentful. If we do it for attention, we’ll be prideful. If we do it just when it’s convenient, we’ll be neglectful. But... If we do it because of love, we’ll be joyful. Obeying Jesus isn’t a matter of duty, show or convenience; it’s a matter of the heart. Our affection for Him produces our devotion to Him. We don’t say and do the right things because that’s the way we should live, but because that’s the way we should love the One who tells us what things are right for us to say and do. Love doesn’t just change what we do; it also changes how and why we do it. And it’s all because He first loved us.

### ***For Purpose***

Fifth, it is essential that we respond to what God tells us in the Bible because we want something from doing as He says. We want Him to be honored. We want us to be happy. That’s the ultimate purpose behind it all. All of the doing and correcting and thinking and believing and feeling and saying and sharing is a means to this end: His honor and our happiness. That’s what we’re after in everything, and anything else is too small a thing to live for. We live out what we read because we believe that’s the only way to be who we were made to be, to do what we were made to do and to get what we were made to get. That’s the goal. That’s the objective. That’s the reason. That’s the aim. That’s the purpose.

So...

## **THE RESULT IS AN HONORED GOD AND HAPPY PEOPLE**

How is God honored through this? There are at least three ways... First, He is honored when we trust that He knows best how to make us happy, and we lovingly do what He says to bring about our happiness. Second, He is honored when we thank Him for the good things He gives to us and does for us that make us happy so that He gets credit. Third, He is honored when we treasure Him as our ultimate source of happiness by delighting not just in His gifts, but in Him as a good and generous and gracious Giver. God is made to look good when we make much of who He is to us and what He does for us. Trust Him. Thank Him. Treasure Him. This is how God is honored in us as we are happy in Him.

## *THERE IS JOY FOR YOU*

How are we happy through this? There are at least three ways... First, we are happy because in aligning ourselves with how God has designed things to work, we will eliminate much unnecessary suffering. Second, we are happy because in going where God says to go and doing what God says to do, we will more fully experience His blessings and benefits. Third, we are happy because we will find in Him the things that we have been looking for elsewhere such as peace, hope, comfort, security, rest, approval, purpose and love. He will make us happy in ways that nothing else can. And that happiness will grow stronger and last longer than anything else will. This is how we are happy in Him as He is honored in us.

Perhaps a few examples would be helpful...

### **Example #1**

*Ephesians 4:31-32 says, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." (ESV)*

God is honored as we obey the command to forgive because it shows that we trust His way of handling the offenses of others is better than our way, because we model the incredibly gracious forgiveness that He has extended to us in Jesus to others who need it too, and because our happiness doesn't depend upon getting even with people who hurt us, but by enjoying His presence and undeserved kindness as forgiven sinners ourselves.

We are happy because we don't have the cancer of bitterness and resentment spreading inside of us destroying us and our relationships, because we remember how God has forgiven us and rejoice that we will never face His wrath for our own sin, and because we look to God to both deal with the offender as He knows best, and we find satisfaction in knowing He is faithful and just to forgive sin when people repent and punish sin when they don't.

### **Example #2**

*Philippians 4:6-7 says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (ESV)*

God is honored as we obey the command to pray and not worry because it shows that we trust He is in control and ruling over our lives for good even in the midst of uncertain and unpleasant circumstances, because we experience supernatural peace that can only come from Him and is not dependent upon natural reasons for peace such as absence of worrisome things, and because our happiness doesn't depend upon ideal circumstances and ideal people in our lives, but the presence

## THERE IS JOY FOR YOU

and power of God in our lives.

We are happy because we don't have the heavy burden of worry weighing on our hearts and minds disrupting our sense of well-being, because we have the rock-solid assurance that nothing can happen to us that does not ultimately serve our good, and because we have the settled, lasting peace of God in us which infinitely exceeds any peace that might come from conflict resolution that we know has no permanence.

