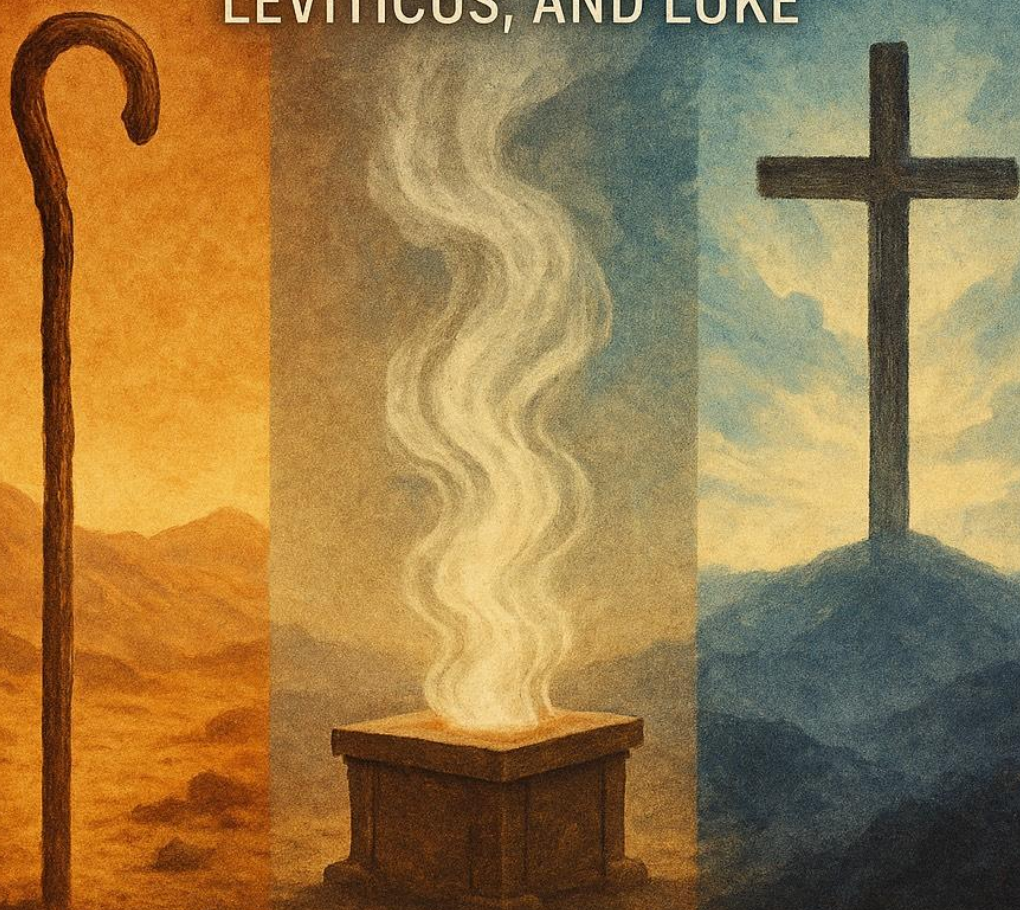


ECHOES OF REDEMPTION

A JOURNEY THROUGH EXODUS,
LEVITICUS, AND LUKE



Dr. Tim W. Gould

ECHOES OF REDEMPTION

Echoes of Redemption is a powerful continuation of the Journey Series by Dr. Gould. It begins by walking readers through two of the most often misunderstood and challenging books of the Bible—Exodus and Leviticus. While many approach these texts through a historical or literal lens, which is valid and valuable, this book invites us deeper, into the spiritual layers where the presence of Jesus can be seen throughout.

Dr. Gould masterfully reveals how these Old Testament passages are filled with foreshadowings—echoes—of Christ. These subtle yet profound glimpses point to a divine orchestration that ties the entirety of Scripture together. Echoes of Redemption doesn't just recount ancient laws and events; it draws out the sacred threads that lead us to the Messiah, reminding us that Jesus was present even in the wilderness. The journey culminates in the Gospel of Luke, bringing the reader full circle—from the shadows of promise to the fulfillment of hope in Christ. In doing so, this work affirms that these early biblical texts are not only foundational but deeply ordained within the Christian faith. This book is for those seeking not only knowledge but revelation—for hearts hungry to see Jesus more clearly in every part of God's Word.



"It's amazing to read such an eye-opening book that reflects deeply on life, especially through the way Tim has broken it down. After reading this, and truly understanding who God is, I'm confident that even in difficult times, it's still good—because God is good."

Minister Vernon Porter, Fort Worth, TX



The most transformational book of all time is, without question, the Bible. Yet, for many, the beauty of its application lies beyond the grasp of many who struggle to understand this context. Dr. Gould provides us with a resource that helps break down the intellectual barriers that keep many from beginning their own journey with God through scripture. This book, like his others, helps the scripture come alive, while helping people unlock a new passion for the Word of God." Chris Bohon Associate Pastor Pathway Church and Chaplin, 1LT U.S. Army Reserve, Burleson, TX



Download your free e-book of this or
any of Dr. Gould's Journey Series at

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Echoes of Redemption

*A Journey Through Exodus Leviticus,
and Luke*

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Introduction and Acknowledgement

I wasn't planning on writing or publishing more books after the *Journey Series*. However, I still felt compelled to send out my daily chapters to those who continue to desire a deeper understanding of God's Word. So, I guess this work will go on until the Father tells me to stop.

While the first three books primarily focused on the New Testament, this one turns to the Old—exploring two foundational books: Exodus and Leviticus, with the *Gospel of Luke* as the capstone. Since *Genesis* was covered in my third book, it felt right to keep walking the path and move forward.

To some, Exodus and Leviticus may feel like hard or boring reads. But I hope that, through the lens of the Gospel, new clarity and insight emerge. My prayer is that your understanding of these ancient words will open—even just a little bit more—as you continue your walk of faith with Jesus. Because make no mistake: Jesus is all over these books.

I titled this book *Echoes of Redemption* because the Old Testament contains many voices and sounds that speak of Jesus in subtle, quiet ways. These messages go out in a literal sense but return with deep spiritual meaning. My hope is that readers will recognize and feel these echoes resonating in their souls, strengthening and encouraging their walk of faith.

My wife must always be at the top of my thank-you list. Her patience with me through the years—despite all the grief I've given her—is nothing short of saintly. *Tink, you are one of a kind.* God only knows why He paired an angel like you with a rascal like me. (Yes folks—I married way up! Probably like most of you did too!) Thank the Lord daily for your wives.

I also want to thank the Blue Letter Bible team for their incredible, ongoing resource. If you haven't used it yet, look it up and dive in—it's a treasure trove for anyone studying God's Word. To all its contributors and staff: I thank you personally.

I could go on and on, but I'll spare a few pages. Let's continue our Journey in God's Word—together.

BOOK OF EXODUS

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Chapter 1

There have been a few times in my life and career when it was an absolute joy to get up and go to work. I can say that most of the jobs I've had started that way. Some were more enjoyable than others, of course.

One job, in particular, was truly great. I loved my work. I honestly thought I would stay with this job and organization until I retired. I was well respected and had a good relationship with the organization's leadership. I felt certain this was my long-term place! But as time passed, life happened, and the leadership changed. Nothing major happened at first, but I began to notice small changes. The close bond I had with the leadership seemed to weaken, and one day, I realized I had fallen out of favor with them.

Suddenly, the joy I once felt and the strong relationship I had built began to fade. Getting up for work became increasingly difficult. The daily commute was exhausting, knowing I was walking into a stressful atmosphere. I tried to figure out what I had done to cause this. Sure, I made mistakes—who doesn't? But nothing specific stood out as the cause. Maybe it was a mix of my mistakes and their own issues? Who knows? Well, as I later learned, God knows.

I went from a job I had almost idolized to a job that felt nearly unbearable. Each day brought new challenges to my faith as I tried to find peace. Eventually, God opened a door elsewhere, and I moved on to my next job. That job was also with a great company, and I found real value in being there.

Now, we come to the Book of Exodus. It continues the story from Genesis. The first word, "now," could also be translated as "and," picking up right where Genesis left off.

The first chapter of Exodus briefly describes the time when Israel arrived in Egypt, leading up to their servitude and bondage. They, too, as a people, fell out of favor. Just like we sometimes wonder, "What did we do wrong?" I'm sure they had the same thoughts. But they couldn't pinpoint the reason. It's only when we look back from a distance that we can see how God's plan was unfolding in their lives.

Exodus is an exciting book because it reveals God's plan for mankind and our redemption. Jesus is woven throughout this story. And it's amazing to see him in a book that was written about 1,200 to 1,400 years before his birth. This is going to be a fun journey!

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

The Israelites Oppressed

1 Now these are the names of the sons of Israel, who came into Egypt (every man and his household came with Jacob): 2 Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, 3 Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin, 4 Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. 5 And all the souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy souls: and Joseph was in Egypt already.

6 And Joseph died, and all his brothers, and all that generation. 7 And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and grew exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them.

8 Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who knew not Joseph. 9 And he said unto his people, "Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: 10 come, let us deal shrewdly with them, or they will multiply, and it will come to pass, that, when there comes any war, they will also join themselves to our enemies, and fight against us, and leave our land."

11 Therefore they did set over them slave masters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh store-cities, Pithom and Raamses. 12 But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. *[Nowhere else could the growth of a nation take place in this way. As we will see after the Exodus, Israel struggled with intermarrying other races and cultures. However, in Egypt, the entrenched system of racial bias and separation was so strong that Israel could grow for centuries without any assimilation. At this time, it was important for Israel to remain a separate nation. Remember, this is a shadow of the point God will make regarding sin and holiness: living in the world but not being of the world.]* And the Egyptians were grieved because of the children of Israel. 13 And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor: 14 and they made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field, all their service, they made them serve with rigor.

15 And the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, of whom the name of the one was Shiprah, and the name of the other Puah: 16 and he said, "When you do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them while sitting upon the birth-stool; if it be a son, then you shall kill him; but if it be a daughter, then she shall live." *[Remember, Satan also knew about the Promised Redeemer mentioned in the book of Genesis. So, his plan to eliminate the promise made to Abraham continues here. This will not be the last time the enemy of God attempts to kill the man-child—he did the same with Jesus.]*

17 But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men-children alive. *[We are to obey our civil law and government. But when*

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that law is expressly contrary to God and His Word, then we should follow God first and foremost.] 18 And the king of Egypt called for the midwives, and said unto them, “Why have you done this thing, and have saved the men-children alive?”

19 And the midwives said unto Pharaoh, “Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are lively, and are delivered before the midwife comes to them.”

20 And God dealt well with the midwives: and the people multiplied, and grew very mighty.

21 And it came to pass, because the midwives feared God, that he provided them with households. 22 And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, “Every son that is born you shall cast into the river, and every daughter you shall save alive.”

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

Chapter 2

Have you ever felt like life is a bit of a battle? Oh sure, we all enjoy the peace of living in the valley, or the views from the mountaintop, but boy, the struggles of getting up and down can sometimes feel so defeating. Life is a battle. It started from the very day of conception, really. Millions of “racers” were released to find one tiny egg. Out of those millions, only a few hundred reach the goal. And of those hundreds, most of the time, only one makes it home. Yep. Life can be tough.

But guess what? You started life as a winner! You faced off with those millions, and you beat out those hundreds at the goal line! You may not remember it, but it was *you*! So, when things seem hard, remember: God made you a winner from day one! He had a plan for you that very first day—just as He did with Moses.

Moses is a type of Jesus. That’s a fancy way of saying he’s a shadow or a hint of the plan God has for mankind. Not everything Moses did was perfect, but his life, his mission, and his devotion to God foreshadowed the plan of Jesus that was still to come.

I really enjoy seeing Jesus in the next chapter. It excites me to see those little hints of what came later and what will come again. Reading things like this encourages me when I’m climbing up and down the mountain. It reminds me that God had a plan then, He has a plan for me, and I’m in Good Hands. Sometimes, I just need to take one step at a time and let the finish line come to me.

The Birth of Moses

1 And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi. 2 And the woman conceived, and bore a son: and when she saw him that he was a fine child, she hid him three months. 3 And when she could no longer hide him, she built for him an ark *[Hebrew word “teba”, only used one other time in the Bible, with Noah.]* of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch; and she put the child inside, and laid it in the reeds by the river’s brink. 4 And his sister stood afar off, to know what would be done to him. *[Ironically, Moses’ mother did exactly what the Pharaoh demanded—she placed the male children in the river. However, she used wisdom in how she did it.]*

5 And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river-side; and she saw the ark among the reeds, and sent her handmaid to fetch it. 6 And she opened it, and saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, “This is one of the Hebrews’ children.”

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7 Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call for you a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for you?"

8 And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go." And the maiden went and called the child's mother. 9 And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will pay you." And the woman took the child, and nursed it. 10 And the child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses, and said, "Because I drew him out of the water."

Moses Flees to Midian

11 And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown up, that he went out to his own people, and looked on *[literal meaning: "to see with emotions"]* their burdens: and he saw an Egyptian striking a Hebrew, one of his people. *[Hebrews 11:24-26 sheds more light on this moment. For right here, Moses rejected his position as Pharaoh's prince, and chose to be Hebrew.]* 12 And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he killed the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand. 13 And he went out the second day, and, behold, two men of the Hebrews were fighting each other: and Moses said to him that did the wrong, "Why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew?"

14 And the Hebrew said, "Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Are you going to kill me, as you killed the Egyptian?" And Moses feared, and said, "Surely the thing I did is known." *[Look at the shadow of Jesus within Moses. Moses wanted to deliver his people, so he had to step down from the throne and become one of them. Yet, even as he did, they did not recognize who he was or what he was trying to do, and they rejected him the first time too.]*

15 When Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian: and he sat down by a well. 16 Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters: and they came and drew water, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. 17 And the shepherds came and drove them away; but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock.

18 And when they came to Reuel their father, he said, "How is it that you have come back so soon to-day?" 19 And they said, "An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and moreover he drew water for us, and watered the flock." 20 And he said unto his daughters, "And where is he? Why is it that you have left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread." 21 And Moses was content to dwell with the man: and the father gave Moses Zipporah his daughter. *[Here is another beautiful revelation: Moses was rejected by his people, yet he found a home with Gentiles and even married one. Who is included as the bride of Jesus today? The Church, which includes millions of Gentiles! Yet, Moses*

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still had a mission to deliver the nation of Israel, just as Jesus continues to carry out that mission. The book of Revelation becomes even clearer.] 22 And she bore a son, and he called his name Gershom; for he said, “I have been a sojourner in a foreign land.”

23 And it came to pass in the course of those many days, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel groaned by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up to God by because of the bondage. 24 And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. 25 And God saw the children of Israel, and God took concern for them. *[This too will be repeated!]*

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Chapter 3

It started out as a regular day. Just like any other, I got up, fixed breakfast, watched the traffic report on the news, and prepared for my hour-long commute. Upon arriving at work, I followed my usual routine of completing daily reports and monitoring my customers' needs as they came in. At lunchtime, I chatted with a friend on the Yorkie friends list. This was my typical daily routine.

For a couple of years now, my little Canadian Yorkie buddy and I have swapped stories about what our dogs were doing, traded pictures, and so forth. I had gotten to know "Grasshopper" (as I later nicknamed her) pretty well. She and her husband lived in Vancouver, were retired, and loved hockey. She was like a big, grouchy sister. She loved her dogs but was gruff with everything else. I guess that's what drew me to her—her gruffness. I've always been inclined to try to draw the smile out of the gruff.

It had taken years of friendly chatting and hundreds of silly dog pictures, but we finally achieved friendship. As we grew closer, I tried to see if she and her husband were open to the Faith. That door was quickly and harshly slammed shut. So, I respected that and just decided to be their friend.

Then, on one of those normal days, as we met for our lunchtime chat, it happened. The door opened in our conversation, and somehow, it led to her telling me how betrayed she felt by the church and God, and so forth. I let her talk. There was some deep hurt there from her childhood. Then came the pause of silence. I remember asking her, "What about Jesus offended you so much?" She thought for a moment and replied, "Well, nothing about Jesus, just those claiming to follow Him." That little introduction gave space for Holy Spirit to use me to introduce Jesus into her life.

"Grasshopper" committed her life to Jesus. From that day forward, she just wanted to learn more and more about God's Word and the personal relationship she now had with Him. Thus, the name, "Grasshopper" (now I am really showing my age to all those who watched KUNG FU back in the 70's.)

I suppose you may be wondering, "What does all this have to do with Exodus 3?" Well, it was a normal day for me and Grasshopper, just like it started as a normal day for Moses. Our Father met "Grasshopper" on that normal day, and the Heavenly Father met Moses.

The takeaway I get from this chapter, along with the excellent pictures of our Savior in it, is to never assume that a day that begins "normally" will end the same way. Our Father is all around us, all the time. Moses was honestly curious and went looking around and found

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God. And God loves to show Himself to those who are honestly curious even in the course of their normal day. Wonderful things can still happen today!

Moses and the Burning Bush

1 Now Moses was keeping the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the back of the wilderness, and came to the mountain of God, to Horeb. 2 And the angel of Jehovah [*Not an angel that was a created being, but the “Angel of God” referring to Jesus.*] appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. 3 And Moses said, “I will turn aside now, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.” [*This simple bush has a wonderful secret within it—another glimpse of our promised redemption. The word used here for “bush” is “sene,” which means “to prick” or “a bush of thorns.” Thorns in the Bible represent sin, as we see in Genesis 3:18 when Adam was cast out of the garden. Fire in the Bible represents judgment. Here, we see judgment within sin, yet the judgment does not consume the sin! Who do we know who judges our sin but does not consume us in our sin, instead showing mercy and grace? It is the man who wore these thorns—the sin of the world! The very man who will be speaking to Moses as we continue to read.*] 4 And when Jehovah saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the midst of the bush, and said, “Moses, Moses.” And Moses said, “Here am I.”

5 And God said, “Draw not any closer: take off your shoes from your feet, for the place whereon you stand is holy ground.” 6 Moreover he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.

7 And Jehovah said, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people that are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their slave masters; for I know their sorrows; 8 and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey; to the place of the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Amorite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite. 9 And now, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to me: moreover I have seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. 10 Come now therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh, that you may bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.”

The Mission of Moses

11 And Moses said to God, “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?” 12 And God said, “Certainly I will be with

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you; and this shall be the token to you, that I have sent you: when you have brought forth the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God upon this mountain.” 13 And Moses said to God, “Behold, when I come to the children of Israel, and shall say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you;’ and they shall say to me, ‘What is his name?’ What shall I say to them?” 14 And God said to Moses, “I AM THAT I AM. *[Meaning: I Was, I Am Now, and I Always Will Be.]* This is what you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

15 And God said also to Moses, “Say to the children of Israel, ‘Jehovah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you’ this is my name forever, and this is my memorial to all generations.”

16 “Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say to them, Jehovah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, ‘I have surely visited you, and [seen] that which is done to you in Egypt: 17 and I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Amorite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite, to a land flowing with milk and honey.’”

18 “And they shall listen to your voice: and you shall come, you and the elders of Israel, to the king of Egypt, and you shall say to him, ‘Jehovah, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us: and now let us go, we request of you, three days’ journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to Jehovah our God.’ 19 And I know that the king of Egypt will not give you leave to go, no, not by a mighty hand. *[It may seem strange when God asks you to do something and the results you expect don’t come about. Here, God tells Moses up front, the request will be denied. But...]* 20 And I will put forth my hand, and strike Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst of them: and after that he will let you go.” *[God has a plan, and His ways are better than our ways. He wanted it to work out this way for His ultimate plan and purpose.]*

21 “And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when you leave, you shall not leave empty. 22 But every woman shall ask of her neighbor, and of her that lives in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and clothing: and you shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and you shall plunder the Egyptians.”

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Chapter 4

My wife loves taking care of the elderly and has done so for many years. She managed all the caregivers and was always determined to ensure every resident was treated like her own mother or father. It was her passion. However, there was one thing she hated: public speaking. Part of her job required her to conduct monthly training sessions with her staff. She once told her boss after years of service, "I love this job, but I hate doing the training in front of everyone." Despite knowing every person in the room and being familiar with every detail of the training, standing in front of everyone made her feel queasy.

Have you ever felt that way? I know I have. As a shy person, I still feel that way from time to time. Most of the time, it isn't because I'm unprepared or ignorant of the material; it's just because I don't want to do it. It's easier to sit back and watch. It's much less fearful to stay out of the spotlight than to step into it and take the risk.

Moses faced a similar challenge. When he met God, he was in awe, but when God told him what He wanted him to do, Moses came up with excuse after excuse, from verse one through verse ten. Finally, in verse thirteen, Moses gave up the excuses and simply asked, "Can you send someone else?" (Tim's modern paraphrase.) With no more excuses, Moses admitted his true feelings: "I don't want to do this. Can you find someone else?" In His mercy, God did provide an assistant for Moses, though this helper would cause problems down the road.

We can learn from this. Fear can keep us from walking in God's perfect will. While God's grace still covers us, there may be consequences later because of our weak choices now.

Signs for Moses

1 And Moses answered and said, "But, behold, they will not believe me, nor listen to my voice; for they will say, 'Jehovah has not appeared to us.'"

2 And Jehovah said to him, "What is that in your hand?" And Moses said, "A rod." [*A rod is symbolic of protection*]

3 And God said, "Cast it on the ground." And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it. 4 And Jehovah said to Moses, "Reach out your hand, and take it by the tail." (and Moses reached out his hand, and laid hold of it, and it became a rod in his hand.) 5 "This," God said, "is so they may believe that Jehovah, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to You."

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[This shows a physical, perhaps literal protection with God; not always to keep us away from all harm, but deliverance through it.]