### **Example #3**

Hebrews 10:24-25 says, *"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."* (ESV)

God is honored as we obey the command to regularly meet together as brothers and sisters in Christ because it shows we trust He has good reasons for wanting us to do so (and there are many!), because it demonstrates that we value and prioritize time spent with His family over lesser things that might be available as a substitute, and because it stands out to the world to bear witness to the beauty and blessing that outsiders can be welcomed into through Jesus.

We are happy because as we assemble, we get encouraged in our faith in ways that the world will never do for us, because authentic corporate worship always produces joy in Jesus as we remember who He is and what He does, and because we are regularly purged of the toxic influences of the world while being filled with the things of God.

And those are just three examples. Here is what we need to remember: every snippet of instruction from God in the Bible is to be *"lived out"* because that's the practical outworking that results in God being honored in us and us being happy in Him.

## STEP FOUR: Share It

There is a question that most of us ask at some point in our lives as we consider the purpose of our lives: *Why am I here?* There is this hard-wired desire in each us to know the reason we were made and what we were made to do. You may state the conclusion differently than I do, but the words of my personal mission statement offer the basic meaning for why God in His grace gets us up each morning:

*"I exist to know Jesus and make Him known  
so that God is honored in us and we are happy in Him."*

So that's it... Starting with ourselves and spreading to our circles of influence, we are after one ultimate objective: an honored God and happy people. Said in a different way, one of the four key steps of Christianity which are centered on the Bible is to *"share it"* which results in God being honored in the lives of more people and more people finding their happiness in God. Anything else is too small a thing to live for.

2 Corinthians 5:20 says,

*"Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."*

An ambassador is always FROM someone and TO someone; you are sent from Jesus and sent to the specific people in your life, such as your family, your friends, your neighbors, your co-workers, your teammates, and every other person you find yourself with so God can make an appeal for their hearts through you. Why are you going to these people? To make known Jesus – His gospel message, His precious promises, His timeless truths, His gracious appeal.

This appeal that is being made through you and me is for people to come to God (and come back to God over and over again throughout their lifetimes) so that He is honored in them and they are happy in Him. This appeal is made primarily through the words of God from the Bible as we *"share it"* with other people. Our words repeat His words. Our words deliver His words. Our words explain His words. We aren't fully following Jesus until we help someone else follow Jesus, and sharing the Bible is the key to helping others do that.

Jesus said in Matthew 28:19-20...

*"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And*

*behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (ESV)*

## **MORE HONOR FOR GOD, MORE HAPPY PEOPLE**

To make disciples based on what Jesus said there means to: get people converted, baptize them and then teach them to lovingly obey all that Jesus commands. I add “*lovingly*” because Jesus said in John 14:15-24 that it is those that love Him who obey His commandments. So, through our words and way of life, we are to model for others how to think and feel and act as a people whose love for and commitment to Jesus is growing. We are to help others know, follow and enjoy Jesus as they take steps in their walk with Him, just as we do.

You might think of it like this...

- The initial part of disciple-making is helping others find their way to new life in Jesus.
- The ongoing part of disciple-making is helping others follow the new way of life with Jesus.

In order for God to be honored in the lives of more and more people, and for more and more people to find their happiness in God, we must reproduce our faith and teach others to do the same. This is known as making disciples who make disciples. This is our great commission. We must continually encourage other people to follow Jesus because the world is continually encouraging them not to follow Him. And we help others take the next step in their spiritual journey with Jesus by “*teaching them to observe all that He commands.*” In other words, we share the Bible with them.

You and I are on earth for a reason, and that reason is this: God has called us by His grace to know and make known Jesus. His perfect life. His atoning sacrifice. His resurrection power. His heart for people. His message of love. His life-transforming hope. His offer of eternal life. His amazing grace. His matchless value. His endless joy. His immeasurable benefits. His imminent return. His soul-satisfying glory. His incredibly good news. God has graciously transformed our lives and sent us back out to be agents of His transformation in the lives of other people. As ambassadors for Christ, we have been summoned into the most important work in the universe: to spread the message and ministry of reconciliation as God makes His appeal for the hearts of others through us.