6 And Jehovah said furthermore to him, "Put now your hand into your bosom." And Moses put his hand into his bosom: and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous, *[leprosy is symbolic for sin.]* as white as snow. 7 And God said, "Put your hand into your bosom again." (And he put his hand into his bosom again; and when he took it out of his bosom, behold, it was turned again as his other hand.) *[We see again a subtle hint of Jesus' mission: notice the hand going to the heart in these verses? It is out of the heart that our hands/actions become stained with sin. And it is by giving our hearts to Jesus that our hands are washed clean from sin. Thus, this shows the spiritual purity we gain with God.]*

8 God said, "And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe you, nor listen to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign. 9 And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe even these two signs, nor listen to your voice, that you shall take of the water of the river, and pour it upon the dry land: and the water which you take out of the river shall become blood upon the dry land." *[A sign of judgment. Not only in the book of Exodus do we see this come about, but also in the book of Revelation.]*

10 And Moses said to Jehovah, "Oh, Lord, I am not eloquent, neither in the past, nor since you have spoken to your servant; for I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue." 11 And Jehovah said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes [a man] dumb, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, Jehovah? 12 Now go, and I will be with your mouth, and teach you what you shall speak."

13 And Moses said, "Oh, Lord, I pray you, send someone else." 14 And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Moses, and he said, "Is there not Aaron your brother the Levite? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he comes forth to meet you: and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. 15 And you shall speak to him, and put the words in his mouth: and I will be with your mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what you shall do. 16 And he shall be your spokesman to the people; and it shall come to pass, that he shall be to you a mouth, and you shall be to him as God. 17 And you shall take in your hand this rod, where you shall do the signs."

Moses Returns to Egypt

18 And Moses went and returned to Jethro his father-in-law, and said to him, "Let me go, I pray you, so that I may return to my brothers that are in Egypt, and see whether they be yet alive." And Jethro said to Moses, "Go in peace."

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19 And Jehovah said unto Moses in Midian, “Go, return to Egypt; for all the men are dead that sought your life.” 20 And Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon an ass, and he returned to the land of Egypt: and Moses took the rod of God in his hand.

21 And Jehovah said unto Moses, “When you go back into Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your hand. But I will harden his heart and he will not let the people go. 22 And you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘This is what Jehovah says, Israel is my son, my first-born.’ 23 and I have said to you, ‘Let my son go, that he may serve me. But you have refused to let him go. Behold, I will kill your son, your first-born.’”

24 And it came to pass on the way at the lodging-place, that Jehovah met Moses, and sought to kill him. 25 Then Zipporah took a flint knife, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at Moses feet; and she said, “Surely a bridegroom of blood are you to me.” 26 So God let him alone. Then she said, “You are a bridegroom of blood, because of the circumcision.” *[Moses had been living in the desert for 40 years. He married and had children. However, he failed to circumcise his son according to the covenant of Abraham. Perhaps because his wife and her family were not a tribe of the covenant. Before launching into this mission, God took issue with this. We don’t know much about the history that led to this event, but we can see that his wife took a serious issue with the circumcision. She appears to have reluctantly performed it. She later leaves Moses altogether. It can be a trial in a relationship when one chooses to follow God and one does not. Moses allowed her to leave.]*

27 And Jehovah said to Aaron, “Go into the wilderness to meet Moses.” And he went, and met Moses in the mountain of God, and kissed him. 28 And Moses told Aaron all the words of Jehovah wherewith he had sent him, and all the signs wherewith he had charged him.

29 And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel. 30 And Aaron spoke all the words which Jehovah had spoken to Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people. 31 And the people believed, and when they heard that Jehovah had visited the children of Israel, and that He had seen their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped.

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Chapter 5

Life can be incredibly busy. Finishing school, finding a job, building a career, getting married, having children, raising them, and striving to build a better career—it all piles up. We tend to create lists of things to do and goals to accomplish. Somewhere in the midst of it all, the thought of “spending time with God” comes to mind.

How many of us have thought, “I need to set aside time for prayer”? Or, “I need to schedule some time alone with God and His Word”? Some of us even look at our schedules and carve out a time. Maybe it’s early in the morning, around lunchtime, or in the evening before bed. We take the time to make the time.

Then, life happens. “Okay, I had to miss my time with God today,” we think. But work, kids, school, and other commitments got in the way. We tell ourselves, “I’ll start again tomorrow, once I catch up.”

Weeks, months, or even years later, we’re still “kicking the can” down the road, postponing our time with God.

Has this ever happened to you? It certainly has to me. The enemy is sly in pulling us away from worship and time spent with God. He will use every tool at his disposal to keep us from getting to know God better.

I can speak from personal experience: the hardest part of spending time with God is the first day. As the old slogan says, “Just do it.” Then, do it again and again. Whether in the morning, noon, or evening—whether in your car during your commute or even in the shower—take the time, and spend it with God. Start the race. Begin the conversation. Don’t wait for time to open up—take it. The enemy will never make it easy.

This was the simple request Moses and Aaron made to Pharaoh: “Let us go worship God.” Look at how the world responded. Even today, we can expect no different. The world has not changed—it remains the same. So, use wisdom and don’t look to the world to be reasonable. Seek the Father, and He will make a way where there seems to be no way.

Bricks Without Straw

1 And afterward Moses and Aaron came, and said to Pharaoh, “This is what Jehovah says, the God of Israel, ‘Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.’”
2 And Pharaoh said, “Who is Jehovah, that I should listen to his voice to let Israel go? I know not [meaning - don’t: perceive, experience, consider, recognize, acknowledge, confess, either physically or spiritually] Jehovah, and moreover I will not let Israel go.” [This illustrated the posture of Pharaoh’s heart.]

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3 And they said, “The God of the Hebrews has met with us: let us go, we request from you, three days’ journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to Jehovah our God, or He may he fall upon us with plagues, or with the sword.” *[Notice the request was not for full liberation. It was for a short break so they could worship God. Not an unreasonable request, but it highlights the unreasonableness of Pharaoh.]*

4 And the king of Egypt said to them, “Why do you, Moses and Aaron, release the people from their works? Go back to work.” 5 And Pharaoh said, “Behold, the people of the land are now many, and you make them rest from their work.”

6 And the same day Pharaoh commanded the slave masters of the people, and their officers, saying, 7 “You shall no longer give the people straw to make brick. Let them go and gather straw for themselves. 8 And the number of the bricks, which they did make before, you shall require of them; you shall not diminish their quota: for they are lazy; therefore they cry, saying, ‘Let us go and sacrifice to our God.’ 9 Let heavier work be laid on the men, that they may labor more; so they may not pay attention to lying words.”

10 And the slave masters of the people went out, and their officers, and they spoke to the people, saying, “This is what Pharaoh says, ‘I will not give you straw. 11 Go yourselves, get straw where ye can find it: for none of your work shall be reduced.’” 12 So the people were scattered abroad throughout all the land of Egypt to gather stubble for straw. 13 And the slave masters were pressing them saying, “Fulfil your works, and daily tasks, as when there was straw.” 14 And the officers of the children of Israel, whom Pharaoh’s slave masters had set over them, were beaten, and demanded, “Why have you not fulfilled your task both yesterday and to-day, in making brick as before?”

15 Then the officers of the children of Israel came and cried to Pharaoh, saying, “Why have you dealt with your servants like this? 16 There is no straw given to your servants, and they say to us, ‘Make brick!’ and, behold, your servants are beaten; but the fault is in your own people.

17 But Pharaoh said, “You are lazy, you are lazy! That is why you say, ‘Let us go and sacrifice to Jehovah.’ 18 Go then now, and work; for no straw shall be given to you, yet shall you deliver the same number of bricks.”

19 And the officers of the children of Israel did see that they were in trouble, when it was said, “You shall not reduce the number of your bricks, from your daily tasks.” 20 And they met Moses and Aaron, who stood in the way, as they departed from Pharaoh. 21 And they said to Moses and Aaron, “Jehovah look upon you, and judge: because you have made us to be obnoxious in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to kill us.” *[Israel fell into a common trap of immaturity. They assumed that*

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because God was on their side, anything that made their immediate situation worse could not be from the Lord. How many times have we fallen into that same thinking?]

God Promises Deliverance

22 And Moses returned to Jehovah, and said, “Lord, why have You dealt ill with this people? Why is it that you have sent me? 23 For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has dealt ill with this people; neither have You delivered your people at all.” *[Even those who are mature in the Lord can lose focus on the promises He has made to us in His Word, if we allow it. God had already told Moses that Pharaoh would refuse the request, yet Moses still hoped that the release would come easily. However, God had a plan and purpose for everything that happened—and everything that will happen—just as He does today.]*

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Chapter 6

There have been many times in my life when I've felt completely overwhelmed. More bills than time to pay them, tension in my marriage, stress with family, conflicts with coworkers, and even losing a job. There have been moments when all of these challenges came crashing down at once, and it felt like a massive wave was about to drown me. Just when I managed to lift my head above water, right before I could take a breath, another wave would slam down. One after another. It's a helpless feeling, fighting against forces that seem beyond my control.

I'm sure I'm not alone in this experience. As I've grown older, I've faced it more than a few times. Eventually, you come to accept it as part of life. Because these struggles are so common, there are countless books offering advice on how to cope with feeling overwhelmed. But this chapter stands out to me as one of the best.

In this chapter, Moses is feeling overwhelmed as well. He faithfully delivered the message God asked him to deliver, and everything happened exactly as God planned—but not in the way Moses had hoped (mistake #1). In Chapter 6, God takes a moment to pause and speak directly to Moses. What struck me were the repeated “I am” and “I will” statements God makes. Yet, even after receiving these assurances from the Creator of the universe, Moses still makes the same mistake: in verses 12 and 30, he focuses on his own limitations, responding with his own feeble “I am” statement.

It's easy to fall into this trap. I'll admit, when the waves of life come crashing down and it feels like the world is against me, my natural response is to feel small and powerless. Instead of calming down and trusting in how great and powerful the “I AM” is, I focus on my own weakness. The lesson is when we focus on ourselves, we can miss the person and promises laid out in front of us by our loving Father.

Perhaps this is the lesson God was trying to show Moses and Aaron: they were nothing without Him. Victory wouldn't come through their words or actions—it would only come through the Father. Over time, I've gotten better at this. No, I'm not perfect, but I've learned to loosen my grip when the waves hit, relying more on God to calm the storm and guide me through it, rather than trying to control the waves or save myself. The key takeaway here: Focus on God, not on yourself.

God Promises Action

1 And Jehovah said unto Moses, “Now shall you see what I will do to Pharaoh: for by a strong hand shall he let them go, and by a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land.”

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2 And God spoke to Moses, and said to him, “I am Jehovah: 3 and I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty; but by my name Jehovah I was not known to them. 4 And I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their wandering, wherein they were foreigners. 5 And moreover I have heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and I have remembered my covenant.

6 Therefore say to the children of Israel, ‘I am Jehovah, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm, and with great judgments: 7 and I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God; and you shall know that I am Jehovah your God, who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. 8 And I will bring you in to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for a heritage: I am Jehovah.’”

9 And Moses spoke this to the children of Israel: but they listened not to Moses for their discouragement of spirit, and for their cruel bondage.

10 And Jehovah spoke to Moses saying, 11 “Go in, speak to Pharaoh king of Egypt, that he let the children of Israel go out of his land.”

12 And Moses spoke before Jehovah saying, “Behold, the children of Israel have not listened to me; how then shall Pharaoh hear from me, I, who am of uncircumcised *[unclean, unworthy]* lips?”

Family Record of Moses and Aaron

13 And Jehovah spoke unto Moses and to Aaron, and gave them a charge to the children of Israel, and to Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt.

14 These are the heads of their fathers' houses. The sons of Reuben the first-born of Israel: Hanoch, and Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi; these are the families of Reuben.

15 And the sons of Simeon: Jemuel, and Jamin, and Ohad, and Jachin, and Zohar, and Shaul the son of a Canaanitish woman; these are the families of Simeon.

16 And these are the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations: Gershon, and Kohath, and Merari; and the years of the life of Levi were a hundred thirty and seven years.

17 The sons of Gershon: Libni and Shimei, according to their families. 18 And the sons of Kohath: Amram, and Izhar, and Hebron, and Uzziel; and the years of the life of Kohath

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were a hundred thirty and three years. 19 And the sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. These are the families of the Levites according to their generations.

20 And Amram took him Jochebed his father's sister to wife; and she bare him Aaron and Moses: and the years of the life of Amram were a hundred and thirty and seven years. 21 And the sons of Izhar: Korah, and Nepheg, and Zichri. 22 And the sons of Uzziel: Mishael, and Elzaphan, and Sithri.

23 And Aaron took him Elisheba, the daughter of Amminadab, the sister of Nahshon, to wife; and she bare him Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar.

24 And the sons of Korah: Assir, and Elkanah, and Abiasaph; these are the families of the Korahites.

25 And Eleazar Aaron's son took him one of the daughters of Putiel to wife; and she bare him Phinehas. These are the heads of the fathers' [houses] of the Levites according to their families.

26 These are that Aaron and Moses, to whom Jehovah said, "Bring out the children of Israel from the land of Egypt according to their hosts." 27 These are they that spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring out the children of Israel from Egypt: these same Moses and Aaron.

Aaron to Speak for Moses

28 And it came to pass on the day when Jehovah spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, 29 that Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, "I am Jehovah: you shall speak to Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I speak to you." 30 And Moses said before Jehovah, "Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips, and how shall Pharaoh listen to me?"

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Chapter 7

My wife and I took a trip to Manhattan for our first wedding anniversary. It was our first time in New York, and it was a blast! Of course, being in late January, it was *very* cold. We visited Central Park, 5th Avenue, and had a special dinner overlooking Times Square before watching the classic *Phantom of the Opera* on Broadway. (Here's a tip: it's an actual opera, where everything is sung—it's not just a play! Who knew? Haha!)

While walking through Times Square, I encountered a man standing on the side of the street. He waved me over and showed me some items he was selling—watches! Now, most people don't know this, but I love watches. It's one of the few types of jewelry for men. He showed me a particularly stunning piece: a gold Presidential Rolex, with diamonds around the bezel and even diamonds marking the hours. It was beautiful, and he told me it could be mine for only \$30. Considering these watches go for around \$25,000, I thought it was quite a bargain.

Yes, of course, I knew it wasn't real. I wasn't born yesterday! But it was a pretty impressive replica. I thought to myself, "What better souvenir could I get from New York City? It seems ironically fitting."

I wore that watch for years, and surprisingly, it kept great time. One day, at church, I was in the sound booth when a fellow "soundman" noticed my watch. He took a glance at it and said, "Rolex Presidential, huh?" I smiled and replied, "You bet." He asked to see it, so I handed it over, knowing the truth was about to come out. As soon as he held it, he chuckled. Then he took off his own watch, handed it to me, and said, "Here, this is what the real deal feels like." I joked that I'd offer to trade since his was just gold and didn't have the diamonds, but for some reason, he declined. We both laughed.

A fake Rolex is easy to spot, but how do we navigate life and identify all the counterfeit versions of the truth that surround us? That's essentially what this chapter is about.

The world is full of fakes, which shouldn't be surprising since the ruler of this world is, himself, the master of deception. We often get lured into imitations of God, attracted by their sparkle, the glitches, and sometimes even the seemingly unexplained wonders. The enemy of God will do everything he can to resemble God in order to mislead us. He might even do "good" things to confuse us and nudge us just a degree off-center. It worked on Pharaoh. One reason it succeeded was that his heart was not positioned correctly from the start. When the imitators appeared, Pharaoh failed to recognize that they could only reproduce—they couldn't resolve or overpower God's true work.

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My final thought for my friends: remember, if you encounter something that makes you wonder, pay close attention to the results. Is Jesus being lifted up, or is something else taking center stage? If it's anything other than Jesus, take that as a warning sign. We are created to praise and honor Him, not ourselves or anything else. Anything from God will always lead you back to the Cross.

1 And Jehovah said to Moses, "See, I have made you like a God to Pharaoh; and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet. 2 You shall speak all that I command you; and Aaron your brother shall speak to Pharaoh, that he let the children of Israel go out of his land. 3 And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt. *[It is important to remember that God did not harden Pharaoh's heart against Pharaoh's own desires. Pharaoh revealed his heart when he refused the humble request of Moses in Chapter 5. Now, God would strengthen the evil he already chose. God gave him over to his own sinful desires. (Romans 1:24)]* 4 But Pharaoh will not listen to you, and I will lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth my multitudes, my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. 5 And the Egyptians shall know that I am Jehovah, when I stretch forth my hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them." *[The ultimate goal is for all mankind to recognize God. Some to the Promise, some to the Darkness. But to all: every knee shall bow; every tongue will confess: Jesus is Lord.]*

6 And Moses and Aaron did as Jehovah commanded them.

Aaron's Staff becomes a Snake

7 And Moses was fourscore years old *[80 years old]*, and Aaron fourscore and three years old, *[83 years old]* when they spoke to Pharaoh. 8 And Jehovah spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, 9 "When Pharaoh shall speak to you, saying, 'Show me a miracle', then you shall say to Aaron, 'Take your rod, and cast it down before Pharaoh, that it become a serpent.'"

10 And Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh, and they did so, as Jehovah had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and before his servants, and it became a serpent. *[Literal word is more akin to a dragon, or crocodile, (to which the Egyptians worship) than a snake.]* 11 Then Pharaoh also called for the wise men and the sorcerers: and they also, the magicians of Egypt, did in like manner with their enchantments. 12 For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: *[same word used]* but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods. *[The question isn't in the how the "wisemen" were able to do this; for in so doing it they only proved they understood the supernatural world. The key takeaway is that God's rod prevailed! All supernatural forces are not*

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made equal. 13 And Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them; as Jehovah had spoken.

The Plague of Blood

14 And Jehovah said to Moses, "Pharaoh's heart is stubborn, he refuses to let the people go. 15 Go to Pharaoh in the morning. As he goes out to the water; and you shall stand by the river's brink to meet him, and the rod which was turned to a serpent shall you take in your hand. 16 And you shall say to him, 'Jehovah, the God of the Hebrews, has sent me to you saying, 'Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness: but, behold, you still have not listened.' 17 So says Jehovah, 'In this way you shall know that I am Jehovah: I will strike with the rod that is in my hand on the waters which are in the river, and it shall be turned to blood. 18 And the fish that are in the river shall die, and the river shall become foul; and the Egyptians shall loathe to drink water from the river.'"

19 And Jehovah said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Take your rod, and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, over their streams, and over their pools, and over all their ponds of water, that they may become blood; and there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone.' *[Each plague that will be seen confronts a specific Egyptian god. Answering Pharaoh's earlier question, "Who is the Lord that I should obey him?" There are ten in total. The last one stands alone. Prior to it, there will be three sets of three. In all sets, the first two will give a call of repentance, and the third will come without warning. If Egypt is a shadow of the World, then Pharaoh is a shadow of Satan. Here, we begin to see a shadow of the book of Revelation and God's ultimate plan of redemption.]*

20 And Moses and Aaron did so, as Jehovah commanded; and he lifted up the rod, and struck the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood. 21 And the fish that were in the river died; and the river became foul, and the Egyptians could not drink water from the river; and the blood was throughout all the land of Egypt.

22 And the magicians of Egypt did in like manner with their enchantments: *[Satan will always try to imitate God. But they cannot turn the blood back into water. Satan has limitations.]* And Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them; as Jehovah had said. 23 And Pharaoh turned and went into his house, he did not take this to heart. 24 And all the Egyptians dug round about the river for water to drink; for they could not drink of the water of the river.

The Plague of Frogs

25 And seven days were fulfilled, after that Jehovah had smitten the river.

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Chapter 8

We live in an amazing time. It is hard to believe the advancements even someone as young as me has seen. I remember when I was in 7th grade, my science teacher said, “Technology is doubling every 7 years.” Recently I read that it has increased to 1 to 2 years. Yes, we live in quite a time.

With all that information, there is a real hazard. We get so used to being able to search for answers that we can miss the simplest explanation. Take the rainbow, for example. When I was a kid, I understood the rainbow as something God put in the sky to remind of never to flood the world again. Today, if you were to ask the question, “What is a rainbow?” you would get something like this: “A rainbow is a natural optical phenomenon that occurs when light is refracted, reflected, and dispersed in water droplets in the atmosphere, creating a spectrum of light.”

Yes, it describes the mechanics, but fails to cover the wonder. But you know, we are not the first smart generation. The Egyptians were a very sophisticated race. They were extremely clean, very well organized, highly intelligent, and thought they were the center of the world. Sounds like a few nations today, doesn't it? Yes, they had gods we would consider barbaric today, but look carefully through this study, and you will find many of their “gods” are merely gods with different names today. Don't be too quick to judge them too harshly, for their world still lives today. So too, the message to them is still very relevant to people today.

So we will continue with the battle between God and his people, and the World and its ruler.

Frogs Over the Land

1 And Jehovah spoke to Moses, “Go in to Pharaoh, and say to him, ‘Thus says Jehovah, Let my people go, that they may serve me. 2 And if you refuse to let them go, behold, I will strike all your borders with frogs: 3 and the river shall swarm with frogs, which shall go up and come in to your house, and into your bedchamber, and on your bed, and into the house of your servants, and on your people, and into your ovens, and into your kneading-troughs: 4 and the frogs shall come up both upon you, and upon your people, and upon all your servants.’” *[Frogs were also worshipped by the Egyptians. One God had the face of a frog and was the god of fertility (much like we consider rabbits today, frogs were back then.) So the God of fertility and sensuality was being dealt with here. God allowed lust and passion to cover every part of their lives. Remember Egypt symbolized the World – today we see fertility and sensuality very much covering every area of life.]*

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5 And Jehovah said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Stretch out your hand with your rod over the rivers, over the streams, and over the pools, and cause frogs to come up upon the land of Egypt.’”