## **FOUR IDEAS FOR GETTING STARTED SHARING THE BIBLE**

We aren't going to take an in-depth exploration of disciple-making in this section, but rather are going to look at some simple ways to “*share it.*” In other words, we're going to cover a handful of ways to practically pass on to others what you have learned in the Bible. Whether this is delivering an intentional message to a specific person or simply speaking the truth of Scripture in ordinary conversation, there are some easy ways to make Jesus known through what you say. Sometimes this

## THERE IS JOY FOR YOU

will be to introduce a non-believer to something they may have known about Him, and sometimes this will be to remind a believer of something they already know. At all times, it will be to point people to Him so God can use what you say to speak into their lives. Here are four ideas to get you started...

*SIDEBAR: For more help on making disciples, check out the free training at [JimmyBrown.com](http://JimmyBrown.com) entitled, "How To Turn Your Passion Into Your Mission."*

### **1. Lead with good news instead of good advice.**

Humans love self-help strategies that promise you can fix yourself... until they inevitably find that these strategies don't actually help self. Well-meaning sayings like toughen up, lighten up, buck up and cheer up are just a set up that make us want to give up. Real, lasting change will only come when we ask God to begin and complete His good work in us so we can live by His grace. More than a man-centered plan, principle or pep talk, they need a precious promise from God. There is nothing wrong with giving good advice to people for what they should do; what is wrong is substituting it for the good news of what Jesus has already done, is doing and will do for His people. We never want to give anyone advice that leaves God out of it or wrongly includes Him in it. Let's look at the difference...

*Advice: Don't worry. It's going to be okay.*

*News: Don't worry. God has promised to work this out for good and is with you as He does.*

*Advice: Stop being so hard on yourself. You are awesome just like you are.*

*News: Jesus knows all your flaws and loves you anyway. He cares enough to re-make you in His image.*

*Advice: You are stronger than you think. You can do hard things. Believe in yourself and get it done.*

*News: Even though you feel weak, you can do all things through Jesus who gives you strength.*

*Advice: Cheer up, she wasn't the one for you. Go find someone else; there are plenty of others out there.*

*News: Cheer up, Jesus will never break up with you. You will never be alone a day in your life.*

*Advice: You do you. If that will make you happy, then don't let anyone stop you from doing it.*

*News: God created you for a purpose. He will make you happy as you do what you were made for.*

Notice that all the second entries are grounded in Scripture (For example, "Even though you feel weak, you can do all things through Jesus who gives you strength" comes from Philippians 4:13). It is especially effective to mention what you are basing your beliefs and comments to others on. This isn't an opinion or a pep talk; it's a fact that is guaranteed on the authority of God. Much "advice" that we give others has no real certainty to it, but all that God says in the Bible does. So, tell people

## THERE IS JOY FOR YOU

why you believe what you say to them. It's not just your feel-good words that are being spoken; it's the words of God that you are restating and repeating. God has made promises to those who are trusting or will trust in Jesus. One of our responsibilities is to proclaim these promises to believers and unbelievers alike.

Now, there are two things I want to be clear about this... First, people won't always appreciate good news in the moment because, as I said, what they often want is good advice for how they can quickly get what they want. They may not want good news, but they need good news. Second, while it's helpful to share practical things others can do, these things should always be grounded in all that Jesus does for us. While it is appropriate to recommend a next step to take, this step should only be suggested and taken in light of the greater message of God's work on our behalf through Jesus. He forgives us. He supplies us. He helps us. He guides us. He empowers us. He delivers us. He corrects us. He loves us. Everything we should rightly do is graciously made possible because of what He does. Lead with that.

### **2. Tell His story as you tell your own story.**

Every Christian has a story to tell. But maybe you think your story isn't all that interesting. Perhaps you don't feel gifted enough or capable enough to communicate your story in a page-turner sort of way that keeps people on the edge of their seats. It could be that you would say, "*I'm just not a storyteller.*" None of that is true.