6 And Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt; and the frogs came up, and covered the land of Egypt. 7 And the magicians did in like manner with their enchantments, and brought up frogs upon the land of Egypt.

8 Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, “Pray to Jehovah, that he takes away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may sacrifice to Jehovah.”

9 And Moses said to Pharaoh, “You have this option over me: what time shall I pray for you, and for your servants, and for your people, that the frogs be destroyed from you and all of your houses, and remain in the river only?”

10 And Pharaoh said, “Tomorrow.” *[How many times to we hate the sin that takes hold of us, yet even then, we delay, “one more day” before letting go?]* Moses said, “Be it according to your word; that you may know that there is none like Jehovah our God. 11 The frogs shall depart from you, and from your houses, and from your servants, and from your people. The frogs shall remain in the river only.”

12 And Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh: and Moses cried to Jehovah concerning the frogs which he had brought upon Pharaoh. 13 And Jehovah did according to the word of Moses. The frogs died out of the houses, out of the courts, and out of the fields. 14 And the Egyptians gathered the frogs together in heaps, and the land stank. *[By God’s mercy and grace, He can remove the sin in our lives. But many times, there is still a consequence, a stink, that may remain. It may be up to us to clean away the stink of the choices we made. Through that process, it will help remind us not to go back into that sin.]* 15 But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart, and did not listen to Moses and Aaron, as Jehovah had said.

The Plague of Lice

16 And Jehovah said unto Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Stretch out your rod, and strike the dust of the earth, that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt.’” 17 And they did so. Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod, and struck the dust of the earth, and there were lice upon man, and on beast. All the dust of the earth became lice throughout all the land of Egypt.

18 And the magicians did so with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not and there were lice on man, and on beast. 19 Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, “This

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is the finger of God." But Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as Jehovah had said. *[Here we see the end of the magician's might. Even they, with their understanding and power of the darkness, confessed this was God acting. Interesting that they referred to the finger of God, for with the same finger, God will write out the first commandment – "Thou shalt have no other God before me." The same point He is proving with the Egyptians/World.]*

The Plague of Flies

20 And Jehovah said to Moses, "Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh. When he comes to the water; and say to him, 'This is what Jehovah says, Let my people go, that they may serve me. 21 Otherwise, if you will not let my people go, then I will send swarms of flies on you, and on your servants, and on your people, and in your houses. The houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground wherever they are. *[These were not just normal house flies like we may know; this word means various types and sizes of flying insects.]*

22 And I will set aside in that day the land of Goshen, where my people live, that no swarms of flies shall be there. To the end you may know that I am Jehovah in the midst of the earth. 23 And I will put a distinction between my people and your people. By tomorrow shall this sign be in place.'" *[Here we see God creating a boundary between the World and His people. The first three plagues focused on disrupting comfort and included the children of God. The next plagues will focus on possessions and personal security and will be directed solely at the ones rejecting God – Egypt – the World.]*

24 And Jehovah did so. There came grievous swarms of flies into the house of Pharaoh, and into his servants' houses. In all the land of Egypt the land was ruined by the swarms of flies. 25 And Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and said, "Go, sacrifice to your God in this land."

26 And Moses said, "It is not right to do so. For the sacrifice to Jehovah our God would be the abomination to the Egyptians. Shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us? *[Egyptians thought shepherds were the lowest of the low and animal sacrifice was barbaric, so sacrificing sheep within their midst would cause a problem.]* 27 We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to Jehovah our God, as he shall command us."

28 And Pharaoh said, "I will let you go, that you may sacrifice to Jehovah your God in the wilderness. Only you shall not go very far away. Now pray for me." 29 And Moses said, "Behold, I go out from you, and I will pray Jehovah that the swarms of flies may depart from

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Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people, tomorrow. Only do not let Pharaoh deal deceitfully any more in not letting the people go to sacrifice to Jehovah.”

30 And Moses went out from Pharaoh, and prayed to Jehovah. 31 And Jehovah did according to the word of Moses. He removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people. There remained not one fly. 32 And Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also, and he did not let the people go.

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Chapter 9

When I was a police officer, I will admit something: I never enjoyed arresting people. It was part of the job, but when I told them to “turn around and place your hands behind your back,” it wasn’t something that made me leap for joy. Without exception, as I put the cuffs on and restricted their liberty, it was a sobering moment for me—a reminder of the seriousness of the event taking place.

But then, there were exceptions. Every now and then, there was a “bad guy” that I did take a little pleasure in “hooking up”—the guy who beat his girlfriend, or the person who caused willful harm to another. Those folks? I really didn’t mind taking them into custody.

Several times, while booking an individual, I would get a look at their “rap sheet.” I could see how many times they had been arrested or had spent time in jail or prison. Most people in the city where I worked were first-time offenders, though a few were habitual offenders.

What was really funny was seeing how repentant—or sorry—these habitual offenders seemed to be. They would practically beg not to be arrested. They swore up and down this was the first or last time they would ever do this. They had every excuse in the book, trying to play on your compassion to be released with just a warning. Then, I would run their record, and the truth was revealed. Once they saw I knew, they would tone it down and just shrug it off. They knew they had lost the argument. Some of them even joked, “Well, I had to try.”

There’s a big difference between sorrow and repentance. These habitual offenders were very sorry they got caught, but they never considered true repentance. Repentance requires a change in direction—a 180-degree turn from the path you’re on—and taking a step in a new direction. Notice, “taking a step” is required for repentance. Just turning around to look at the “right way” isn’t enough. It takes that act of faith to step toward it.

We read about more plagues hitting Egypt as Pharaoh continues to agree to repent, but he never reaches the point of actually taking that step. I’m sure he was sorry for the suffering he endured, but he was never repentant enough to make a real change. I pray that the Father gives me the wisdom to recognize when I am becoming stubborn or hard-hearted, so that I may avoid the lessons Pharaoh had to face.

Egyptian Cattle Die

1 Then Jehovah said to Moses, “Go in to Pharaoh, and tell him, ‘This is what Jehovah says, the God of the Hebrews: Let my people go, that they may serve me.’ 2 For if you refuse

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to let them go, and will hold them still, 3 behold, the hand of Jehovah is upon your cattle which are in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the herds, and upon the flocks. There shall be a very grievous plague. 4 And Jehovah shall make a distinction between the cattle of Israel and the cattle of Egypt; and there shall nothing die of all that belongs to the children of Israel.”

5 And Jehovah appointed a set time, saying, “Tomorrow Jehovah shall do this thing in the land.” 6 Jehovah did that thing on the next day. All the cattle of Egypt died. *[This plague was directed against the Egyptian god “Hathor” who was depicted as bringing prosperity and healing. It’s more than ironic that a plague of sickness overtook the cows, huh?]* But of the cattle of the children of Israel died not one. 7 Pharaoh investigated, and, behold, there was not so much as one of the cattle of the Israelites dead. But the heart of Pharaoh was stubborn, and he did not let the people go.

The Plague of Boils

8 And Jehovah said unto Moses and unto Aaron, “Take handfuls of soot of the furnace, *[“the” furnace referenced here is believed to be the one to which the Egyptians used for human sacrifice.]* and let Moses sprinkle it toward heaven in the sight of Pharaoh. 9 And it shall become small dust over all the land of Egypt, and shall festering boils break forth on man and on beast, throughout all the land of Egypt.”

10 Moses and Aaron took soot of the furnace, and stood before Pharaoh. Moses sprinkled it up toward heaven; and it became a boil breaking forth festering upon man and upon beast. 11 The magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils, for the boils were upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians. *[This plague was probably directed against the Egyptian god “Imhotep”, who was known as the Physician god, and known for wisdom and science. He was a symbol for intellectual and spiritual enlightenment. Even those who were thought to be closest to him, the court magicians, were stricken with this plague.]* 12 And Jehovah hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he listened not to Moses and Aaron, as Jehovah had spoken to them.

The Plague of Hail

13 Jehovah said to Moses, “Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say to him, ‘This is what Jehovah says, the God of the Hebrews, let my people go, that they may serve me. 14 For I will this time send all my plagues upon your heart, and upon your servants, and upon your people; that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth. 15 For now I had stretched forth my hand, and struck you and your people with pestilence, and you would have been cut off from the earth: 16 but in for this very reason have I made

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you to stand, to show you my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth. 17 And yet you exalt yourself against my people, that you will not let them go?

18 Therefore, tomorrow about this time I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as has not been in Egypt since the day it was founded even until now. 19 Now therefore send quickly in your cattle and all that you have in the field. For every man and beast that shall be found in the field, and shall not be brought home, the hail shall come down on them, and they shall die.”

20 Those that feared the word of Jehovah among the servants of Pharaoh made their servants and his cattle come into the houses. 21 Those that regarded not the word of Jehovah left their servants and his cattle in the field.

22 Jehovah said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt.” 23 Moses stretched out his rod toward heaven and Jehovah sent thunder and hail, and fire ran down unto the earth and Jehovah rained hail upon the land of Egypt. *[This plague could have been directed at several gods, but most notably “Nut”, the sky goddess, also known as the protector of the Stars and cosmos.]* 24 So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as had not been in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. 25 And the hail struck throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail struck every herb of the field, and broke every tree of the field. 26 Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail.

27 And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said to them, “I have sinned this time. Jehovah is righteous, and I and my people are wicked. 28 Pray to Jehovah, for there has been enough of these mighty thundering’s and hail. I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer.” *[It is wonderful to hear a repentant heart, but alas, this was not Pharaoh. Pharaoh was more grieved at the consequences of his sin, but not at the sin itself.]*

29 Moses said to Pharaoh, “As soon as I am gone out of the city, I will spread abroad my hands to Jehovah. The thunders will cease, neither shall there be any more hail, that you may know that the earth is Jehovah’s. 30 But as for you and your servants, I know that you will not yet fear Jehovah God.

31 And the flax and the barley were smitten. (for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was in bloom. 32 But the wheat and the spelt were not destroyed, for they were not grown up.)

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33 And Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh, and spread out his hands to Jehovah. The thunders and hail ceased, and the rain was not poured upon the earth. 34 And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders had ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants. 35 And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the children of Israel go, just as Jehovah had spoken by Moses.

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Chapter 10

Reading this chapter, an odd memory came to mind. It was long ago, back when I still had plenty of hair. I was married to my first wife. Like many marriages, we were in the midst of a real struggle. My wife and I were barely speaking at the time. I went to work that day, just like any other day. Around lunchtime, a visitor showed up in the front lobby asking for me. I was a bit perplexed, as I had nothing scheduled. I met this young man in the lobby. He looked at me and asked if I was Tim Gould. Immediately, I thought, "Another salesman." I said I was Tim Gould, waiting for him to introduce himself and tell me which company he represented. Instead, he very shyly handed me an envelope.

I must have had an inquisitive expression on my face, for he said, "I am sorry, please understand it's my job just to give this to you. I hope you understand." I took the envelope, looked at him with compassion, and said, "Of course." I actually felt sorry for him at that moment. He left, and I took the envelope into my office and read the heading: "Petition for Divorce."

As dumbfounded as I was looking at that surprising document, I almost caught myself smiling when I realized what the messenger had meant by his comment. Oddly enough, I found myself thinking more about his task and the many messages he had carried during those few moments than I did about the legal papers that had just been served to me. I couldn't help but think about his occupation and the weight of having to deliver such grievous news to people every day.

Moses was very much like that man. As I read through the previous chapters and this one, I see how Pharaoh just wouldn't yield. Now, he is trying to negotiate and manipulate the release of Israel. (That alone could be the subject of many sermons.) But I couldn't help but notice how Moses responded each time Pharaoh asked him to pray to God for the plagues to end. Every time, Moses did it. I know Moses couldn't believe that Pharaoh would actually repent; heck, God told him Pharaoh would be stubborn. Yet Moses never challenged Pharaoh's request. He simply prayed as requested. Moses let God be in control. He was just the messenger—the one passing on God's words to Pharaoh when God spoke, and delivering Pharaoh's prayers to God when requested.

This convicted me. How many times have I failed as a messenger? Too often, I've made my own personal assessment of someone's heart or motives before just taking it to God. Or, in my pious way, I would add my own judicious comments, like "change their heart, God," in my prayers.

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Sometimes, God gives us words of wisdom. Sometimes, He encourages us to correct. But I challenge us all to always offer up the prayer requested by others and let God sort out the details. God had a plan and purpose for Pharaoh, just like He does for you and me.

The Plague of Locust

1 And Jehovah said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh: for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I may show these my signs in the midst of them, 2 and that you may tell in the ears of your son, and of your son's son, what things I have brought on Egypt, and my signs which I have done among them. That you may know that I am Jehovah." *[Sometimes, the work that God performs is not only for the benefit of the ones going through it, but as a testimony for others later on, to encourage and direct.]*

3 And Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh, and said to him, "This is what Jehovah says, the God of the Hebrews, "How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me?" *[This is often a question the Father may ask you or me, too!]* Let my people go, that they may serve me. 4 Otherwise, if you refuse to let my people go, tomorrow will I bring locusts into your border. 5 They shall cover the face of the earth, so that one shall not be able to see the earth. They shall eat the remaining of that which has escaped, which remained to you from the hail, and shall eat every tree which grows for you out of the fields. 6 Your houses shall be filled, and the houses of all your servants, and the houses of all the Egyptians. As neither your fathers nor your fathers' fathers have seen since the day that they were on the earth until this day." And Moses turned, and went out from Pharaoh.

7 And Pharaoh's servants said to him, "How long shall this man be a snare to us? Let the men *[could literally mean "man" – meaning Moses]* go, that they *[in the plural sense, people]* may serve Jehovah their God. Do you not realize yet that Egypt is destroyed?" 8 And Moses and Aaron were brought again to Pharaoh. Pharaoh said to them, "Go, serve Jehovah your God. but who will be going?"

9 Moses said, "We will go with our young and with our old. With our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go. For we must hold a feast to Jehovah." 10 And Pharaoh said to them, "So let Jehovah be with you, if I will let you go, and your little ones, look to it. For evil is your heart before you. 11 No! Go now only that are men, *[Pharaoh wanted to bargain, and heard only the literal "men" instead of "people." He wanted assurance that they would come back by holding the women and children hostage.]* and serve Jehovah. For that is what you desire." And Moses and Aaron were driven out from Pharaoh's presence.

12 And Jehovah said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come up upon the land of Egypt, and eat every herb of the land, even

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all that the hail has left.” 13 Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt, and Jehovah brought an east wind upon the land all that day, and all the night; and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts. 14 The locusts went up over all the land of Egypt, and rested in all the borders of Egypt. Very grave were they. Before them there were no such locusts as they. Neither after them shall be such. 15 For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened. They did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left. There remained not any green thing, either tree or herb of the field, through all the land of Egypt. *[This plague confronted their god “Set”, thought to be the protector of crops.]*

16 Then Pharaoh quickly called for Moses and Aaron and he said, “I have sinned against Jehovah your God, and against you. 17 Now therefore forgive, I pray you, my sin only this once, and pray to Jehovah your God, that he may take away from me this deadly plague from me.” *[sorrow in the consequences of sin...]*

18 Moses went out from Pharaoh, and prayed to Jehovah. 19 And Jehovah turned an exceeding strong west wind, which took away the locusts, and drove them into the Red Sea. There remained not one locust in all the border of Egypt. 20 But Jehovah hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he did not let the children of Israel go. *[...but still not a sorrow that leads to a heart’s repentance.]*

The Plague of Darkness

21 And Jehovah said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt.” *[Directly opposing the Egyptian sun god, “Ra”]* 22 And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven. There was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days. 23 They saw not one another, neither rose any one from his place for three days. But all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings. *[This darkness was not normal darkness as we know. It was not only void of light, but an absolute void of awareness. It is like being locked in a safe, and submerged in the deep ocean. This symbolized what life would/will be like without the presence of God. We fail to consider just how much of God’s presence is active in our day-to-day living. Without His presence, life is literal hell. No awareness of love, joy, happiness, contentment, nor even a fond thought.]*

24 And Pharaoh called to Moses, and said, “Go and serve Jehovah. Only let your flocks and your herds stay. Let your little ones also go with you.” *[Amazingly, Pharaoh still tries to negotiate. Now he tries to use their possessions as a hostage. I think the term we are familiar with would be: “he was grasping at straws.”]*

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25 And Moses said, "You must also give into our hand sacrifices and burnt-offerings, that we may sacrifice to Jehovah our God. 26 Our cattle also shall go with us. There shall not a hoof be left behind so we must take all to serve Jehovah our God. We know not with what we must serve Jehovah, until we arrive."

27 But Jehovah hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go. 28 And Pharaoh said to him, "Get away from me! Take this warning to heart, look to me no more, for in the day you see me again you shall die!"

29 And Moses said, "You have spoken. I will see you again no more."

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Chapter 11

The next few chapters are among the most profound in the Holy Scriptures, and it's impossible to briefly capture the significance of what is about to unfold.

The Passover is upon us. This moment has been foreshadowed in various ways throughout the book of Genesis. After Adam and Eve fell, God clothed them with skins, symbolizing the laying down of life to cover their shame. In the story of Cain and Abel, we see Abel's willing offering of life, which was accepted, contrasted with Cain's religious works, which were rejected. And, of course, the most significant foreshadowing before this moment is Abraham, who offered his son in faith, while God provided a substitute. And on that same hill where, 2,000 years later, the "final" and "real" sacrifice would take place by Jesus.

This chapter sets the stage for what is about to happen—the death of the firstborn. But this is not just the death of the Egyptian firstborn; it is the death of every firstborn. We will soon see that everyone and everything is affected. It is a sobering time. But... Jesus. Remember, when you read the Old Testament, always look for our Savior. When you do, these next two chapters will come alive in a new way, and you will see Jesus throughout. Chapter 12, in particular, goes much deeper.

This chapter identifies the problem—sin. Sin brings the plagues. "For the wages of sin is death," Everyone is touched by sin, so we can live in this land called Egypt. But, as the Scripture says, "the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Just as the Israelites will soon be given a way out, so too are we faced with the penalty of sin, but also with the gift of grace and salvation. This way is not based on our deeds or actions, but solely on God's love.

The Last Plague

1 And Jehovah said to Moses, "Yet one plague more will I bring upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go from here. When he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out of here altogether. 2 Speak now in the ears of the people, and let them ask *[request]* every man of his neighbor, and every woman of her neighbor, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold." 3 And Jehovah gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. The man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people.

4 And Moses said, "This is what Jehovah says, 'About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt. 5 All the first-born in the land of Egypt shall die, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sits on his throne, even to the first-born of the maid-servant that is behind the

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mill. All the first-born of cattle. *[This death to come would affect everything in Egypt, the Israelites included. Everything will be touched by death, just as sin touches everyone and everything in this fallen world.]* 6 And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there has never been, nor shall there be any more. 7 But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog bark, at man or beast.' *[People would know this was God's hand, not Israel's. They will not stand up in revenge against Israel, nor would a dog even bark at them in accusation. Everyone will know precisely that this was God's plan alone. – Just like the plan of salvation. Just like when we stand before God, and every man has to give a personal account. There will be no one else to point the blame if you are found lacking.]* This will be done that you may know how that Jehovah does make a distinction between the Egyptians and Israel. 8 And all these your servants shall come down to me, and bow down themselves to me, saying, 'Get out, and all the people that follow you. After that I will go out.' And Moses, hot with anger, went out from Pharaoh.

9 And Jehovah said to Moses, "Pharaoh will not listen to you, that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt." 10 And Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh, and Jehovah hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the children of Israel go out of his land.

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Chapter 12

Since 2018, an average of 40,077 people in the USA have lost their lives in traffic accidents each year, and this number has been steadily rising by about 3.16% annually. This means around 3,340 people each month are tragically lost. What's even more heart-wrenching is that approximately 30% of these victims were not at fault — that's over 12,000 people each year.

I've had friends who were part of that number, and my own little sister was among them. We can understand when reckless driving leads to tragic consequences; after all, we reap what we sow. But what about those who were not at fault? People who were doing everything right — careful drivers, pedestrians, cyclists, or passengers — and still found themselves caught in a tragedy. Why them?

The truth is, we live in a fallen world, where the poor choices of others can have devastating effects on our lives. Some suffer deeply, while others feel the pain in quieter, but still significant ways. If we live long enough, we'll all experience the consequences of someone else's actions. And what's even more sobering is that our own choices will impact others as well. No matter how careful, how good, or how virtuous we are, sin and its consequences reach us all.

This is exactly what was happening in Egypt. Their sin, their false gods, their broken systems of belief — all of it was coming to fruition. The curse of death was upon them. But in the midst of this darkness, God offered mercy and a path of hope. During the last plague, He carved out a way for them to be saved — a strange-sounding promise to eat a lamb, put its blood on their doorposts, and trust that this act would protect them. It sounded almost absurd: How could something so simple protect them from death?

And yet, it was exactly this — trusting in God, beyond what they could understand, beyond what made sense — that saved them. Those who were willing to let go of their own intellect, who realized that they couldn't save themselves but had to rely entirely on God's provision, were the ones who survived. It was a powerful lesson in faith and trust.

Through this story, we see the path of salvation that God carved throughout history, a path that ultimately leads us to the acceptance of our own Passover Lamb, Jesus Christ.

This story is more than just a historical account; it's a message of hope and redemption. It's a reminder that, despite the brokenness and consequences we face in this world, God has provided a way for us to find peace and eternal life through faith in Him. Even in the darkest times, there is hope. This is a message worth reflecting on deeply in your journey

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with God. And in that reflection, may you find the strength and peace that comes from trusting in His grace.

Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread

1 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, 2 "This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. *[This event was so significant that it became the "starting line" for Israel. In the same way, our lives begin anew from day one when we receive Jesus into our hearts. True life begins with Him.]* 3 Tell the whole community of Israel *[for "congregation" the first occurrence of Israel addressed in its religious sense. We would now use the word "church"]* that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb *[pay close attention to this word usage. Later it becomes cooler!]* for his family, one for each household. 4 If any household is too small for the lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat. 5 Your lamb must be a year-old male without blemish, *[Jesus was without blemish and sinless.]* and you may take it from the sheep or the goats. 6 Take care of it until the fourteenth day of the month, *[the lamb would live in the house, symbolizing a personal relationship with the sacrifice. It wasn't just any lamb, but one you grew close to and connected with. In the same way, Jesus desires to have that close, personal relationship with us as well.]* When all the members of the community of Israel must slaughter it at twilight. 7 Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lamb. *[In so doing, they formed a cross. The head of crowns and the arms pierced.]* 8 That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, *[fire in the Bible represents judgement]* along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast. 9 Do not eat the meat raw or boiled in water, but roast it over a fire-- with the head, legs and internal organs. *[consume the whole sacrifice from God. Don't just "nibble on" Jesus; Totally consume him.]* 10 Do not leave any of it till morning; if some is left till morning, you must burn it. 11 This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the LORD's Passover. *[In the original Hebrew, every instance uses a singular word for "lamb," never plural. It is always "lamb," not "lambs." Notice how the lamb is addressed: first as "a lamb," then "the lamb," and finally "your lamb." Abraham promised Isaac that God would provide a lamb, and when John the Baptist first saw and recognized Jesus, he proclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God." When you accept Jesus, He becomes "your lamb."]*

12 "On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. *[The Egyptians*

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were not the only ones worshipping false gods at this time. Israel had been there for over 400 years, and many Israelites also participated in their worship.] I am the LORD. 13 The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.

14 "This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD—a lasting ordinance. 15 For seven days you are to eat bread made without yeast. *[Yeast is a symbol of sin in the bible. It puffs up and multiplies – describing the root of sin-pride.]* On the first day remove the yeast from your houses, for whoever eats anything with yeast in it from the first day through the seventh must be cut off from Israel. 16 On the first day hold a sacred assembly, and another one on the seventh day. Do no work at all on these days, except to prepare food for everyone to eat; that is all you may do.

17 "Celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread, because it was on this very day that I brought your divisions out of Egypt. Celebrate this day as a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. 18 In the first month you are to eat bread made without yeast, from the evening of the fourteenth day until the evening of the twenty-first day. 19 For seven days no yeast is to be found in your houses. And anyone, whether foreigner or native-born, who eats anything with yeast in it must be cut off from the community of Israel. *[This ceremony highlights the seriousness with which God views sin. Anyone who broke this rule would be completely and permanently cut off from their nation. It also reveals how much God hates sin, to the point that He cannot dwell with anyone who is tainted by it. This underscores the immense sacrifice Jesus made for us — taking our sin upon Himself so that we could dwell with God. Without this, we could never have the privilege of being in God's presence.]* 20 Eat nothing made with yeast. Wherever you live, you must eat unleavened bread."

21 Then Moses summoned all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Go at once and select the animals for your families and slaughter the Passover lamb. 22 Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood in the basin and put some of the blood on the top and on both sides of the doorframe. None of you shall go out of the door of your house until morning. *[They were instructed to stay inside and not to walk outside of the covering of blood. We, too, are covered by grace by remaining under the blood of Jesus.]* 23 When the LORD goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe and will pass over that doorway, and he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down. *[God is a Creator, while Satan is a Destroyer. In this event, God allowed Satan to carry out his desire to destroy. However, just as with Job, God placed a boundary on Satan's actions. He could only take the lives*

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of the firstborns, and only those without the seal of protection. This eternal principle has not changed; the only difference now is that the seal of protection is Jesus, as symbolized here.]

24 "Obey these instructions as a lasting ordinance for you and your descendants. 25 When you enter the land that the LORD will give you as he promised, observe this ceremony. 26 And when your children ask you, 'What does this ceremony mean to you?' 27 then tell them, 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.' " Then the people bowed down and worshiped. 28 The Israelites did just what the LORD commanded Moses and Aaron.

29 At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on the throne, to the firstborn of the prisoner, who was in the dungeon, and the firstborn of all the livestock as well. 30 Pharaoh and all his officials and all the Egyptians got up during the night, and there was loud wailing in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead. *[Remember, this is the curse of the firstborn, which applies not just to children but to any firstborn, including adults. It could be either male or female. The Bible makes no distinction based on gender, only on being the firstborn.]*

The Exodus

31 During the night Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "Up! Leave my people, you and the Israelites! Go, worship the LORD as you have requested. 32 Take your flocks and herds, as you have said, and go. And also bless me."

33 The Egyptians urged the people to hurry and leave the country. "For otherwise," they said, "we will all die!" 34 So the people took their dough before the yeast was added, and carried it on their shoulders in kneading troughs wrapped in clothing. 35 The Israelites did as Moses instructed and asked the Egyptians for articles of silver and gold and for clothing. 36 The LORD had made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people, and they gave them what they asked for; so they plundered the Egyptians. *[This fulfilled the promise God made to Abraham centuries earlier that they would plunder their captives.]*

37 The Israelites journeyed from Rameses to Sukkoth. There were about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children. 38 Many other people went up with them, and also large droves of livestock, both flocks and herds. 39 With the dough the Israelites had brought from Egypt, they baked loaves of unleavened bread. The dough was without yeast because they had been driven out of Egypt and did not have time to prepare food for themselves.

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40 Now the length of time the Israelite people lived in Egypt was 430 years. 41 At the end of the 430 years, to the very day, all the LORD's divisions left Egypt. 42 Because the LORD kept vigil that night to bring them out of Egypt, on this night all the Israelites are to keep vigil to honor the LORD for the generations to come.

Passover Restrictions

43 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "These are the regulations for the Passover meal: "No foreigner may eat it. 44 Any slave you have bought may eat it after you have circumcised him, 45 but a temporary resident or a hired worker may not eat it.

46 "It must be eaten inside the house; take none of the meat outside the house. Do not break any of the bones. [Jesus fulfilled this prophecy when the Roman soldiers found him dead on the cross and did not break his legs, as would normally be done.]_47 The whole community of Israel must celebrate it.

48 "A foreigner residing among you who wants to celebrate the LORD's Passover must have all the males in his household circumcised; then he may take part like one born in the land. No uncircumcised male may eat it. 49 The same law applies both to the native-born and to the foreigner residing among you."

50 All the Israelites did just what the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron. 51 And on that very day the LORD brought the Israelites out of Egypt by their divisions.

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Chapter 13

When I was a little boy, it was Easter time, and my parents took me to a large Easter egg hunt. The organizers divided the children into age groups and led my group to an area to start our “hunt.” One of the leaders mentioned there was a special golden egg hidden, and whoever found it would receive a very special reward. We were each given a basket, and after they counted us off, we sprang into action as soon as the “Go!” signal was sounded.

I ran around, looking behind trees, stumps, and found all kinds of eggs (they used to hide real, dyed, boiled eggs back then). After a few minutes, everyone slowed down, focusing on finding that golden egg. I saw a few other kids gathered around a clump of trees and made my way over. I overheard an adult say, “Boys, I think you might be getting close...” He wasn’t talking to me, but to the others. Still, his words pushed me on. When I reached the next tree and looked around, there it was! The golden egg! I dropped my basket, scooped up the egg, and ran back to the starting point, holding it up high. I was so excited—I just knew the reward would be worth its weight in gold!

Everything else faded from my mind. Nothing else mattered. I had the best reward that could be found. And what was the reward? A snorkel mask. Well, in Houston, Texas, swimming season comes early, so I was happy with it.

A few years later, in California, I had a similar feeling when my family went panning for gold. The first time I saw little flakes of real gold sparkling through the powdered iron in the pan, I could hardly believe it. It felt like magic. There’s something special about the joy we feel when we search for something precious and finally find it.

That’s how I feel when I read this chapter. For years, I skimmed over it, thinking it was too ceremonial and religious. But when I began reading it with a focus on finding Jesus, that golden egg appeared. As I read on, more and more flakes of gold showed up. It’s amazing to see someone I know so well—my Savior—present long before He made His human appearance. It reaffirms for me that every word in the Bible is there for a reason, and every action has a purpose. In the Holy Bible, there are no accidents. This truly is the divine work of the Creator, and I can hold it in my hands any time I want. That realization gets me all fired up! I can’t wait for the next chapter!

Consecration of the Firstborn

1 And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, 2 “Sanctify [*“set apart” God is making a point to show that the firstborn has a significant position with Him – because of Jesus.*] to me all the first-born, whatsoever opens the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine.”

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3 And Moses said to the people, “Remember this day, in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage. By strength of hand Jehovah brought you out from this place. There shall no leavened bread be eaten. 4 This day you go forth in the month Abib. 5 And it shall be, when Jehovah shall bring you into the land of the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Amorite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite, which he swore to your fathers to give you. A land flowing with milk and honey, that you shall keep this service in this month. 6 Seven days [*representing perfection*] you shall eat unleavened bread [*foreshadowing the sinless body of Jesus – The Last Supper*], and in the seventh day shall be a feast to Jehovah. 7 Unleavened bread shall be eaten throughout the seven days; and there shall no leavened bread be seen with you, neither shall there be leaven seen within in all your borders. 8 And you shall tell your son in that day, saying, ‘It is because of that which Jehovah did for me when I came forth out of Egypt.’ [*Our testimony is similar: How Jesus rescued us from the world’s penalty.*] 9 And it shall be for a sign to you on your hand, and for a memorial between your eyes [*forehead*], that the law of Jehovah may be in your mouth. [*This symbolic gesture took on a literal practice with the Jews wearing the “phylacteries” – small boxes holding parchment with scriptures on them, held to their foreheads or hands with leather straps. The spiritual emphasis of what Moses was saying was to keep God in your hand (efforts and actions) and heart, thoughts, and meditations. Ironically, in the age to come, the great Imitator will require his mark of devotion on the hands and/or foreheads of his followers as well. (Revelation 13:160)*] With a strong hand has Jehovah brought you out of Egypt. 10 You shall therefore keep this ordinance in its season from year to year.

11 And it shall be, when Jehovah shall bring you into the land of the Canaanite, as he swore to you and to your fathers, and shall give it to you, 12 that you shall set apart for Jehovah all that opens the womb, and every firstborn which you have that comes of a beast, the males shall be Jehovah’s. 13 And every firstborn of an ass you shall redeem with a lamb. If you do not redeem it, then you shall break its neck. [*The donkey or ass in Scripture refers to natural man in sin. Sinful man needs redemption by the lamb – Jesus.*] All the first-born of man among your sons shall you redeem. [*This “redemption” will be later revealed in the law as silver, which symbolized blood. Isn’t it cool how all these small items seem to fit so perfectly when we understand what Jesus came to do?*]

14 And it shall be, when your son asks you in time to come, saying, ‘What is this?’ You shall say to him, ‘By strength of hand Jehovah brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage. 15 It came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that Jehovah killed all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both the first-born of man, and the first-born of beast. Therefore, I sacrifice to Jehovah all that opens the womb, being males; but all the first-born

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of my sons I redeem.' 16 And it shall be for a sign on your hand, and for symbol between your eyes. By strength of hand Jehovah brought us forth out of Egypt."

Crossing the Sea

17 When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter. For God said, "If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt." 18 So God led the people about, by the way of the wilderness by the Red Sea. The children of Israel went up armed out of the land of Egypt. *[The easiest and shortest path is not always the right path. God had other things yet planned, including the protection of his people.]*

19 And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him. He had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones away with you."

20 And they took their journey from Succoth, and camped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness. 21 Jehovah went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way, and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light, that they might go by day and by night. 22 The pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, departed not from before the people. *[Here again, we see another pattern of our faith. First, we had the lamb sacrificed—Jesus. Only after the lamb was sacrificed is the pillar of cloud first mentioned, to lead the people. This represents the Holy Spirit coming after the resurrection, guiding us in God's will. Then, the pillar of fire represents the presence of God. Another amazing picture of the Trinity and the promises to come.]*

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Chapter 14

After my wife and I got married, we combined all our belongings. As you can imagine, we had some duplicate items, one of which was two dining room tables. Both were made of cherry wood, and both had a china cabinet. Her set included a couple more pieces, so we agreed that hers would be the set we put in the dining room. I then moved my large, beautiful cherry table upstairs. I covered it and used it as a desk in my "computer room." The eight chairs that came with it were placed throughout the house in various spots. And so, it sat for nearly 15 years.

Finally, one summer, we decided to get rid of the set. But how? I found an app where you could advertise garage sale items locally. I put it up for sale for \$75.00. After all, we just wanted to get it out of the house quickly, without the hassle of moving it somewhere else. As you can imagine, we got an immediate response. The next day, a young couple came to load it up. It felt good knowing it was going to a fairly large family to enjoy.

When the next holiday season approached, we started planning our family gathering. I couldn't help but think of my table set. I even felt sorry for letting that gorgeous set go for just \$75.00. I was experiencing "seller's remorse."

Seller's remorse refers to the feeling of regret or second thoughts a person experiences after selling something, such as an item, property, or business. This emotion can arise in various situations, like selling a house, a car, or even a business, when the seller realizes they might have made a mistake or could have gotten a better deal.

Egypt was about to experience the same feeling. Even after all their struggles, they refocused on what they lost instead of the lessons they learned. This selfish desire led them into an even bigger lesson, as we will see.

There's also a counter-lesson here: buyer's remorse. Israel had just gained their freedom, something they had desired for centuries. But as soon as trouble appeared, they forgot their joy, looked inward, and started nostalgically glorifying the days of their slavery.

I'm not going to say how many times I've been in Egypt and Israel, but it's been way too many. This chapter offers a good lesson, no matter which side of the pillar you're on today.

Pharaoh in Pursuit

1 And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "Speak to the children of Israel, that they turn back and camp before Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, before Baal-zephon. Over against it shall you camp by the sea. 3 And Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, 'They are wandering confused in the land, the wilderness has shut them in.' 4 And I will harden

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Pharaoh's heart, and he shall follow after them. I will get honor upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host. The Egyptians shall know that I am Jehovah." And they did so.

5 And it was told to the king of Egypt that Israel had fled. The heart of Pharaoh and of his servants changed towards the people, and they said, "What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?" *[Once the curses died down, and the people looked around, they saw the devastation and the spoils they willingly gave to Israel. All of a sudden, they started regretting their choice to release them. When we are led by the material world, we can quickly start claiming "victim" status and forget the lessons we just experienced because of our choices.]* 6 Pharaoh made ready his chariots, and took his people with him. 7 He took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over all of them. 8 And Jehovah hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel. The children of Israel went out marching boldly. 9 And the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them camping by the sea, beside Pihahiroth, before Baal-zephon.

10 And when Pharaoh drew close, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians were marching after them. The Israelites were very afraid and the children of Israel cried out unto Jehovah. 11 And they said to Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dwelt with us like this to bring us forth out of Egypt? 12 Is not this the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, 'Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians?' For it were better for us to serve the Egyptians than we should die in the wilderness." *[It is ignorance that shows our immaturity to think that when we have a Godly victory against the world system, that Satan will not counter-attack. Until Jesus is fully established, the enemy will always try to strike back. He wants us to have a short memory of God's power in our lives by trying to steal, kill, and destroy the peace we have in God.]*

The Sea Divided

13 Moses said to the people, "Fear not, *[Trust in faith with peace and assurance]* stand still, *[there is nothing you can do by your own power, intellect, or merit.]* and see the salvation *[literal meaning: "life saving"]* of Jehovah, which he will work for you today. The Egyptians whom you have seen today, you shall see them again no more forever. 14 Jehovah will fight for you, and you shall hold on to your peace." *[This is also a shadow of the path to salvation through Jesus our Lord.]*

15 And Jehovah said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to me? Speak to the children of Israel, that they go forward. 16 And lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea,

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and divide it. The children of Israel shall go into the midst of the sea on dry ground. 17 Behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall go in after them. I will gain honor on Pharaoh, and on all his host, on his chariots, and on his horsemen. 18 And the Egyptians shall know that I am Jehovah, when I have gotten my honor on Pharaoh, on his chariots, and on his horsemen.”

19 And the angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them. The pillar of cloud moved from before them, and stood behind them. 20 It came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel. There was the cloud of light on one side and the darkness on the other side. So the one [group] came not near the other [group] all the night. *[This demonstrated how the work of God may be enlightening to some, but foolishness/darkness to others.]*

21 And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea and Jehovah caused the sea to drive back by a strong east wind all the night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. 22 And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground. The waters were a wall to them on their right hand, and on their left.

23 And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. 24 And it came to pass in the morning watch, that Jehovah looked forth on the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of cloud, and confused the host of the Egyptians. 25 He [God] took off their chariot wheels, and they drove with difficulty, so that the Egyptians said, “Let us flee from the face of Israel for Jehovah fights for them against the Egyptians.”

26 Jehovah said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen.” 27 And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its strength when the morning appeared. The Egyptians fled against it. Jehovah overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. 28 The waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, even all the host of Pharaoh that went in after them into the sea. There remained not so much as one of them.

29 But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea. The waters were a wall to them on their right hand, and on their left. 30 Thus Jehovah saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore. 31 And Israel saw the great work which Jehovah did upon the Egyptians, and the people feared Jehovah. They believed in Jehovah, and in his servant Moses.

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Chapter 15

Recently, my wife and I were playing cards with some friends. We always play guys vs. girls, and most of the time, the ladies wipe the floor with us. This night was no different. We typically play three hands of cards, and after the first two hands, the girls beat us. Usually, we'd call it quits since there'd be no hope for us guys, but we had some time left and figured, just for grins and giggles, we'd go for a third. Maybe we could win the last hand and claim a moral victory.

I was trying to play it up, so I grabbed my phone and queued up an old '80s tune—"U Can't Touch This" by MC Hammer. (I knew that would make their eyes pop!) As my partner drew his cards, I said, "Okay, Steve, we got this!" and hit play on my phone. Everyone stopped and stared at me like I'd just landed from Mars as I bee-bopped in my chair to the tune, grinning. Well, I thought it was cool. My wife thought it was definitely funny to look at.

Bottom line, the guys won that hand. As we laid down the winning card, I couldn't help but hit the tune again in victory. For some reason, the girls' eyes rolled, and my wife turned to them and said, "At least you have the option of going home. I have to live with this! Pray for me."

I've been asked several times, "What's your favorite song?" Can you answer that question? I always find it hard. There are so many impactful tunes. Some have a great beat; some have powerful lyrics. Some are secular, while others are devout or religious. I guess my favorite depends on the mood I'm in at the moment. Music tends to connect with our emotions. It can lead us down sad roads when we're feeling low. It can really hype us up when we're happy. It can even feed our temptations when we're feeling.. well, naughty.

This next chapter is really interesting—it's another *first mention* in the Bible: the first song recorded. Notice the timing: After God delivered His children from the world and completely destroyed the pursuing enemy. The Israelites were hopelessly defenseless. There was absolutely nothing they could do except rely on God for their deliverance. And God did it. They saw the devastation of the enemy, and it inspired this song.

Here's a little *Paul Harvey* twist: This is also the last song mentioned in the Bible, in Revelation 15!

Do you think God is trying to make a point here? Consider the words of Moses in this song, and imagine yourself in the future—because these words will be true then, too. The powerful nation of Egypt may not exist like it did anymore, but the spirit behind Egypt is exactly the same. It brings to mind Ephesians 6:12: *"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood,*

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but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.' (Ephesians 6:12, NIV)

The Song of Moses

1 Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song to Jehovah, and spoke, saying, "I will sing to Jehovah, for he has triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider has he thrown into the sea. 2 Jehovah is my strength and song. He has become my salvation. This is my God, and I will praise him; My father's God, and I will exalt him. 3 Jehovah is a man of war. Jehovah is his name. 4 Pharaoh's chariots and his host has He cast into the sea. Pharaohs chosen captains are sunk in the Red Sea. 5 The deeps cover them. They went down into the depths like a stone. 6 Your right hand, O Jehovah, is glorious in power, your right hand, O Jehovah, dashes the enemy to pieces.

7 In the greatness of Your excellency you overthrow them that rise up against you. You send forth your wrath; it consumes them as stubble. 8 And with the blast of your nostrils the waters were piled up. The floods stood upright as a heap. The deeps were congealed in the heart of the sea. 9 The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil. My desire shall be satisfied on them. I will draw my sword; my hand shall destroy them.' 10 You blew with your wind and the sea covered them. They sank as lead in the mighty waters. 11 Who is like you, O Jehovah, among the gods? Who is like you, glorious in holiness, Fearful in praises, doing wonders?

12 Thou stretched out your right hand; the earth swallowed them. 13 You in your loving kindness has led the people that you have redeemed. You have guided them in your strength to your holy habitation. 14 The peoples have heard, they tremble. Pangs have taken hold of the inhabitants of Philistia. 15 Then were the chiefs of Edom dismayed. The mighty men of Moab, trembling takes hold on them. All the inhabitants of Canaan melt away. 16 Terror and dread falls upon them. By the greatness of your arm they are as still as a stone. Until your people pass over, O Jehovah, until the people pass over that which you have purchased. 17 You will bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of your inheritance. The place, O Jehovah, which you have made to dwell in; the sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established.

18 Jehovah shall reign for ever and ever!"

19 When the horses of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and Jehovah brought back the waters of the sea on them. However, the children of Israel walked on dry land in the midst of the sea. 20 And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and

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with dances. 21 And Miriam answered them, "Sing all to Jehovah, for he has triumphed gloriously. The horses and his riders has he thrown into the sea."

The Waters of Marah and Elim

22 Moses led Israel onward from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur. They went three days in the wilderness, and found no water. 23 And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. Therefore, the name of it was called Marah. 24 And the people murmured against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?"

25 And he cried to Jehovah. Jehovah showed him a tree, and he cast it into the waters, and the waters were made sweet. There the Lord made for them a ruling and an ordinance, and there God put Israel to a test. 26 God said, "If you will diligently listen to the voice of Jehovah your God, and will do that which is right in his eyes, and will give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes; I will put none of the diseases upon you, which I have put upon the Egyptians. I am Jehovah that heals you."

27 And they came to Elim, where were twelve springs of water, and seventy palm-trees. Israel camped there by the waters.

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Chapter 16

The Library of Congress houses approximately 1,320,000 cookbooks and diet-related books. To put that into perspective, the average city library in a typical-sized city holds about 250,000 books. That's a lot of discussion about food!

Eating, much like birth and death, is something every human shares in common. It's essential for survival. In fact, most Americans will consume about 35 tons of food in their lifetime—that's a staggering 70,000 pounds! Just writing that is making me feel full!

But I believe God created us this way, and food serves as a daily reminder in our walk with Him—if we're paying attention. Nutrients, and especially bread, hold a special place in the Bible.

In the Bible, bread symbolizes the Word of God, which, as John's Gospel tells us, is Jesus Himself.

With that in mind, let's take a step back to the time of Exodus, about 1,500 years before Jesus. In this period, we encounter a divine provision called manna. It's no surprise that the first subtitle of this chapter is called "Manna and Quail." When we review this chapter with an understanding of the New Testament, we see deep connections that reveal much more than what meets the eye. When we understand the manna, there is a lot of meat for the soul in this chapter.

I want to highlight a few key elements that stood out to me as I read this. But I encourage you to take your time with it—perhaps God will reveal other insights to you as well!

This beautiful story demonstrates God's design, showing how the Old Testament was written with the New Testament already in mind.

Manna and Quail

1 The whole Israelite community set out from Elim and came to the Desert of Sin, *[A great Holy Spirit pun, for we too were in the wilderness of sin when the Word, the Bread of Life: Jesus, came to us. And still continues to meet with us and feed our souls.]* which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had come out of Egypt. 2 In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. 3 The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the LORD's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death."

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4 Then the LORD said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day [*God wants us in His word daily. With Jesus as our Word, this shows the constant connection – relationship with Him.*] and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. [*It is a challenge before us all to continue in Him, and He will continue in us.*] 5 On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days."

6 So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, "In the evening you will know that it was the LORD who brought you out of Egypt, 7 and in the morning you will see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we, that you should grumble against us?" 8 Moses also said, "You will know that it was the LORD when he gives you meat to eat in the evening and all the bread you want in the morning, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we? You are not grumbling against us, but against the LORD."

9 Then Moses told Aaron, "Say to the entire Israelite community, 'Come before the LORD, for he has heard your grumbling.' "

10 While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the LORD appearing in the cloud.

11 The LORD said to Moses, 12 "I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, 'At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.' "

13 That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. 14 When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor. [*Dew, or Water, represents the Holy Spirit. Upon the Holy Spirit the Word of God laid. Just like today.*] 15 When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, "It is the bread the LORD has given you to eat. 16 This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Everyone [*Every person was required to gather the Word for their personal consumption. It is not a task to get by proxy. Our relationship with Jesus is the same. One can't rely on one's spouse or parent to grow in Jesus. We are responsible for doing our part, to get our fill.*] is to gather as much as they need. Take an omer for each person you have in your tent.' " [*about 3 ½ liters – Think about a liter of Coke in the grocery store. 3 of these for each person, daily.*]

17 The Israelites did as they were told; some gathered much, some little. 18 And when they measured it by the omer, the one who gathered much did not have too much, and the

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one who gathered little did not have too little. Everyone had gathered just as much as they needed. *[The Word of God fills us to completion, as does Jesus. He fills us with exactly what we need – daily.]*

19 Then Moses said to them, "No one is to keep any of it until morning." 20 However, some of them paid no attention to Moses; they kept part of it until morning, but it was full of maggots and began to smell. So Moses was angry with them. *[When we use God's provision: His Word or his sacrifice, with selfishness, the results will spoil.]*

21 Each morning *[Not everyone is a morning person, but notice the pattern? First thing in their day, they met with the Word.]* everyone gathered as much as they needed, *[gathering would require a certain position since this was on the ground. Kneeling probably. So this describes the posture of our hearts when in God word, and our heart of worship toward our Savior.]* and when the sun grew hot, it melted away. 22 On the sixth day, they gathered twice as much—two omers for each person—and the leaders of the community came and reported this to Moses. 23 He said to them, "This is what the LORD commanded: 'Tomorrow is to be a day of sabbath rest, a holy sabbath to the LORD. So bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil. Save whatever is left and keep it until morning.' "

24 So they saved it until morning, as Moses commanded, and it did not stink or get maggots in it. 25 "Eat it today," *[The bread of the Lord MUST be consumed in order to have any benefit. Just like the Word of God. Jesus said, "Take this bread, and eat, for it is my body..]* Moses said, "because today is a sabbath to the LORD. You will not find any of it on the ground today. 26 Six days you are to gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will not be any." *[Mankind could not manipulate the manna. It was by God's grace that His Word is given and extended. Thus, we need to rely fully on His promise and directions and not our control.]*

27 Nevertheless, some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather it, but they found none. 28 Then the LORD said to Moses, "How long will you refuse to keep my commands and my instructions? 29 Bear in mind that the LORD has given you the Sabbath; that is why on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Everyone is to stay where they are on the seventh day; no one is to go out." 30 So the people rested on the seventh day.

31 The people of Israel called the bread manna. *[Literal meaning: "What is it??" Even though Moses explained this was the Bread of the Lord, they still chose to call it, "What is it??"]* It was white like coriander seed *[this hints at purity - Jesus was the spotless lamb.]* and tasted like wafers made with honey. 32 Moses said, "This is what the LORD has

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commanded: 'Take an omer of manna and keep it for the generations to come, so they can see the bread I gave you to eat in the wilderness when I brought you out of Egypt.' "

33 So Moses said to Aaron, "Take a jar and put an omer of manna in it. Then place it before the LORD to be kept for the generations to come." 34 As the LORD commanded Moses, Aaron put the manna with the tablets of the covenant law, so that it might be preserved. *[I challenge you to explore this shadow as we continue in Exodus.]* 35 The Israelites ate manna forty years, until they came to a land that was settled; they ate manna until they reached the border of Canaan. *[Notice the bread of heaven, the Word, was given only for one people – God's kids - to sustain them to their Promised destination.]* 36 (An omer is one-tenth of an ephah.)

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Chapter 17

There is a period the church observes before the Easter holiday called **Lent**, which started about 1,500 years ago. Different churches have different practices for Lent, but in simple terms, it's a time of 40 to 46 days leading up to Easter. It's a time for intentional reflection on your personal walk with God. It's a time to consciously set something aside and replace it with Jesus—whether it's time, food, or anything else you feel led to give up. The goal is the same: to grow closer to God in both your walk with Him and your relationship with Him. This process should be personal and private, just between you and God.

During these 40 days, you may experience periods of change. Some changes might be physical, but the hope is that all of them will be spiritual. It may be difficult, and you may stumble a bit at the beginning. That's normal as we work to let go of old habits and replace them with new ones. The ultimate goal is that, by the end of this time, you will feel closer to God and recognize how He fills the gap in our human nature. You'll come to realize that He is the true source of our completeness. While 40 days may seem long, it's amazing how much growth can happen in that time.

Israel was also experiencing a similar 40-day journey. This chapter shares two stories that may seem unrelated at first—water from a rock and war. But both actually carry the same lesson: God is teaching His people to rely completely on Him. One story shows this in a very practical way, providing life-giving water. The other shows how we need to rely on God while still doing our part. When we come together and rely on God, each of us doing our part, victory is assured.

This chapter illustrates the Israelites' process of change—moving away from the world, letting go of worldly ideas, and learning to rely on God. Don't be too hard on them when you read about their failures. If you're anything like me, you'll probably stumble too as you try to learn the same lessons. Consider taking your own 40-day journey. You can start anytime!

Water From the Rock

1 And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, by their journeys, according to the commandment of Jehovah, and camped in Rephidim. *[Sometimes, even when listening, God will take us into dry places. Not to hurt us, but to teach us something. Whatever the reason, God has a plan, and He is always there. Perhaps this was to test the posture of their hearts.]* There was no water for the people to drink. *[a real problem: No water for millions to drink.]* 2 So the people quarreled with

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Moses, and said, "Give us water that we may drink." Moses said to them, "Why quarrel you with me? Why do you test Jehovah?"

3 The people thirst there for water and the people grumbled against Moses, and said, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?" *[Already, they forgot who brought them out of bondage. When we get in the flesh, we can easily lose our spiritual discernment. When we face real problems with real stress, our natural (worldly) inclination is for the fingers of blame to come out pointing.]* 4 And Moses cried to Jehovah, saying, "What shall I do to this people? They are almost ready to stone me."

5 And Jehovah said to Moses, "Pass in front of the people, and take with you of the elders of Israel and your rod, *[symbolizing "judgment"]* with which you struck the river. Take it in your hand, and go. 6 Behold, I will stand before you there upon the rock in Horeb. You shall strike the rock, *[who is the Rock? "He was pierced for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities..."]* and there shall come water out of it, *[And when they pierced his side, blood and water flowed..."]* that the people may drink." Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7 And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the striving of the children of Israel, and because they tested Jehovah, saying, "Is Jehovah not among us, or not?" *[A beautiful symbol of the judgment that Jesus will bear for us, and the life-giving salvation he provides us, even while we grumble and fuss. It wasn't Israel's faithfulness that brought this event. It was solely by God's grace, despite their doubt. Yes, this is me. I am this Israel too many times, I am sad to say.]*

The Amalekites Defeated

8 Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. 9 And Moses said to Joshua, "Choose us out men and go out fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand."

10 Joshua did as Moses had said to him and fought with Amalek. Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. 11 And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, *[symbolic of prayer]* that Israel prevailed. When Moses let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. 12 But Moses' hands were heavy. They took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon. Aaron and Hur held up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side. *[This shows the power of prayer when "two or more agree/support" in prayer.]* Moses' hands were steady until the going down of the sun. 13 And Joshua overcame Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

14 Jehovah said to Moses, "Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven."

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

15 So Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-Nissi. *[The Lord Is My Banner]* 16 Moses said, “Jehovah has sworn: Jehovah will be at war with Amalek from generation to generation.” *[This is another “first mention”. The first war for Israel as a nation. The enemy came from behind and attacked unprovoked. What lesson do you think God is trying to teach Israel and us?]*

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Chapter 18

Anyone here a Star Wars buff? There's a saying by Princess Leia in *Star Wars: A New Hope* (the first movie released back in the '70s). As she stood before Darth Vader during her interrogation, she commented, "The more you tighten your grip, the more people will slip through your fingers."

I've never forgotten that saying. As I've grown older and experienced various levels of leadership, it's come to mind more and more. Leadership can be incredibly trying, with each level bringing its own unique challenges. I've learned that if I seek leadership for titles, roles/power, or money, I've already failed in the foundations of good leadership. That desire for leadership is really about control and self-ambition.

Maybe I want to take on a leadership role because I feel God has called me to something. And by His grace, something begins to develop. People respond, and structure begins to form. "Wow, how wonderful to do the work of God, and I'm the leader! Now all I have to do is keep it together." Right? Again, too many "I" statements. When we rely only on ourselves, we can expect to burn out very quickly.

So, we gather trusted people around us to help carry the load. "There, I'm passing leadership on to others." But then, I have them report every decision they make. I second-guess them afterward. I go behind their backs and meet with others they manage, undermining the leaders I put in place. I make deals on the side and tell others to come to me if they have any problems with my leaders. I give my leaders tasks to complete, but not the authority to carry them out. After all, God chose me, not them. So, I need to be the ultimate decision maker.

Maybe you've known leaders like this. Maybe you've even been guilty of some of it. I'll admit, it's part of "human" nature—fear of losing control, trust issues, ego or pride, fear of failure, and even insecurity. These are all root causes of poor leadership.

Sometimes, in early developing leaders, it's not any of these. It's simply ignorance, a lack of understanding. That brings us to Chapter 18. Moses is carrying the full burden of leading a new nation. Here, he receives some sound counsel from his father-in-law. Notice the qualifications listed in verses 20-23. They ironically mirror the qualifications for the first deacons in the book of Acts.

I suppose this journey of identity for Israel was also one for Moses. God is no respecter of persons. No level of leadership is immune to God's teaching. No corporate title will ever be the "finish line." Heaven forbid we ever think we've reached a place where we can no

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longer be taught! The true success of a leader is measured by the number of people they've influenced to influence others toward the cross.

So, yes, get skills—they're absolutely necessary, as we see in verse 21a. But always, and forever, keep your heart postured toward God. Then, those skills will be used in wonderful ways—both practically and spiritually.

For godly leadership is about proper influence, not titles, money, or personal power.

Jethro Visits Moses

1 Now Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses, and for Israel his people, how that Jehovah had brought Israel out of Egypt. 2 And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her away, 3 and her two sons; of whom the name of the one was Gershom, for he said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land." 4 The name of the other was Eliezer, for he said, "The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh."

5 Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife to Moses into the wilderness where he was camped, at the mount of God. 6 He said to Moses, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, have come to you, and your wife, and her two sons with her."

7 Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, and did obeisance, and kissed him. They asked each other of their welfare, and they came into the tent. 8 Moses told his father-in-law all that Jehovah had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the travail that had come on them along the way, and how Jehovah delivered them.

9 Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which Jehovah had done to Israel, in that he had delivered them out of the hand of the Egyptians. 10 Jethro said, "Blessed be Jehovah, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh. God has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. 11 Now I know that Jehovah is greater than all gods. Yes, in this thing where they dealt arrogantly against Israel." 12 Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt-offering and sacrifices to God. Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God.

13 And it came to pass the next day, that Moses sat as judge for the people. The people stood about Moses from the morning to the evening. 14 When Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did for the people, he said, "What is this that you do for the people? Why do you sit by yourself alone, and all the people stand about you from morning to evening?"

15 Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God. 16 When they have a matter, they come to me and I judge between a man and his neighbor, and I make them know the statutes of God, and his laws."

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17 Moses' father-in-law said to him, "The thing that you are doing is not good. 18 You will surely wear away, both you, and the people that are with you. For the work is too heavy for you. You are not able to perform it yourself alone. 19 Listen now to my voice, I will give you counsel, and God be with you. Be for the people their representative, and bring their causes to God. 20 You shall teach them [*Moses was to multiply himself by pouring into them.*] the statutes and the laws, and shall show them the way [*not just by words but by actions. Be consistent in word and deed.*] they must walk, and the work that they must do. [*Give clearer understanding of their roles, responsibilities, and authority.*] 21 Moreover you shall provide out of all the people able men, [*not "favored" but "able" with the ability to perform.*] such that fear God, [*One may have the ability, but do they have the heart postured toward God? That is a must.*] men of truth, [*When the heart is right, truth, or faithfulness is a fruit. When these are evident, then one can rest assured that the decisions they make will be made with the right heart.*] hating unjust gain. [*not ambitious for selfish gain, but those with a servant's heart.*] Place such men over them, to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. 22 Let them judge the people at all seasons. [*Not just temporarily until Moses rested, but consistent in allowing his leaders to lead.*] It shall be that great matters they shall bring to you, [*Stay connected and be available for serious issues.*] but every small matter they shall judge themselves. [*Don't micro-manage, but rely on them to do their part regardless, even if the method was different from what Moses would do.*] So shall it be easier for you, and they shall help bear the burden with you. 23 If you shall do this, and God commands you so, then you shall be able to endure, and all this people also shall go to their place in peace.

24 Moses hearkened to the voice of his father-in-law, and did all that he had said. 25 Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. 26 And they judged the people at all seasons. The hard causes they brought to Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves.

27 And Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went his way into his own land.

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

Chapter 19

I've been a Christian for a few years now and, believe me, I've attended more than a few Sunday services. Like most believers, I have a routine for preparing for church. Now, I won't bore you with the details of my routine, but I want you to think about yours. Come on, you know you have one! It's probably not too different from the daily routine you follow to get ready for work during the week.

But here's something I've noticed: On Sundays, whether I'm preparing for church or driving there, I've experienced some of the worst family battles. It seems the devil really doesn't like the idea of people going to church and takes every opportunity to throw a "dart" of discontent, disruption, or disagreement between me and my family.

There's been more than one time, or fifteen for that matter, that my family and I have pulled into the church parking lot—steam practically coming from the windows over some silly argument—only for us to try to put on our "church face" and bury the emotional baggage we just dug up before we reach the door and meet the Greeter waiting for us ... smiling at us! (Seriously, the nerve of them, right?)

Okay, maybe this is just me and my family, but honestly, this has happened more times than I'd like to admit. Actually, I *hope* you can't relate to this confession!

So, you're probably wondering, "What in the world is he talking about, and how does any of this relate to Chapter 19?" I'm glad you asked. As I was reading this chapter, one word kept popping up and really stood out to me: "Consecrate."

Now, that's a pretty religious-sounding word, so just to make sure we're all on the same page, it basically means to dedicate, set apart, purify, or make holy.

In this chapter, God is about to meet with Israel, and He tells Moses to consecrate the people. How? By having them wash their clothes. Now, this is symbolic—it's a shadow of how we're supposed to approach God. God wants us to prepare ourselves to meet with Him so that we can receive the fullness of His presence and what He wants to deposit into our lives.

But here's the thing: Consecrating yourself isn't about performing some religious ritual like washing clothes or pouring oil on your head. Those are just symbols. Consecration is about taking the time to be real with yourself. It's about doing an internal inventory of your spiritual condition and humbling yourself in the face of whatever challenges the Holy Spirit might reveal.

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Yes, the devil doesn't want you to do this. But here's what I've learned after years of "pre-church" blow-ups: When the devil tries to get me in the flesh, he ends up helping to bring my failings to the surface just before church. And when I finally settle down and reflect, I have plenty of fresh examples of my shortcomings that I can bring to God and lay at the foot of the cross. See how God works all things out for our good? Pretty cool, huh?

At Mount Sinai

1 In the third month after the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness [*the word translated here is not referring to desert, but grazing land, just unsettled by man.*] of Sinai. 2 And when they were departed from Rephidim, and were going to the wilderness of Sinai, [*Sinai literally means: "thorny." Remember, thorns represent sin. Mount Sinai: many say it looks much like a preacher's pulpit. God came to the mountain of thorns to give his laws. God meets us where we are and gives us direction toward redemption.*] they camped in the wilderness. There Israel camped before the mount.

3 And Moses went up to God, and Jehovah called to him out of the mountain, saying, "This is what you will say to the house of Jacob, [*notice that God refers to them as the House of Jacob, not Abraham, nor Isaac. But the weakest of the patriarchs, and even then, not using his spiritual name of "Israel". Thus, we can see a hint of the spiritual condition of most of these "new believers."*] and tell the children of Israel, [*and here we see that there were some further along in their faith walk.*] 4 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to myself. [*This explains why the Holy Spirit draws mankind to Jesus. God delivers us so we may have a relationship with Him.*] 5 Therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be my own possession [*literally: "a special treasure"*] from among all peoples. For all the earth is mine. 6 You shall be to me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.' [*It was the priest that were able to be in the presence of God. More confirmation that God wants to have a very personal, intimate relationship with His children.*] These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."

7 Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and set before them all these words which Jehovah commanded him. 8 All the people answered together, and said, "All that Jehovah has spoken we will do." Moses reported the words of the people to Jehovah.

9 Jehovah said to Moses, "I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you forever." Moses told the words of the people to Jehovah.

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

10 Jehovah said to Moses, "Go to the people, and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments. 11 Be ready by the third day, for the third day Jehovah will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai. *[God was going to reveal Himself on the third day. Just as Jesus did on his third day.]* 12 And you shall set limits to the people round about, saying, 'Take caution of yourselves, that you go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it. Whosoever touches the mountain shall be surely put to death. 13 No hand shall touch him, or he shall surely be stoned, nor shot through, whether it be beast or man, he shall not live.' Only after the trumpet sounds long, they shall come up to the mount."

14 And Moses went down from the mountain to the people, and consecrated the people; and they washed their garments. 15 And he said to the people, "Be ready by the third day. Come not near a woman."

16 And it came to pass on the third day, when it was morning, *[This is a shadow of another third morning event!]* that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of a trumpet exceeding loud. All the people that were in the camp trembled. 17 And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet God. They stood at the foot of the mountain. 18 Mount Sinai, the whole of it, smoked, because Jehovah descended upon it in fire. The smoke ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain trembled greatly. 19 When the voice of the trumpet sounded louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by a voice.

20 Jehovah came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain. Jehovah called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. 21 And Jehovah said to Moses, "Go down, charge the people, so they do not force their way through to see Jehovah, and many of them perish. 22 Let the priests also, that come near to Jehovah, consecrate themselves, or Jehovah will break out on them."

23 Moses said to Jehovah, "The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai, for you did warn us, saying, 'Set limits about the mountain, and sanctify it.'" 24 Jehovah said to him, "Go down. You shall come back up, you and Aaron with you. Let not the priests and the people break through to come up to Jehovah, or he will break out against them."