Your story is important and worth telling. And you share pieces of it every single day when you tell others about the things you're experiencing, thinking, or feeling. You unfold your narrative in bits and pieces in everyday conversations with the people in your life. You ARE a storyteller. There's no questioning that. The real question is this: who's the hero of your story? As Christians, if the hero of our stories is anyone other than Jesus, we're not telling them right. If we find that we talk about ourselves more than we do Him, we're taking credit that doesn't belong to us. If we speak of our efforts, our achievements, our works more than we do of His work of grace in and through our lives, then we're making ourselves the main character of the story instead of our Savior.

Here's the easiest way I know of to make sure that Jesus gets the rightfully deserved top billing in our story so that He is glorified as He should be: Cite the source of every good thing in your life and every bad thing in your life that was turned around for good. Is it a beautiful day? Cite the source. Did you lose another pound on the way to your fitness goals? Cite the source. Do you feel at peace even in the midst of a difficult time? Cite the source. Every blessing in your life has an origin, a benefactor, a place from where it comes, someone to whom credit should go. And that source is Jesus. Jesus is the source of your abilities and opportunities. He's the origin of your changed life. He's the generous benefactor of your strength, courage, hope, peace, comfort, guidance, security and joy. He turned what was going to be a tragic story into a triumphant one.

## THERE IS JOY FOR YOU

As you tell your story in bits and pieces of everyday life, tell His story of grace. There are countless options...

- Surroundings: God has surely given us a beautiful day today.
- Feelings: I'm not worried about it; God has given me such peace.
- Events: We had a great service at church this morning.
- Opportunities: God opened the door for me to get a promotion at work.
- Difficulties: I believe God will give me everything I need to get through this.
- Lessons: God has been teaching me to be more gracious.
- Changes: In the past, I really struggled with unforgiveness, but God...
- Verses: It reminds me of ... what the Bible says / the story in the Bible.
- Imperfections: I really lost my temper this morning and had to ask God...
- Promises: One thing that really helps me is to remember that God said...
- Prayers: I've really been asking God to give me guidance in this decision.
- Achievements: To God be the glory. It is only by His grace that I did it.
- Blessings: God really came through for me with this new work schedule.

And, let's not forget, this is all grounded in what you have learned about God, yourself and how you and God relate to each other by grace which you have discovered in the Bible. Your story is part of the everlasting, universal narrative that unfolds in the pages between Genesis and Revelation. As you tell your story and cite the source, you are pointing towards *The Greatest Story Ever Told*. In fact, citing the source takes on another level of power when you actually cite something from the Bible.

*For example, "I'm not worried about it; God has given me such peace. The Bible says in Philippians 4:6-7 'Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.' That is exactly what has happened to me in this."*

You might even invite someone else into this same peace as you tell your story and cite the source: *"Do you have this same kind of peace when you face worrisome things? Would you like to?"* This could open up a tremendous opportunity to share the gospel with someone so they can receive Jesus. And it all starts with just being intentional about connecting your story to His greater story.

### **3. Point others to God by pointing them to resources.**

Sometimes we "share it" by speaking the truths of God ourselves; sometimes we "share it" by letting other people do the speaking. In other words, we can point the people we know to resources that others have created such as study bibles, commentaries, books, sermons, podcasts, blog posts, videos / channels and other gospel-centered materials. This can be especially helpful when someone



## THERE IS JOY FOR YOU

would benefit from a “*deeper dive*” into a point of discussion. In these cases (and any others), we would simply recommend the resource and give others a link to access it, let them borrow it if it’s a physical item in our possession, or provide the name of it for them to order.

The key is to make sure that whatever resources we recommend are strongly based on the Bible and include references to the Bible throughout. These resources should supplement God’s Word, not become a substitute for it. Nor should they become a substitute for us speaking God’s words to the people in our lives. They are intended to further enhance our words and further explain God’s words to those who need to hear them. And, as mentioned earlier, the things we recommend should lead with good news before sharing good advice of how to live out the Bible.