25 So Moses went down to the people, and told them.

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Chapter 20

Does anyone remember the line, “Mirror, mirror, on the wall; who’s the fairest of them all?” If you guessed *Snow White*, you’re right! The original phrase, “Magic mirror on the wall, who’s the fairest of them all?” was first found in the 1812 edition of *Grimm’s Fairy Tales*, in a story called *Snow White*. Later, in 1937, it became iconic in Disney’s animated movie of the same name. Can you imagine owning such a mirror?

Now, let’s look at one of the most famous chapters in the Bible: The Ten Commandments. I’ll share my notes on each commandment to clarify, but honestly, the best explanation comes from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chapter 5) and other teachings. As with any scripture, the best way to interpret the Bible is with the Bible itself.

As I reflect on this chapter, I’m drawn to the people’s reaction after being in God’s presence. They asked Moses to deliver God’s word to them, rather than having God speak directly to them. The ultimate “Mirror” was right in front of them, but they struggled with what it revealed—their true selves.

Have you ever sat in your living room on a bright day? When the sunlight pours in just right, you suddenly see all sorts of microscopic things floating in the air—dust particles you never noticed before. On regular days, when the light isn’t so bright, the air looks clean.

That’s what happened to Israel. Still wandering in the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land, God came close to them. As His presence grew nearer, the light grew brighter, and the “mirror” started revealing the true state of their hearts.

I’ve experienced this many times in my walk with Jesus. The closer I get to Him, the more I see how unclean I really am. But thanks to His amazing grace, I don’t have to beg Him to leave me. I can choose to face the mirror, see my flaws, and bow in humility. Through the forgiveness, grace, and mercy of the cross, I get a fresh start. A relationship with God means that, no matter how we feel, we can run to Him instead of away from Him. We always have the choice: to live in deceptive darkness or to grow in the Light.

The Ten Commandments

1 And God spoke all these words:

2 “I am the LORD (*literal: Jehovah*) your God (*literal: Elohim*), who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

3 “You shall have no other gods before me. [This implies NO gods, before or after Him. We don’t just add Jesus to our life, we yield our life to Him.]

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4 "You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. *[Implies more than just carved gods, but anything that we might worship or adore as much or more than our relationship with God. Money, power, fame, self, nationality, culture, and other people. All of these can be common idols.]* 5 You shall not bow down to them *[yield reverence to their influence in your heart]* or worship *[serve as subjects, to become subjective to]* them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, *[in the sense that God is not jealous OF you, but FOR you.]* punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, 6 but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

7 "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. *[This is not ONLY about Profanity, but also Frivolity – using God's name superficially for selfish gain, as well as Hypocrisy – claiming God's name but purposely living contrary to Him. "Giving God a bad name" without caring. These are all ways to take the Lord's name in vain.]*

8 "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. 11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. *[This is a highly misunderstood commandment that led to religious works. Jesus, in his gospels, reminds us that the Sabbath was made for man – the time of rest and reflection with God, not vice versa. Whether it be on Saturday, Sunday, or any other day of the week, we need to have time set aside to rest and reflect with God. After all, we are after a relationship, not religion. Any good relationship requires honest time investment.]*

12 "Honor *[to make heavy, as in something of great value and worth]* your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

13 "You shall not murder. *[intentionally, willfully, knowingly. See what Jesus says about this in Matthew 5 before you get too comfortable with this "easy" commandment.]*

14 "You shall not commit adultery. *[same suggestion!]*

15 "You shall not steal. *[Not just the obvious material things, but spiritual items as well, mercy, grace, goodness, compassion, joy, love. God calls us all to share this with others. When we withhold them, we are stealing the blessing God wants them to have through you, his vessel.]*

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16 "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. *[many think of this as just lying, but it also includes gossip, slander, and making a promise you have no intention to keep. It can even include inappropriate silence when we hold truth back for the wrong motive!]*

17 "You shall not covet *[literal: "to pant after"]* your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor." *[All of this means: "stuff." It speaks of the dissatisfaction that we have now, and the jealousy toward those who have something better.]*

18 When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance 19 and said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die."

20 Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning." *[The test revealed what kind of God they serve; what God's expectations were; and their own weakness in the sight of those first 2 tests.]*

21 The people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the thick darkness where God was. *[Here is the choice I spoke about earlier. Do you draw away from the Father when he is revealed, or draw closer? One action is by fear, one is by grace.]*

Idols and Altars

22 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites this: 'You have seen for yourselves that I have spoken to you from heaven: 23 Do not make any gods to be alongside me; do not make for yourselves gods of silver or gods of gold. *[After this tremendous event, let's see how long this instruction is obeyed.]*

24 " 'Make an altar of earth for me and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, your sheep and goats and your cattle. Wherever I cause my name to be honored, I will come to you and bless you. 25 If you make an altar of stones for me, do not build it with dressed stones, for you will defile it if you use a tool on it. 26 And do not go up to my altar on steps, or your private parts may be exposed.'

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

Chapter 21

As I approached the age of 18, I remember feeling excited to officially become an “adult.” However, there was one thing that still haunted me in the quiet of the night: the idea that I would now be responsible for not breaking any laws. It even scared me a little. The more I thought about it, the more I realized I didn’t know most of the laws in my state. They didn’t really teach them in high school. I wasn’t worried about the “big” laws, but about all the small ones I might miss. I had nightmares that I would be walking down the street, accidentally break some unknown law, and get carted off to jail. Let’s face it, you need to know the law in order to consciously follow it.

Chapter 20 is known as “God’s Law” or the “Moral Law.” The Ten Commandments are still relevant today for all people, regardless of race or creed. Simply put, they represent God’s standard. Jesus also helps us better understand these commandments and our relationship to them.

The next few chapters cover a different aspect of the law, known as the ordinances, or civil and ceremonial law. Together, they are referred to as the “Law of Moses,” and they differ in style and purpose from “God’s Law.” It’s important to understand a few things about these laws:

1. These were given to Israel as a nation. They were for Israel and had/have a time limit attached.
2. When reading them, don’t get too caught up in the nuances of the details. Remember, these laws were written thousands of years ago for a specific culture. They essentially created a standard of living for this new and very young nation. They describe how people should behave toward one another and how they should relate to God. They also cover the judicial system and define what “fair” means.
3. Never forget that this was a very high standard, one that God knew couldn’t be perfectly followed. It included sacrifices for atonement. The law was meant to reveal our need for Jesus and the need for his sacrifice for mankind.
4. As believers, our job is not to try to follow the law we will read about. Instead, we should look at this high standard and let it reveal how God’s grace has covered us. You might say, “But I’m not Jewish, so the Law of Moses doesn’t apply to me.” To that, I refer you back to the Ten Commandments. Even if they are impossible to keep without the forgiveness, grace, and mercy of Jesus.

Ordinances for the People

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1 "These are the ordinances which you shall set before them:

2 If you buy a Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve. In the seventh he shall go out free for nothing. 3 If he comes by himself, he shall go out by himself. If he is married, then his wife shall go out with him. 4 If his master gives him a wife and she bears him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master. He shall go out by himself.

5 But if the servant shall plainly say, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children. I will not go free.' 6 Then his master shall bring him to God, and shall bring him to the door, or to the door-post. His master shall pierce his ear through with an awl and he shall serve him forever. [*notice blood was to be deposited on the doorpost. We also saw this in the Pass-over. Another*]

7 And if a man sells his daughter to be a servant, she shall not go out as the men servants do. 8 If she please not her master, who has selected her for himself, then shall he let her be redeemed. Sell her not to a foreign people for he shall have no power, seeing he has dealt deceitfully with her. 9 And if he selects her for his son, he shall deal with her in the same manner as a daughter. 10 If he takes him another wife, her food, her clothing, and her duty of marriage shall he not deprive. 11 And if he does not these three things for her, then shall she go free for nothing, without money."

Personal Injuries

12 "Anyone who strikes a person with a fatal blow is to be put to death. 13 However, if it is not done intentionally, but God lets it happen, they are to flee to a place I will designate. 14 But if anyone schemes and kills someone deliberately, that person is to be taken from my altar and put to death.

15 "Anyone who attacks their father or mother is to be put to death.

16 "Anyone who kidnaps someone is to be put to death, whether the victim has been sold or is still in the kidnapper's possession.

17 "Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.

18 "If people quarrel and one person hits another with a stone or with their fist and the victim does not die but is confined to bed, 19 the one who struck the blow will not be held liable if the other can get up and walk around outside with a staff; however, the guilty party must pay the injured person for any loss of time and see that the victim is completely healed.

20 "Anyone who beats their male or female slave with a rod must be punished if the slave dies as a direct result, 21 but they are not to be punished if the slave recovers after a day or two, since the slave is their property.

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

22 "If people are fighting and hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely but there is no serious injury, the offender must be fined whatever the woman's husband demands and the court allows. 23 But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, 24 eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, 25 burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.

26 "An owner who hits a male or female slave in the eye and destroys it must let the slave go free to compensate for the eye. 27 And an owner who knocks out the tooth of a male or female slave must let the slave go free to compensate for the tooth.

28 "If a bull gores a man or woman to death, the bull is to be stoned to death, and its meat must not be eaten. But the owner of the bull will not be held responsible. 29 If, however, the bull has had the habit of goring and the owner has been warned but has not kept it penned up and it kills a man or woman, the bull is to be stoned and its owner also is to be put to death. 30 However, if payment is demanded, the owner may redeem his life by the payment of whatever is demanded. 31 This law also applies if the bull gores a son or daughter. 32 If the bull gores a male or female slave, the owner must pay thirty shekels of silver [*This was established as the price of a servant. This was also the price Judas paid to give up the ultimate servant of mankind – Jesus.*] to the master of the slave, and the bull is to be stoned to death.

33 "If anyone uncovers a pit or digs one and fails to cover it and an ox or a donkey falls into it, 34 the one who opened the pit must pay the owner for the loss and take the dead animal in exchange.

35 "If anyone's bull injures someone else's bull and it dies, the two parties are to sell the live one and divide both the money and the dead animal equally. 36 However, if it was known that the bull had the habit of goring, yet the owner did not keep it penned up, the owner must pay, animal for animal, and take the dead animal in exchange.

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Chapter 22

It seems strange that in today's world, so many people struggle with what I thought was common sense. Take red lights, for example. To me, it's pretty straightforward: you don't enter an intersection when the light is red. But lately, I've noticed that many people are flat-out disregarding this "common sense" law. As traffic congestion increases, this behavior seems to be happening more and more.

It feels like our moral and ethical values are being tested. It's a simple example, but one that most of us can relate to.

This seems to be the struggle:

Some people may prioritize their own convenience or desires over the collective well-being that traffic laws are meant to protect. In these cases, running a red light may seem like a way to fulfill an immediate need (like getting somewhere faster), without considering how their actions might affect others, such as increasing the risk of collisions.

On the other hand, those who follow traffic laws may view it as part of their ethical responsibility to contribute to the safety and well-being of everyone on the road. They may believe that by following the law, they help prevent accidents, keep everyone safer, and promote a more orderly society.

The real irony here is that one person may share in both of these examples depending on the situational circumstance!

This next chapter continues with more civil laws. It's interesting to explore the ancient laws, and there are certainly many lessons to learn from them if you're interested in digging deeper. Overall, this chapter emphasizes the need for personal responsibility and accountability. No matter how you drive, this chapter shows that it's important for society to have established boundaries and consequences to maintain civil order and fairness for all.

Although Jesus is not directly mentioned in Exodus 22, we believe He fulfills the key principles found in these laws, such as justice, mercy, restitution, and substitution. The laws in Exodus 22 help us understand God's desire for justice and mercy, which are fully shown through Jesus Christ. Through His life, teachings, and sacrifice, Jesus brings a complete understanding and fulfillment of the law.

Property Protection

1 *Whoever steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it must pay back five head of cattle for the ox and four sheep for the sheep.

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2 "If a thief is caught breaking in at night and is struck a fatal blow, the defender is not guilty of bloodshed; 3 but if it happens after sunrise, the defender is guilty of bloodshed. "Anyone who steals must certainly make restitution, but if they have nothing, they must be sold to pay for their theft. 4 If the stolen animal is found alive in their possession--whether ox or donkey or sheep--they must pay back double.

5 "If anyone grazes their livestock in a field or vineyard and lets them stray and they graze in someone else's field, the offender must make restitution from the best of their own field or vineyard.

6 "If a fire breaks out and spreads into thornbushes so that it burns shocks of grain or standing grain or the whole field, the one who started the fire must make restitution.

7 "If anyone gives a neighbor silver or goods for safekeeping and they are stolen from the neighbor's house, the thief, if caught, must pay back double. 8 But if the thief is not found, the owner of the house must appear before the judges, and they must determine whether the owner of the house has laid hands on the other person's property. 9 In all cases of illegal possession of an ox, a donkey, a sheep, a garment, or any other lost property about which somebody says, 'This is mine,' both parties are to bring their cases before the judges. The one whom the judges declare guilty must pay back double to the other.

10 "If anyone gives a donkey, an ox, a sheep or any other animal to their neighbor for safekeeping and it dies or is injured or is taken away while no one is looking, 11 the issue between them will be settled by the taking of an oath before the LORD that the neighbor did not lay hands on the other person's property. The owner is to accept this, and no restitution is required. 12 But if the animal was stolen from the neighbor, restitution must be made to the owner. 13 If it was torn to pieces by a wild animal, the neighbor shall bring in the remains as evidence and shall not be required to pay for the torn animal.

14 "If anyone borrows an animal from their neighbor and it is injured or dies while the owner is not present, they must make restitution. 15 But if the owner is with the animal, the borrower will not have to pay. If the animal was hired, the money paid for the hire covers the loss.

Social Responsibility

16 "If a man seduces a virgin who is not pledged to be married and sleeps with her, he must pay the bride-price, and she shall be his wife. 17 If her father absolutely refuses to give her to him, he must still pay the bride-price for virgins.

18 "Do not allow a sorceress to live. *[This emphasizes the importance of not allowing unduly influences to creep into your life. Remember that God is jealous for you.]*

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19 "Anyone who has sexual relations with an animal is to be put to death.

20 "Whoever sacrifices to any god other than the LORD must be destroyed.

21 "Do not mistreat or oppress a foreigner, for you were foreigners in Egypt.

22 "Do not take advantage of the widow or the fatherless. 23 If you do and they cry out to me, I will certainly hear their cry. 24 My anger will be aroused, and I will kill you with the sword; your wives will become widows and your children fatherless. *[I can't help but think of those who prey upon the elderly and ignorant in this modern, computer-friendly internet age. But this reminds us that God still sees them and their actions and greed will still have a consequence.]*

25 "If you lend money to one of my people among you who is needy, do not treat it like a business deal; charge no interest. 26 If you take your neighbor's cloak as a pledge, return it by sunset, 27 because that cloak is the only covering your neighbor has. What else can they sleep in? When they cry out to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate. *[There is a difference between business and charity. Those who want for the sake of pleasure and desire, and those who want for survival. Be mindful of that in your dealings. Don't excuse (because God does not) taking advantage of people with the disclaimer, "it's just business."]*

28 "Do not blaspheme God or curse the ruler of your people. *[We can very easily remember the first, but are challenged with the second. Yet God, in His wisdom and purpose, set rulers in place for a time and season.]*

29 "Do not hold back offerings from your granaries or your vats. "You must give me the firstborn of your sons. 30 Do the same with your cattle and your sheep. Let them stay with their mothers for seven days, but give them to me on the eighth day.

31 "You are to be my holy people. So do not eat the meat of an animal torn by wild beasts; throw it to the dogs.

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Chapter 23

A lot of people are of the mindset that science and scripture are opposed to one another. I don't agree. I will qualify that with science, properly applied, works in harmony with scripture. Science is the method of gaining knowledge about the physical and natural world through observation, experimentation and evidence. Those scientists who believe in the Holy Bible and its absolute inspiration have a "leg up" on those who do not. For the Holy Bible has revealed things centuries before scientists have validated them. But I do love hearing about scientists writing papers on something that was mentioned 4 thousand years earlier in the Bible.

We can see one great example of this in this next set of laws. Concerning the Sabbath Rest. I could not help but wonder what scientific research has shown about working six days and resting for one. Let's see what scientists say are some benefits of a sabbath rest:

Physical Recovery and Muscle Repair

Scientific Perspective: After physical exertion, the body requires time to repair itself. This is especially true for muscles and tissues that undergo wear and tear from daily physical activity. Rest allows muscles to rebuild and become stronger. This process, called muscle hypertrophy, is critical for maintaining physical strength, endurance, and health.

Mental Health and Stress Relief

Scientific Perspective: Chronic stress is a well-known contributor to mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and burnout. Continuous work without sufficient rest can lead to mental fatigue, decreased cognitive function, and poor decision-making abilities. Rest allows the brain to recover, reduce cortisol levels (the stress hormone), and rejuvenate cognitive function. The practice of taking regular breaks is essential for maintaining a healthy work-life balance and avoiding burnout.

Improved Productivity and Creativity

Scientific Perspective: Rest isn't just about recovery; it also plays a role in improving productivity and creativity. Studies have shown that taking breaks during work can increase focus, reduce errors, and enhance problem-solving skills. Without adequate rest, the brain becomes fatigued, and productivity declines. The concept of "resting" or "stepping away" from a problem often leads to creative breakthroughs because the subconscious mind continues processing even when you're not actively focused on the task.

Spiritual and Emotional Fulfillment

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Scientific Perspective: Emotional well-being is closely tied to purpose and meaning in life. Engaging in activities that foster a sense of spirituality, gratitude, or emotional connection can enhance happiness and life satisfaction. In modern psychology, practices like mindfulness, meditation, and reflection have been shown to improve emotional regulation and reduce stress.

Prevention of Burnout

Scientific Perspective: Burnout is a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by prolonged stress, overwork, or lack of balance. It can result in physical illness, depression, and a significant decline in productivity. Regular rest is one of the most effective ways to prevent burnout. The idea of a structured day off — such as the Sabbath — helps to create balance in life, ensuring that individuals do not push themselves beyond their limits without taking time to recharge.

Social and Family Bonding

Scientific Perspective: Social connections and strong family bonds are crucial for emotional health. Spending quality time with loved ones, engaging in meaningful conversations, and participating in shared activities contribute to overall life satisfaction and happiness. Regular rest allows time to nurture relationships, which can help buffer the effects of stress and provide emotional support.

Did you know all of this? The list goes on. When I read this, I just get a warm feeling inside about reading the Bible, and it reminds me again how I can trust the Word, and I can just do what God says to do. He knows all the benefits. Sometimes, it's just okay to say, "Okay Father. You said it, and that is good enough for me." Let's all try to remember that the next time we are tempted to hold a grudge!

Laws of Justice and Mercy

1 "Do not spread [*meaning: inventor or receiver*] false reports. Do not help a guilty person by being a malicious witness.

2 "Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong. [*1Cor15:33: "Evil company corrupts good habits."* Be careful of the band-wagon you jump on!] When you give testimony in a lawsuit, do not pervert justice by siding with the crowd, 3 and do not show favoritism to a poor person in a lawsuit. [*Allow facts/truth to determine a case, not the high or low standing or perceived victim status of those involved.*]

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4 "If you come across your enemy's ox or donkey wandering off, be sure to return it. *[Jesus reminds us to "love our enemy"]* 5 If you see the donkey of someone who hates you fallen down under its load, do not leave it there; be sure you help them with it.

6 "Do not deny justice to your poor people in their lawsuits. 7 Have nothing to do with a false charge and do not put an innocent or honest person to death, for I will not acquit the guilty.

8 "Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds those who see and twists the words of the innocent.

9 "Do not oppress a foreigner; you yourselves know how it feels to be foreigners, because you were foreigners in Egypt.

[How you feel toward someone should not determine your right or wrong behavior toward them. Justice is higher than your feelings, and God honors faith/actions wrapped and love/agape.]

Sabbath Laws

10 "For six years you are to sow your fields and harvest the crops, 11 but during the seventh year let the land lie unplowed and unused. Then the poor among your people may get food from it, and the wild animals may eat what is left. Do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove. *[There is both a practical use for this to help the poor, and a scientific value that has been proven. Leaving a field dormant also helps to regenerate the soil and helps to prevent soil erosion. Isn't it nice to see science catch up with the Bible? Lol]*

12 "Six days do your work, but on the seventh day do not work, so that your ox and your donkey may rest, and so that the slave born in your household and the foreigner living among you may be refreshed.

13 "Be careful to do everything I have said to you. Do not invoke the names of other gods; do not let them be heard on your lips.

[The sabbath was made for man (and beast). There are both physical and spiritual regeneration benefits to be had.]

The Three Annual Festivals

14 "Three times a year you are to celebrate a festival to me.

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15 "Celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread; for seven days eat bread made without yeast, as I commanded you. Do this at the appointed time in the month of Aviv, for in that month you came out of Egypt. "No one is to appear before me empty-handed.

16 "Celebrate the Festival of Harvest with the firstfruits of the crops you sow in your field. "Celebrate the Festival of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in your crops from the field.

17 "Three times a year all the men are to appear before the Sovereign LORD.

18 "Do not offer the blood of a sacrifice to me along with anything containing yeast. "The fat of my festival offerings must not be kept until morning. 19 "Bring the best of the firstfruits of your soil to the house of the LORD your God. "Do not cook a young goat in its mother's milk.

God's Angel to Prepare the Way

20 "See, I am sending an angel ahead of you [*Jesus, before his birth, or what is known as pre-incarnate Jesus*] to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared. [*Jesus said in John 14:3: "and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself, that where I am, there you may be also."*] 21 Pay attention to him and listen to what he says. Do not rebel against him; he will not forgive your rebellion, since my Name is in him. 22 If you listen carefully to what he says and do all that I say, I will be an enemy to your enemies and will oppose those who oppose you. 23 My angel will go ahead of you and bring you into the land of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites and Jebusites, and I will wipe them out. 24 Do not bow down before their gods or worship them or follow their practices. You must demolish them and break their sacred stones to pieces. 25 Worship the LORD your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you, 26 and none will miscarry or be barren in your land. I will give you a full life span.

27 "I will send my terror ahead of you and throw into confusion every nation you encounter. I will make all your enemies turn their backs and run. 28 I will send the hornet ahead of you to drive the Hivites, Canaanites and Hittites out of your way. 29 But I will not drive them out in a single year, because the land would become desolate and the wild animals too numerous for you. 30 Little by little I will drive them out before you, until you have increased enough to take possession of the land.

31 "I will establish your borders from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea, and from the desert to the Euphrates River. I will give into your hands the people who live in the land, and you will drive them out before you. 32 Do not make a covenant with them or with their

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gods. 33 Do not let them live in your land or they will cause you to sin against me, because the worship of their gods will certainly be a snare to you."

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Chapter 24

Sometimes, the quiet subtleties of life bring the most awe and wonder — at least they do for me. I love cruising, and my favorite activity is snorkeling. I enjoy seeing the little fish and coral. I haven't tried diving yet, but I think it would be amazing to go deep and swim among the fish and wildlife.

Because of this, I really enjoy watching programs about undersea life. The more I watch untouched coral reefs, the more I see the hand of God in the cycle of life. From the irony of tiny plankton feeding the largest fish (like the whale shark) and mammals (like the blue whale) to the role of sharks in controlling the coral fish population, which in turn protects the coral — each part of this system plays a vital role. Every creature is an instrument in the orchestra of life.

What fascinates me is that this all happens, even if mankind never sees it. It happens every day without human involvement. God simply created it that way. Every life-form is in the exact right place, at the exact right time, for maximum benefit to all.

The more one reads the Bible, especially the Old Testament, the more one can see these subtle, orchestrated details. There's one in this chapter that I'd like to highlight.

This chapter comes right before the Tabernacle is introduced. It might not seem significant at first, but consider this: for the next 16 chapters, the Tabernacle will be discussed in detail — the offerings, the structure, the sacrifices, the garments of the priests, the furniture, and so on. In fact, aside from Jesus, the Tabernacle is one of the most talked-about topics in the Bible. Clearly, it holds powerful significance, and we'll explore that more as we go through these chapters. One hint: the Old Testament points to Jesus.

What stood out to me in this chapter is a subtle but important point: before mankind was given access to God through the Tabernacle, a covenant was established, and blood was shed to connect God and man. Only after this shedding of blood was the Tabernacle mentioned — and it continued to be a central focus throughout the rest of Exodus. Likewise, it was only after the shedding of blood by Jesus, that we were connected to God. It was only after the cross that the temple veil was torn, and we, too, have access to God in a very intimate and personal way.

I don't think this is a coincidence; I see it as the orchestrated harmony of God.

The Covenant Confirmed

1 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. *[There appears to be a special group that had*

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special access with Moses. Keep a watch on Nadab and Abihu. For in them we will learn that special “positions” do not lead to “special grace” with God. Your position will not grant you salvation, your relationship with God will.] You are to worship at a distance, 2 but Moses alone is to approach the LORD; the others must not come near. And the people may not come up with him."

3 When Moses went and told the people all the LORD's words and laws, they responded with one voice, "Everything the LORD has said we will do." 4 Moses then wrote down everything the LORD had said.

He got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel. 5 Then he sent young Israelite men, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as fellowship offerings to the LORD. *[a covenant, or agreement/bond was only made in the context of sacrifice. Sacrifice admits our sin and failing before God. It addresses that need through the death of a substitute – just like Jesus made for us.]* 6 Moses took half of the blood and put it in bowls, and the other half he splashed against the altar. *[The blood originates from the altar of God, the seat of God, His Son. Later, it will flow to the people in verse 8.]* 7 Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey." *[The covenant was based on God's words and His terms. It was to be clearly read and understood. It was not forced, but there must be a response by us – agree or disagree, not haggle. Just like our choice to agree or deny the covenant Jesus made with mankind on the cross. The covenant of grace is there – how are you responding to it?]*

8 Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, "This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words." *[the blood was on the altar and on man, showing that both God and mankind were mutually bound by this covenant. Jesus also says in Matthew 26:28, “this is the blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”]*

9 Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up 10 and saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of lapis lazuli, as bright blue as the sky. 11 But God did not raise his hand against these leaders of the Israelites; they saw God, and they ate and drank. *[They saw enough of God, but not too closely. As Moses was later beckoned to come closer. But it was close enough for them to see even the footstool of God. Enough of His presence to be in wonder.]*

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12 The LORD said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain and stay here, and I will give you the tablets of stone with the law and commandments I have written for their instruction."

13 Then Moses set out with Joshua his aide, and Moses went up on the mountain of God. 14 He said to the elders, "Wait here for us until we come back to you. Aaron and Hur are with you, and anyone involved in a dispute can go to them."

15 When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, 16 and the glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from within the cloud. 17 To the Israelites the glory of the LORD looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain. 18 Then Moses entered the cloud as he went on up the mountain. And he stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights. *[The number 40 in the Bible represents preparation and/or "change". There would soon be something very significant about to happen. What do you think it will be?]*

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Chapter 25

We are about to enter a section that could feel either dry or deeply meaningful. This chapter begins with a detailed description of the Ark and other pieces of furniture in the Tabernacle. If we approach it purely as historical, it might seem tedious. However, remember that everything God does and says in the Bible serves a purpose. When you search for Jesus in the Old Testament, you'll be amazed by the many shadows and glimpses of Him you'll find.

This is the treasure hunt—let's search for Jesus! Dive in and prepare to be amazed. There are so many elements of our Savior in these items that one could literally spend years exploring them. I won't do that to you, but I will highlight a few key items and provide a brief summary for each. I do not normally add pictures, but I thought I would add a few clips so you can have an idea of the descriptions that are being spoken about by God.

I hope this sparks enough interest for you to dig deeper on your own. These next chapters are full of Jesus' D.N.A.!

Offerings for the Tabernacle

1 And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, 2 “Speak to the children of Israel, that they take for me an offering: of every man whose heart is him willing you shall take my offering. 3 This is the offering which you shall take of them: gold, and silver, and brass, 4 and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, 5 and rams' skins dyed red, and sealskins, and acacia wood, 6 oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil, and for the sweet incense, 7 onyx stones, and stones to be set, for the ephod, and for the breastplate.

8 Let them make me a sanctuary, [*a “set apart” place*] that I may dwell [*rest, inhabit, remain, abide*] among [*within, in, between, through*] them. 9 According to all that I show you, the pattern [*likeness, form, figure*] of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the furniture there in, even so shall you make it.

The Ark



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10 They shall make an ark [*an ark is a box, not a boat.*] of acacia wood: two cubits and a half shall be the length, and a cubit and a half wide, and a cubit and a half the height. [*The natural human state of Jesus*] 11 You shall overlay it with pure gold, inside and outside shall you overlay it, and you shall make on it a crown of gold around it. [*The pure divine nature of Jesus.*] 12 You shall cast four rings of gold for it, and put them in the four feet, and two rings shall be on the one side of it, two rings on the other side of it. 13 You shall make staves of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold. 14 You shall put the staves into the rings on the sides of the ark, where with to carry the ark. 15 The staves shall remain in the rings of the ark; they shall not be removed from it. 16 You shall put in the ark the covenant law which I shall give you.

17 You shall make a mercy-seat of pure gold. Two cubits and a half the length, and a cubit and a half the width of this cover. 18 You shall make two cherubim of hammered [*literal: beaten*] gold shall you make them, at the two ends of the mercy-seat. 19 Make one cherub at the one end, and one cherub at the other end. Of one piece with the mercy-seat shall you make the cherubim on the two ends. 20 The cherubim shall spread out their wings on high, covering the mercy-seat with their wings, with their faces one to another, toward the mercy-seat shall the faces of the cherubim be. 21 You shall put the mercy-seat above on the ark. In the ark you shall put the covenant law that I shall give you. 22 There I will meet with you, and I will commune with you from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the covenant, of all things which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel.

[A summary of what the Ark represents: It is the place where God's mercy and justice meet, just as Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of God's mercy through His atoning sacrifice. The Ark symbolizes the presence of God and the means of atonement for sin, just as Jesus is the ultimate meeting place with God and the final sacrifice for sin. The blood sprinkled on the Mercy Seat points forward to the blood of Jesus, which was shed for the forgiveness of sins once and for all.]

The Table of the Showbread



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23 You shall make a table of acacia wood; two cubits in length and a cubit the width and a cubit and a half the height. 24 You shall overlay it with pure gold, and make a crown of gold around it. 25 You shall make to it a border of a handbreadth around it and you shall make a golden crown to the border around it. 26 You shall make for it four rings of gold, and put the rings in the four corners that are on the four feet. 27 Close by the border shall the rings be, for places for the staves to bear the table. 28 You shall make the staves of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold, that the table may be carried with them. 29 You shall make the dishes and the spoons and the pitchers and the bowls, to pour out. Of pure gold shall you make them. 30 You shall set on the table showbread [*Also known as the bread of the Presence*] before me at all times.

[A summary of what the Table of Showbread represents: Jesus is the Bread of Life: Just as the showbread was the physical sustenance for the Israelites, Jesus is the spiritual sustenance for believers, offering eternal life. Jesus brings fellowship with God: The showbread was placed in God's presence, symbolizing fellowship, and through Jesus' sacrifice, believers can have direct communion with God. Jesus is the fulfillment of God's provision: The twelve loaves symbolized God's care for the twelve tribes, and Jesus, as the true bread, is God's provision for all people. Jesus offers eternal sustenance: Unlike the showbread, which was replaced every Sabbath, Jesus is the eternal bread that gives eternal life.]

The Golden Lampstand



31 You shall make a candlestick of pure gold. Hammered work shall the candlestick be made, even its base, and its shaft. Its cups, its knops, and its flowers, shall be of one piece. 32 There shall be six branches going out of the sides, three branches of the candlestick out of the one side and three branches of the candlestick out of the other side. [*Notice that there is one main vine, and all the other branches stem from it. Remember how Jesus said, I am the vine and you are the branches? (John 15:5) That is symbolized here.*] 33 Three cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms are to be on one branch, three on the next branch, and the same for all six branches extending from the lampstand. 34 And on the lampstand, there are to be four cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms. 35 One bud shall be under the first pair of branches extending from the lampstand, a second

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bud under the second pair, and a third bud under the third pair--six branches in all. 36 The buds and branches shall all be of one piece with the lampstand, hammered out of pure gold.

37 Then make its seven lamps and set them up on it so that they light the space in front of it. 38 Its wick trimmers and trays are to be of pure gold. 39 A talent of pure gold is to be used for the lampstand and all these accessories. 40 See that you make them according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."

[A summary of what the Lampstand represents: Jesus is the Light of the World: Just as the Lampstand provided light in the Tabernacle, Jesus brings spiritual light to those in darkness, offering the truth of God and eternal life. The Fullness of God's Light: The seven lamps represent the completeness and perfection of the light that Jesus brings, revealing the fullness of God's truth. The Source of Light: Jesus is the ultimate source of spiritual light, just as the Lampstand was fueled by a single source of light. The Holy Spirit as the Oil: The oil that fueled the Lampstand symbolizes the Holy Spirit, who empowers believers to reflect Christ's light in the world. Eternal Light: The continuous light of the Lampstand represents Jesus as the eternal light, offering God's presence and eternal life to all who believe.]

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Chapter 26

There is an intriguing place in Ayrshire, Scotland, where cars, bikes, and balls seem to roll uphill on their own. For years, this phenomenon amazed people, and many believed the area had magical or mystical powers. That was until surveyors came and measured the location against sea level. What they discovered shocked everyone: the top of the hill was actually lower than the bottom! So, when a ball was rolled, it appeared to go “uphill,” but in reality, it was simply following the slope.

Many still struggled to understand that the entire hillside was an optical illusion. Our perception of the “uphill” motion was distorted because we were part of the landscape and could only view it from our limited perspective. It’s truly fascinating when you think about it. I’ve also heard of similar spots in California.

This chapter really made me think about directional perspective. It might sound complicated, but it’s simply about how we see or perceive things based on the direction we’re looking from. We tend to view the world from our own perspective. For example, in the USA, Mexico is always to the south, while in Brazil, it’s always to the north.

There’s so much to unpack in this chapter. When we view things through the right “equipment” —Jesus—we gain a whole new spiritual perspective. I’ve pointed out a few things that stood out to me, but I know there’s so much more to discover.

Curtain of Linen [The “Heart” of the Tabernacle]

1 “Make the tabernacle with ten curtains of finely twisted linen and blue, purple and scarlet yarn, with cherubim woven into them by a skilled worker. 2 All the curtains are to be the same size—twenty-eight cubits long and four cubits wide. 3 Join five of the curtains together, and do the same with the other five. 4 Make loops of blue material along the edge of the end curtain in one set, and do the same with the end curtain in the other set. 5 Make fifty loops on one curtain and fifty loops on the end curtain of the other set, with the loops opposite each other. 6 Then make fifty gold clasps and use them to fasten the curtains together so that the tabernacle is a unit.

[Notice how God describes the design from the inside out? From His perspective. He started with the Holy of Holies and moved outward. This part seems to describe heaven itself, and sounds very much like the description John gives us in the book of Revelation.]

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Curtains of Goat Hair [*The Top Covering*]

7 Make curtains of goat hair for the tent over the tabernacle--eleven altogether. 8 All eleven curtains are to be the same size--thirty cubits long and four cubits wide. 9 Join five of the curtains together into one set and the other six into another set. Fold the sixth curtain double at the front of the tent. 10 Make fifty loops along the edge of the end curtain in one set and also along the edge of the end curtain in the other set. 11 Then make fifty bronze clasps and put them in the loops to fasten the tent together as a unit. 12 As for the additional length of the tent curtains, the half curtain that is left over is to hang down at the rear of the tabernacle. 13 The tent curtains will be a cubit longer on both sides; what is left will hang over the sides of the tabernacle so as to cover it. 14 Make for the tent a covering of ram skins dyed red, and over that a covering of the other durable leather.

[We can not overlook the Most Holy, and the furniture we know already point to Jesus. Look here, and we see that the Tabernacle was to be covered by skin! Who do you think that is in reference to?]

Boards and Sockets [*The Frame – The “bones”*]

15 Make upright frames of acacia wood for the tabernacle. 16 Each frame is to be ten cubits long and a cubit and a half wide, 17 with two projections set parallel to each other. Make all the frames of the tabernacle in this way. 18 Make twenty frames for the south side of the tabernacle 19 and make forty silver bases to go under them--two bases for each frame, one under each projection. 20 For the other side, the north side of the tabernacle, make twenty frames 21 and forty silver bases--two under each frame. 22 Make six frames for the far end, that is, the west end of the tabernacle, 23 and make two frames for the corners at the far end. 24 At these two corners they must be double from the bottom all the way to the top and fitted into a single ring; both shall be like that. 25 So there will be eight frames and sixteen silver bases--two under each frame.

26 Also make crossbars of acacia wood: five for the frames on one side of the tabernacle, 27 five for those on the other side, and five for the frames on the west, at the far end of the tabernacle. 28 The center crossbar is to extend from end to end at the middle of the frames. 29 Overlay the frames with gold and make gold rings to hold the crossbars. Also overlay the crossbars with gold.

30 Set up the tabernacle according to the plan shown you on the mountain

[Silver is the metal associated with redemption and payment for sin. Jesus was also betrayed for silver. The Tabernacle's foundations was silver, pointing to the foundational purpose of Jesus.]

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

The Veil and Screen. [*The Front Door*]

31 Make a curtain of blue, purple and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen, with cherubim woven into it by a skilled worker. 32 Hang it with gold hooks on four posts of acacia wood overlaid with gold and standing on four silver bases. 33 Hang the curtain from the clasps and place the ark of the covenant law behind the curtain. The curtain will separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. 34 Put the atonement cover on the ark of the covenant law in the Most Holy Place. 35 Place the table outside the curtain on the north side of the tabernacle and put the lampstand opposite it on the south side.

36 For the entrance to the tent make a curtain of blue, purple and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen--the work of an embroiderer. 37 Make gold hooks for this curtain and five posts of acacia wood overlaid with gold. And cast five bronze bases for them."

[There was only one way to enter into relationship with God. – That same is true today. Jesus said clearly to the world, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one can come to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)]

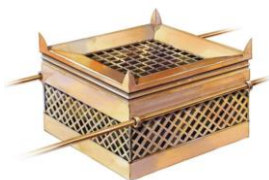
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Chapter 27

This chapter is going to be a little different. I want to challenge you to read it, and then I will comment afterwards at the bottom. It is a really cool and very deep chapter.

The Altar of Burnt Offering

1 "Build an altar of acacia wood, three cubits high; it is to be square, five cubits long and five cubits wide. 2 Make a horn at each of the four corners, so that the horns and the altar are of one piece, *[Horns curve outward and touch every direction of the compass, symbolizing that it applies to all of mankind. The horns on the altar will be revealed to mean, strength, but also refuge/rescue. In Jesus, we have both.]* and overlay the altar with bronze. *["bronze" is also translated "brass", both of which symbolize judgment.]* 3 Make all its utensils of bronze—its pots to remove the ashes, and its shovels, sprinkling bowls, meat forks and firepans. 4 Make a grating for it, a bronze network, and make a bronze ring at each of the four corners of the network. 5 Put it under the ledge of the altar so that it is halfway up the altar. 6 Make poles of acacia wood for the altar and overlay them with bronze. 7 The poles are to be inserted into the rings so they will be on two sides of the altar when it is carried. 8 Make the altar hollow, out of boards. It is to be made just as you were shown on the mountain. *[This altar, which will be used for thousands of years, serves as a shadow of the exact sacrifice Jesus made for all of mankind. Notice that on the journey from the entrance of the court to the Holy Place, one must come to the altar first. As we continue to learn about this altar, picture the Cross in your mind. When the lamb is mentioned, think of Jesus, the ultimate and final Lamb of God.]*



The Courtyard

9 Make a courtyard for the tabernacle. The south side shall be a hundred cubits long and is to have curtains of finely twisted linen, 10 with twenty posts and twenty bronze bases and with silver hooks and bands on the posts. 11 The north side shall also be a hundred cubits long and is to have curtains, with twenty posts and twenty bronze bases and with silver hooks and bands on the posts.

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

12 The west end of the courtyard shall be fifty cubits wide and have curtains, with ten posts and ten bases. 13 On the east end, toward the sunrise, the courtyard shall also be fifty cubits wide. 14 Curtains fifteen cubits long are to be on one side of the entrance, with three posts and three bases, 15 and curtains fifteen cubits long are to be on the other side, with three posts and three bases.

16 For the entrance to the courtyard, provide a curtain twenty cubits long, of blue, purple and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen--the work of an embroiderer--with four posts and four bases. 17 All the posts around the courtyard are to have silver [*remember: redemption*] bands and hooks, and bronze bases. [*bronze/brass: judgement. Judgement from birth, but hope of redemption*] 18 The courtyard shall be a hundred cubits long and fifty cubits wide, with curtains of finely twisted linen five cubits high, and with bronze bases. 19 All the other articles used in the service of the tabernacle, whatever their function, including all the tent pegs for it and those for the courtyard, are to be of bronze.

[The courtyard was open to everyone, showing that all his children are welcome to come into relationship with the Father. The first stop, the altar (cross). The next stop, the basin, we will discuss in Chapter 30. But, (spoiler alert) this layout really describes the Walk of Faith with Jesus.]



Oil for the Lampstand

20 Command the Israelites to bring you clear oil of pressed olives for the light so that the lamps may be kept burning. 21 In the tent of meeting, outside the curtain that shields the ark of the covenant law, Aaron and his sons are to keep the lamps burning before the LORD from evening till morning. This is to be a lasting ordinance among the Israelites for the generations to come.”

[Oil signifies the Holy Spirit throughout the Bible. Notice how God commands Aaron to keep the lampstand burning from evening to morning? Evening marks the start of the Jewish day and also begins the darkest time of day. Darkness in the Bible is symbolic of sin. We live in a fallen world, born into sin from the very beginning.]

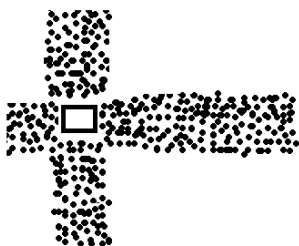
BOOK OF EXODUS

God is speaking quietly and gently to remind us that, even in the darkness of our sin, His Light remains. There is hope in our lives of sin. The lampstand burns throughout the night, and when the sun rises, the lampstand is extinguished, but His light remains, taking on a new form. This shows that His light is everlasting. Every morning is a reminder of the resurrection of Jesus. Every night, a reminder of our need for his grace and mercy and redemption. It was set this way from the creation of the world. Even the earth itself testifies of God plan for mankind. There is even more if we keep looking.

Here's a cool tidbit: The Tabernacle was positioned to face the East, so the sunrise would shine on its front entrance. Light represents purity and life. Notice that the Tabernacle's outer courtyard was made of white linen? The Israelites were instructed to camp around the Tabernacle, each tribe in a different direction: one to the north, one to the south, one to the east, and one to the west (Numbers 2:3-34).

The Israelites' tents were made of goat hair, which was a dark color. So, when the tribes camped around the Tabernacle, the white Tabernacle stood out against the dark backdrop of the tents, symbolizing God's presence in the center.