There are two ways that these resources can be shared: actively and reactively. First, they can be shared actively which is to say that as we think of someone who might benefit from a resource, then we reach out to tell them about it. For example, “*I thought of you when I read this blog post and thought I’d share it*” or “*I know you are struggling with anxiety; this message really helped me when I was worried a lot...*” Second, they can be shared reactively which is to say that as we think of something when we are in conversation with someone, then we mention it. For example, “*What you said reminds me of this podcast episode I heard recently, let me give you the link for it*” or “*I think this book would really help you better understand just how much God loves you...*”

The point is, we can either reach out to someone who isn’t with us or speak up to someone who is, for the purpose of giving them some kind of materials to help them with what they are going through or are talking about. In the information-rich world we live in, it is easier than ever to pass on high-quality, topic-specific, Bible-saturated, Jesus-exalting, multi-media, super-helpful content to those in need of it. In fact, we should regularly and intentionally look for opportunities to do so as a part of our disciple-making so God will be honored in more people, and more people will find happiness in Him.

*SIDEBAR: Consider putting together a list of your own favorite books, sermons, blog posts, podcast episodes, commentaries, videos and other resources with links to where they can be accessed. This will make it easy for you to point to appropriate materials when thinking about or talking to other people.*

That makes this a good place to stress that “*sharing it*” is all about disciple-making. Whether we are proclaiming the words of God ourselves or pointing to other people who proclaim His words through their materials, the intended purpose is to help people take appropriate steps of faith in their spiritual journey with Jesus. We want to help other people trust Jesus more fully in more areas of their lives by letting the truth of the Bible perform its powerful work in them. That process begins with us getting His word before them through what we or other people say and show.

**4. Invite people to a place where more will be shared.**

To “*share it*” can also mean inviting people to a place where you and/or others can share a discussion, share a devotional, share a Bible study, share a sermon, or share a workshop. This would include asking people to join you for a one-on-one activity, a small group, a gathering of the church or some other gospel-centered event where the Bible will be central. In fact, hearing more people affirm the truths that you have been sharing and seeing how those truths can be applied to the unique and varied lives of those in attendance can be a powerful and meaningful means through which God makes His appeal through us.

There are many reasons to regularly gather with other followers of Jesus, but each of them points to the ultimate reason for getting together. Christian community serves as a reminder that we are not the center of it all. It’s an interruption of our thinking that it’s our duty to carry out our plans in our ways with our wisdom by our strength to accomplish our goals so we can be happy with ourselves and our lives. Attending a “*church service*” reorients us and refreshes us so we get our minds and hearts back where they belong, on Jesus. Think about it...

The singing lauds the greatness of Jesus. The preaching proclaims the message of Jesus. The offering furthers the mission of Jesus. The discipleship equips the people of Jesus. The prayers unleash the power of Jesus. The Spirit transforms the image-bearers of Jesus. The communion celebrates the finished work of Jesus. The invitation welcomes new believers of Jesus. The fellowship encourages the good deeds of Jesus. The service nurtures the joy of Jesus. The gathering sends out the representatives of Jesus. Why go to a gathering with other believers? Because it leads to greater honor for Jesus and greater happiness for us. All of us. Including the people that you invite...

Believers and unbelievers alike will have an opportunity to see God’s people orient themselves around the Bible as we “*read it,*” “*pray it,*” “*live it,*” and “*share it*” right in front of their eyes. Believers can be encouraged in their faith and unbelievers can come to faith. Or, as we stated earlier, people can either be helped to find their way to new life in Jesus or helped to follow the new way of life with Jesus.

While we definitely want to be “*go and tell*” ambassadors for Christ, we also want to be “*come and see*” ambassadors for Christ. Both of these are important pieces to disciple-making. On one hand, we are to go where others are and tell them about Jesus. On the other hand, we are to welcome people in to where we are and tell them about Jesus. Our primary objective is to personally invite people to put their faith in Jesus or take a step of faith with Jesus. A secondary objective that serves the primary one is to personally invite people to places where they can do either of those things as the Bible is shared in Christian community.

*SIDEBAR: We all have hobbies and interests such as working out, playing ultimate frisbee, hiking,*

## THERE IS JOY FOR YOU

*watching movies, playing games, grilling out, tailgating, cooking, reading or any of countless other pastimes. The best part about these things we love doing is that we can turn them into things that point people toward Jesus. Our "passion" can become our "mission." For more help on making disciples through the "fun stuff" you do with others, check out the free training at JimmyBrown.com entitled, "How To Turn Your Passion Into Your Mission."*

As a final thought in this section, let me state very clearly that *"sharing it"* is not something that we awkwardly try to force into every conversation with every person throughout every day of our lives. We don't continually quote Bible verses or continually try to make every casual conversation into one about faith or continually call believers and unbelievers to deeper love for and obedience to Jesus. In a short amount of time, many people would simply stop listening to us and start avoiding us if they ever gave us a chance in the first place. Plus, the disruption to normal everyday activities (at work, for example) would be inappropriate.

What we say and where we say it and when we say it should depend upon how the Holy Spirit prompts us so it *"fits the occasion"* as Ephesians 4:29 says...

*Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.*

That's what we are to be considering: the occasion at hand. We want to regularly and intentionally and continually look for opportunities to build others up by speaking the words of God to them without force-feeding them the wrong words at the wrong place at the wrong time, even if we mean well. Sometimes another person just needs a hug or time to calm down or an opportunity to tell us something, and they don't want what feels like a lecture or religious talk in return. The important thing is that whether the moment to speak the truth in love comes now or comes later, we should be sure to *"share it"* as often as possible in as varied ways as possible to as many people as possible.

## Closing Thoughts

Hopefully this short primer on orienting ourselves to the plans and purposes of God as revealed in the Bible will be helpful to you. My prayer is that you have some good ideas on how to “read it,” “pray it,” “live it” and “share it” which you can put into practice. What I have shared in the previous pages is not the only way to do these things, nor have I included all of the ways to do these things. You should consider this a “getting started” way of doing these things which will hopefully change and grow and deepen over time as you become more familiar with the Bible and how to interact with it. Of course, the ultimate goal is bigger than that: to become familiar with the Author of the Bible and interact with Him so that He is honored in you and you are happy in Him.

Of course, this is not a solo endeavor. While everything we have discussed is a personal matter which you should pursue individually, there is also a need for taking these four steps with other brothers and sisters in Christ. This will provide mutual and multiplied benefit that cannot be experienced alone. God has wired us to do many things together as the body of Christ as we do the basic things of following Christ. To that end, let me make three suggestions...

***First, develop a “Paul and Timothy” relationship with a couple of other Christians of the same gender as you.***

Your “Paul” should be someone farther along in his or her spiritual journey than you are that can help you by answering questions, modeling the Christian faith, offering encouragement, lovingly correcting and walking alongside you in any way that will build you up in Christ. Your “Timothy” is someone you do these same things for because they are not as far along in their spiritual journey as you are. Pray to God to bring these people into your life and begin to look for evidences that He has.

***Second, join a small group of believers that you can study and discuss the Bible with.***

This will usually be 3-10 people, and often, they will share a natural affinity such as being in the same season of life, living in the same neighborhood, or attending the same local church. This group usually meets on a weekly basis for mutual upbuilding that is centered around exploring the truths of the Bible together as a group. This is a great way to deepen your understanding of the Scripture, share your own thoughts and insights, and see what it looks like to live out the Word of God in a variety of settings. To find a small group, see what is available through your local church or association. That brings us to...

***Third, get active in a local Christian community to “pray it,” “read it,” “live it” and “share it” with a large group of other like-minded believers.***

## *THERE IS JOY FOR YOU*

This will give you a lot of additional opportunities and benefits that the first two suggestions cannot offer such as corporate worship, Biblical preaching and teaching, service opportunities (to use your spiritual gifts), and much more. I won't revisit what I already said about why you should connect with a local church, but let me summarize it by saying this: God has ordained that followers of Jesus gather regularly with each other so that He gets more honor from them, and they get more happiness in Him. We will not grow as deep and wide and full as we could and should in these two aims if we are not surrounded by a loving and supportive church family.

There are a lot of important questions we should ask ourselves on a regular basis throughout our lives to make sure we don't ruin our lives. These include: Who are you following? Where are you going? What will you be doing? There are consequences to who we allow to influence the direction of our lives. These can be positive or negative consequences, depending upon where we go and what we do. That's why wisely picking your mentor, your tribe and your community is essential. Surround yourself with people who are following Jesus and join them. He will help you all go to the right places and do the right things. This life is too short for us to risk going at it solo. We were not meant to. Which leads us to this...

### **LIVING FULLY AND DYING READY**

We don't like to think about it. We don't like to talk about it. But death is coming for us all. We may not be certain of the time of its arrival, but the certainty of its arrival is never in doubt. Instead of ignoring, downplaying, or fearing it, we should let its reality accomplish two essential and monumental things in our lives: be purposeful to experience life before death, and be prepared to experience life after death. Jesus makes both of these possible when we entrust ourselves to Him. He gives us grace so we can give ourselves to the things that matter most. In every step of faith, let us rely on Him to help us... Live fully. Die ready.

Living fully is not about having the most fun, experiencing the greatest pleasure, and doing the biggest good in this world as if this place is all there is. Instead, it's about the eternal ripple that your life can make when you use it for Jesus. That doesn't mean you leave happiness and helpfulness behind; it means you find it in a more meaningful way. We are to be faithful witnesses for God in the everyday things of life that we're already doing on earth (from cookouts to workouts to hangouts) in such a way that we'll be glad we did when we get to heaven. Enjoy blessings. Do good. Glorify God. Live this life in light of the one to come.

Dying ready is not about trying hard to do more and be better so God will accept you into heaven when this life is over. Instead, it's about trusting in Jesus and the work He has finished on your behalf and, in response, finishing the work that Jesus has entrusted to you. We don't work for our salvation; we work out our salvation. We don't pay Him back. We love Him back. With our hope in Him, we journey homeward in loving obedience (though imperfectly executed) knowing that the death we

## *THERE IS JOY FOR YOU*

once feared is actually the doorway to full and lasting joy with Him. Death is not the end; it is just the beginning.

And right now – this very moment - is the beginning of the rest of your life with Jesus as you move toward your heavenly home. So... Don't waste it. Don't misuse it. Don't underestimate it. God has graciously given you a life that is rich with meaning and purpose in this world, at this time, for His kingdom. What you'll discover about life with Jesus is this... The better you know Him, the longer you follow Him, and the greater you enjoy Him, the deeper you will experience all the blessings and benefits of grace. He will be honored in you and you will be happy in Him. And that's what grace is all about. God and sinner reconciled so that... God receives the full and lasting worship He's always deserved, and you receive the full and lasting happiness you've always desired. It starts now, grows over time, and will extend into eternity where it will explode into unhindered, unbridled, uninterrupted pleasure forevermore.

## Connecting With Me

If you have questions about any of the enclosed material, or if you have any other questions about life with Jesus, please reach out to me by using the *Contact* form at the bottom of the page at *JimmyBrown.com* (making sure you enter your email address correctly). I will personally reply back to you, usually within 24 hours (excluding holidays or weekends).

### Other Connections

- Social media (personal page): [www.Facebook.com/thejimmydbrown/](http://www.Facebook.com/thejimmydbrown/)
- Daily devotions: [www.FinishLineFaith.com](http://www.FinishLineFaith.com) or [www.Facebook.com/FinishLineFaith/](http://www.Facebook.com/FinishLineFaith/)
- Travel / mission vlog (with my wife, Paula): [www.TheMissionAmerica.com](http://www.TheMissionAmerica.com)

*If this training has been helpful to you, please reach out and let me know.  
And please pass this document on to other people who may, by the grace of God, be helped too.*