Now, here's another fascinating and very "God-like" detail: When the tribes set up their tents in the north, south, east, and west, the arrangement formed a shape that could be seen from above. If someone were on a mountain, they would see it clearly. Not all the tribes had the same population (Numbers 1:20-46). The East group of tribes had the most people, the North and South groups less but they had a similar count, and the West group had the fewest. Look at what these forms from an elevated perspective!



My friends, God's plan of redemption is woven all throughout the Old Testament if we just take the time to look!

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

Chapter 28

I enjoy watching "Who Done It" crime shows. Trying to figure out the plot and all its twists and turns is like trying to solve a puzzle with very few pieces. Over time, I've watched many different types of crime shows. One of my favorites, even today, is "Columbo." He wasn't the typical high-tech detective, but I like his mannerisms and logical approach.

Today, science plays a big role in detective work. That's one reason "Forensic Files" is so popular. DNA matching has become a standard tool in police investigations. DNA seems to be everywhere. Did you know that the human body sheds about 30,000 skin cells every minute? That's roughly 1.8 million skin cells every hour! It's like we are constantly walking around in a dust cloud of our skin! (Okay, that may sound gross, but you know what I mean.) While these are dead skin cells and typically don't contain DNA, our fingerprints can. Fingerprints not only contain skin cells but also oils and sweat. Those can carry DNA.

Now, I know what you're thinking: "Tim, this is a Bible study. Why are you talking about DNA and skin cells?" Well, I'm pointing out a really cool similarity. We, as humans, are always leaving a mark, even when we're unaware.

As we continue through this part of Exodus, I can't help but notice more and more how many small signs of Jesus are dusted throughout these verses. The connections are there, hidden but clear. What I've pointed out is just the shallow surface. There are so many "fingerprints" of our Savior in these verses. His presence is all over the place. Yes, these symbols were unknown to Israel at the time, but now, and especially after the resurrection, if people pause and look closely, they won't be able to honestly deny the connection.

We also have that same choice. As we go through this study, we have the privilege of seeing something that many others can't. I hope you choose to share what God reveals to you with others. Many can't see beyond the surface of the religion in these pages, but you can. Help them see the excitement in these words so they can walk closer with our Savior.

The Priestly Garments

1 "Have Aaron your brother brought to you from among the Israelites, along with his sons Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, so they may serve me as priests. *[The priesthood of Israel was not earned by effort or ambition. It could only be inherited by birthright. The importance of this is made known in Jesus, the Ultimate High Priest.]* 2 Make sacred garments for your brother Aaron to give him dignity and honor. 3 Tell all the skilled workers to whom I have given wisdom in such matters *[The special talents and skills one possesses are not by one's own wonderful making. These talents and skills were given by God to you so that you may use them to bring Him glory. They are not*

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given because we are so good and perfect, but despite our imperfection, by God's Grace.] that they are to make garments for Aaron, for his consecration, so he may serve me as priest. 4 These are the garments they are to make: a breastpiece, an ephod, a robe, a woven tunic, a turban and a sash. They are to make these sacred garments for your brother Aaron and his sons, so they may serve me as priests. 5 Have them use gold, and blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and fine linen.

The Ephod

6 "Make the ephod of gold, and of blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and of finely twisted linen--the work of skilled hands. *[The ephod was essentially an ornate apron-like garment.]* 7 It is to have two shoulder pieces attached to two of its corners, so it can be fastened. 8 Its skillfully woven waistband is to be like it--of one piece with the ephod and made with gold, and with blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and with finely twisted linen.

9 "Take two onyx stones and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel 10 in the order of their birth--six names on one stone and the remaining six on the other. 11 Engrave the names of the sons of Israel on the two stones the way a gem cutter engraves a seal. Then mount the stones in gold filigree settings 12 and fasten them on the shoulder pieces of the ephod as memorial stones for the sons of Israel. Aaron is to bear the names on his shoulders as a memorial before the LORD. 13 Make gold filigree settings 14 and two braided chains of pure gold, like a rope, and attach the chains to the settings.

[The first priority and purpose of the priest was to minister before God. The priest also is constantly connected to the people, bearing them on his shoulders.]



The Breastplate

15 "Fashion a breastpiece for making decisions *[also translated "judgement"]* --the work of skilled hands. Make it like the ephod: of gold, and of blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and of finely twisted linen. 16 It is to be square--a span long and a span wide--and folded

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

double. 17 Then mount four rows of precious stones on it. The first row shall be carnelian, chrysolite and beryl; 18 the second row shall be turquoise, lapis lazuli and emerald; 19 the third row shall be jacinth, agate and amethyst; 20 the fourth row shall be topaz, onyx and jasper. Mount them in gold filigree settings. 21 There are to be twelve stones, one for each of the names of the sons of Israel, each engraved like a seal with the name of one of the twelve tribes.

22 *For the breastpiece make braided chains of pure gold, like a rope. 23 Make two gold rings for it and fasten them to two corners of the breastpiece. 24 Fasten the two gold chains to the rings at the corners of the breastpiece, 25 and the other ends of the chains to the two settings, attaching them to the shoulder pieces of the ephod at the front. 26 Make two gold rings and attach them to the other two corners of the breastpiece on the inside edge next to the ephod. 27 Make two more gold rings and attach them to the bottom of the shoulder pieces on the front of the ephod, close to the seam just above the waistband of the ephod. 28 The rings of the breastpiece are to be tied to the rings of the ephod with blue cord, connecting it to the waistband, so that the breastpiece will not swing out from the ephod.

29 *Whenever Aaron enters the Holy Place, he will bear the names of the sons of Israel over his heart on the breastpiece of decision as a continuing memorial before the LORD. 30 Also put the Urim and the Thummim in the breastpiece, so they may be over Aaron's heart whenever he enters the presence of the LORD. *[Not only does the priest bear the names of his people on his shoulders, thus bearing their load, he also bears their names over his heart, showing his love for them. Can we see how clearly this describes our wonderful Savior?]* Thus Aaron will always bear the means of making decisions for the Israelites over his heart before the LORD.



Other Priestly Garments

31 *Make the robe of the ephod entirely of blue cloth, 32 with an opening for the head in its center. There shall be a woven edge like a collar around this opening, so that it will not tear. 33 Make pomegranates of blue, purple and scarlet yarn around the hem of the robe, with gold bells between them. 34 The gold bells and the pomegranates are to alternate around the

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hem of the robe. 35 Aaron must wear it when he ministers. The sound of the bells will be heard when he enters the Holy Place before the LORD and when he comes out, so that he will not die. *[The bells represent the continued work, unseen by the people. Just as Jesus, though unseen, is still our mediator in heaven on our behalf.]*

36 "Make a plate of pure gold and engrave on it as on a seal: holy to the Lord. 37 Fasten a blue cord to it to attach it to the turban; it is to be on the front of the turban. 38 It will be on Aaron's forehead, and he will bear the guilt involved in the sacred gifts the Israelites consecrate, whatever their gifts may be. It will be on Aaron's forehead continually so that they will be acceptable to the LORD. *[The turban had an inscription on it which said, "Holy to the Lord". Jesus wore his crown of thorns, knowing that his sacrifice was an offering "Holy to the Lord"]*

39 "Weave the tunic of fine linen and make the turban of fine linen. The sash is to be the work of an embroiderer. 40 Make tunics, sashes and caps for Aaron's sons to give them dignity and honor. 41 After you put these clothes on your brother Aaron and his sons, anoint and ordain them. Consecrate them so they may serve me as priests.

42 "Make linen undergarments as a covering for the body, reaching from the waist to the thigh. 43 Aaron and his sons must wear them whenever they enter the tent of meeting or approach the altar to minister in the Holy Place, so that they will not incur guilt and die. "This is to be a lasting ordinance for Aaron and his descendants.

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

Chapter 29

There was a show that aired weekly around 2007 called *Extreme Makeover*. The show would find a "typical" person and give them the full makeover—hair, makeup, and even minor plastic surgery if needed. Then, they would show the dramatic "before" and "after" pictures.

I never watched the show, but I recently came across some of the before-and-after pictures in an internet search. I couldn't help but wonder if the producers intentionally made people look as plain and ghostly as possible in the before pictures, just to emphasize the amazing transformation in the after photos. Regardless, the side-by-side pictures did show an incredible difference.

I thought about the "contestants" who received these transformations. Their main involvement in the entire process was... well... they just had to show up! That was pretty much it. They simply had to be present and willing to receive everything the producers wanted to do for them. They had to be the "willing vessel."

I saw a similar kind of willingness when reading this chapter below. There are two obvious parallels we can see in this passage: Jesus as our High Priest, symbolized in many ways, and the priesthood of the believer. As Moses (a type and shadow of Christ) begins to consecrate Aaron and his sons, notice that all the work is performed by Moses, not by the priests themselves. They simply had to show up and be willing vessels.

This mirrors our role with Jesus. It's not about what we did, or could do, to be consecrated—it's all about what Jesus has done. Consider these acts—done entirely by Moses—to set the priests apart for God's service.

We see the fulfillment of this in Jesus in 1 Peter 2:9-10:

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

All we have to do is show up and be a willing vessel.

Consecration of the Priest

1 "This is what you are to do to consecrate [*means to set apart, prepare, purify, to observe as holy*] them, so they may serve me as priests: Take a young bull and two rams without defect. 2 And from the finest wheat flour make round loaves without yeast, thick

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loaves without yeast and with olive oil mixed in, and thin loaves without yeast and brushed with olive oil. 3 Put them in a basket and present them along with the bull and the two rams. 4 Then bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance to the tent of meeting and wash them with water. *[Another did the washing. Consecration can't come without allowing cleansing, an act of humility.]* 5 Take the garments and dress Aaron with the tunic, the robe of the ephod, the ephod itself and the breastpiece. Fasten the ephod on him by its skillfully woven waistband. 6 Put the turban on his head and attach the sacred emblem to the turban. 7 Take the anointing oil and anoint him by pouring it on his head. 8 Bring his sons and dress them in tunics 9 and fasten caps on them. Then tie sashes on Aaron and his sons. The priesthood is theirs by a lasting ordinance. "Then you shall ordain Aaron and his sons. *[Notice after this cleansing, they put on garments, but not their old clothes, they put on their new clothes, made by God. Their new-self. Just as we are made into our new selves when we receive Jesus.]*

10 "Bring the bull to the front of the tent of meeting, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on its head. *[a symbolic transferring of sin from them to the sacrifice.]* 11 Slaughter it in the LORD's presence at the entrance to the tent of meeting. *[consecration could not happen without the shedding of blood. i.e. Our relationship with God, requires Jesus on the cross.]* 12 Take some of the bull's blood and put it on the horns of the altar with your finger, and pour out the rest of it at the base of the altar. 13 Then take all the fat on the internal organs, the long lobe of the liver, and both kidneys with the fat on them, and burn them on the altar. 14 But burn the bull's flesh and its hide and its intestines outside the camp. It is a sin offering.

15 "Take one of the rams, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on its head. 16 Slaughter it and take the blood and splash it against the sides of the altar. 17 Cut the ram into pieces and wash the internal organs and the legs, putting them with the head and the other pieces. 18 Then burn the entire ram on the altar. It is a burnt offering to the LORD, a pleasing aroma, a food offering presented to the LORD.

19 "Take the other ram, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on its head. 20 Slaughter it, take some of its blood and put it on the lobes of the right ears of Aaron and his sons, on the thumbs of their right hands, and on the big toes of their right feet. *[Can you see the crown of thorns on Jesus' head, the nails in his hands and feet here? Also, the sacrifice was symbolic so that they might hear God better, work for God better, and walk with God better.]* Then splash blood against the sides of the altar. 21 And take some blood from the altar *[Jesus]* and some of the anointing oil *[Holy Spirit]* and sprinkle it on Aaron and his garments and on his sons and their garments. Then he and his sons and their garments will be consecrated.

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

22 "Take from this ram the fat, the fat tail, the fat on the internal organs, the long lobe of the liver, both kidneys with the fat on them, and the right thigh. (This is the ram for the ordination.) 23 From the basket of bread made without yeast, which is before the LORD, take one round loaf, one thick loaf with olive oil mixed in, and one thin loaf. 24 Put all these in the hands of Aaron and his sons and have them wave them before the LORD as a wave offering. 25 Then take them from their hands and burn them on the altar along with the burnt offering for a pleasing aroma to the LORD, a food offering presented to the LORD. 26 After you take the breast of the ram for Aaron's ordination, wave it before the LORD as a wave offering, and it will be your share. *[Consecration could not happen without true fellowship, the breaking of bread, together with God.]*

27 "Consecrate those parts of the ordination ram that belong to Aaron and his sons: the breast that was waved and the thigh that was presented. 28 This is always to be the perpetual share from the Israelites for Aaron and his sons. It is the contribution the Israelites are to make to the LORD from their fellowship offerings.

29 "Aaron's sacred garments will belong to his descendants so that they can be anointed and ordained in them. 30 The son who succeeds him as priest and comes to the tent of meeting to minister in the Holy Place is to wear them seven days.

31 "Take the ram for the ordination and cook the meat in a sacred place. 32 At the entrance to the tent of meeting, Aaron and his sons are to eat the meat of the ram and the bread that is in the basket. 33 They are to eat these offerings by which atonement was made for their ordination and consecration. But no one else may eat them, because they are sacred. 34 And if any of the meat of the ordination ram or any bread is left over till morning, burn it up. It must not be eaten, because it is sacred.

35 "Do for Aaron and his sons everything I have commanded you, taking seven days to ordain them. 36 Sacrifice a bull each day as a sin offering to make atonement. Purify the altar by making atonement for it, and anoint it to consecrate it. 37 For seven days make atonement for the altar and consecrate it. Then the altar will be most holy, and whatever touches it will be holy.

38 "This is what you are to offer on the altar regularly each day: two lambs a year old. 39 Offer one in the morning and the other at twilight. 40 With the first lamb *[Jesus the Lamb of God]* offer a tenth of an ephah of the finest flour mixed with a quarter of a hin of oil *[Bread mixed with oil – Jesus the Bread of Life]* from pressed olives, and a quarter of a hin of wine *[Jesus – his blood poured out for us.]* as a drink offering. 41 Sacrifice the other lamb at twilight with the same grain offering and its drink offering as in the morning—a pleasing aroma, a food offering presented to the LORD. *[When John the Baptist referred*

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to Jesus as the “Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world,” the implication of that description would have been well understood!]

42 "For the generations to come this burnt offering is to be made regularly at the entrance to the tent of meeting, before the LORD. *[Because of the sacrifice of Jesus, this next statement is possible:]* There I will meet you and speak to you; 43 there also I will meet with the Israelites, and the place will be consecrated by my glory.

44 "So I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar and will consecrate Aaron and his sons to serve me as priests. 45 Then I will dwell among the Israelites and be their God. 46 They will know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of Egypt so that I might dwell among them. I am the LORD their God.

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

Chapter 30

Let's face it, we all stink! And no, I'm not talking about the kind of stink that comes from bad decisions or questionable life choices—I'm talking about the biological stink. We're all a little *Pepe Le Pew* on the inside. There are plenty of reasons for it: sweat, bacteria (the natural kind, and the "helped along" kind thanks to poor hygiene), diet, hormones, health conditions like diabetes, infections, liver or kidney issues, clothing, smoking, or even some medications. So, yeah, there are a lot of ways we can become walking, talking stink factories.

But here's the good news! The USA alone has about 5,000 to 6,000 different brands of smell-good products to help us combat our daily stench. From soaps to perfumes, wipes to deodorants—you name it, we've got a solution for everything. Let's be real: we stink, we know it, and most of us just want to cover it up. Personally, living in Texas with summer fast approaching, I'm very grateful for this.

Which brings us to the next problem: what *actually* smells good? That's where it gets tricky. What smells amazing to me might be a total turn-off for someone else. Smell is subjective, isn't it?

Maybe that's why I love this chapter so much. Want to know how personal our Father is? He tells us exactly what He likes. Yep, there's a deep spiritual meaning behind the oil and incense mentioned here, but let's be real—I also think He likes it because it smells good to Him *and* to us. It's kinda cool to see something as simple as this in the Bible.

The Alter of Incense

1 "Make an altar of acacia wood for burning incense. 2 It is to be square, a cubit long and a cubit wide, and two cubits high--its horns of one piece with it. 3 Overlay the top and all the sides and the horns with pure gold, and make a gold molding around it. 4 Make two gold rings for the altar below the molding--two on each of the opposite sides--to hold the poles used to carry it. 5 Make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. 6 Put the altar in front of the curtain that shields the ark of the covenant law--before the atonement cover that is over the tablets of the covenant law--where I will meet with you. *[The only other altar in the Tabernacle was the Altar of Sacrifice in the courtyard. It was made of brass/bronze and symbolized judgment of our sins. (Jesus that came in the flesh) This altar, smaller, is made of gold, symbolizing the purity and holiness of God. This altar also represents Jesus now in heaven.]*

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7 "Aaron must burn fragrant incense on the altar every morning when he tends the lamps. 8 He must burn incense again when he lights the lamps at twilight so incense will burn regularly before the LORD for the generations to come. 9 Do not offer on this altar any other incense or any burnt offering or grain offering, and do not pour a drink offering on it. 10 Once a year Aaron shall make atonement on its horns. This annual atonement must be made with the blood of the atoning sin offering for the generations to come. *[Just as the marks on Jesus's hands and feet are still there in heaven. A constant reminder of the price he paid for us.]* It is most holy to the LORD."

[Incense is a picture of prayer. We see this even in the Book of Revelation 8:3-4. Prayers, communication with God, are a sweetness to the Father. Thus, the ministry at the altar of incense speaks of how God's people should continually come to him in prayer. In the Tabernacle, it demonstrates how our High Priest, Jesus, also is in constant intercession for us.]



Atonement Money

11 Then the LORD said to Moses, 12 "When you take a census of the Israelites to count them, each one must pay the LORD a ransom *[the need of redemption, (paying a price for freedom)]* for his life at the time he is counted. Then no plague will come on them when you number them. 13 Each one who crosses over to those already counted is to give a half shekel, according to the sanctuary shekel, which weighs twenty gerahs. This half shekel is an offering to the LORD. 14 All who cross over, those twenty years old or more, are to give an offering to the LORD. 15 The rich are not to give more than a half shekel and the poor are not to give less when you make the offering to the LORD to atone for your lives. 16 Receive the atonement *[the process of making amends or repairing a wrong. An acknowledgement of being wrong.]* money from the Israelites and use it for the service of the tent of meeting. It will be a memorial for the Israelites before the LORD, making atonement for your lives."

[Beyond the practical use of the money for maintaining the Tabernacle, it had a deeper symbolic meaning. Everyone gave the same amount, showing that everyone needs redemption. This equal contribution represents that all people have sinned, no matter how big or small the sin. In God's eyes, every sin leads to the same result: death.]

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No matter your wealth, status, or position, all are equally guilty and in need of redemption. This was a way of recognizing that everyone needs saving.]

Basin for Washing

17 Then the LORD said to Moses, 18 "Make a bronze basin, with its bronze stand, for washing. Place it between the tent of meeting and the altar, and put water in it. 19 Aaron and his sons are to wash their hands and feet with water from it. 20 Whenever they enter the tent of meeting, they shall wash with water so that they will not die. Also, when they approach the altar to minister by presenting a food offering to the LORD, 21 they shall wash their hands and feet so that they will not die. This is to be a lasting ordinance for Aaron and his descendants for the generations to come."

[As the Altar symbolizes the great sacrifice Jesus made for us on the cross, this basin of water speaks to us as the continual cleansing after salvation. How do we do this? By the continual washing with the water of the Word of God. (Ephesians 5:26) This is not a washing to salvation, as Jesus reminded us as he washed his disciples' feet, that those who are bathed need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. (John 13:10). This reminds us that it is important that we be willing to shed the "dirt" of the world, and allow the Holy Spirit to cleanse us in order to draw closer in our relationship with God.]



Anointing Oil

22 Then the LORD said to Moses, 23 "Take the following fine spices: 500 shekels of liquid myrrh, half as much (that is, 250 shekels) of fragrant cinnamon, 250 shekels of fragrant calamus, 24 500 shekels of cassia--all according to the sanctuary shekel--and a hin of olive oil. 25 Make these into a sacred anointing oil, a fragrant blend, the work of a perfumer. It will be the sacred anointing oil. 26 Then use it to anoint the tent of meeting, the ark of the covenant law, 27 the table and all its articles, the lampstand and its accessories, the altar of incense, 28 the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and the basin with its stand. 29 You shall consecrate them so they will be most holy, and whatever touches them will be holy.

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30 "Anoint Aaron and his sons and consecrate them so they may serve me as priests. 31 Say to the Israelites, 'This is to be my sacred anointing oil for the generations to come. 32 Do not pour it on anyone else's body and do not make any other oil using the same formula. It is sacred, and you are to consider it sacred. 33 Whoever makes perfume like it and puts it on anyone other than a priest must be cut off from their people.' "

[If this was a perfume, the name on the label would be: "Holy Spirit"]

Incense

34 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Take fragrant spices--gum resin, onycha and galbanum--and pure frankincense, all in equal amounts, 35 and make a fragrant blend of incense, the work of a perfumer. It is to be salted and pure and sacred. 36 Grind some of it to powder and place it in front of the ark of the covenant law in the tent of meeting, where I will meet with you. It shall be most holy to you. 37 Do not make any incense with this formula for yourselves; consider it holy to the LORD. 38 Whoever makes incense like it to enjoy its fragrance must be cut off from their people."

[This is the incense spoken of earlier in the Chapter. It illustrates the wonderful smell to God that all sincere prayers to Him hold.]

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Chapter 31

At my age, and after having worked in many different places and traveled quite a bit, I've had the privilege of meeting some truly remarkable people. They come from all walks of life, from the humblest backgrounds to the most extravagant. I've witnessed amazing talent in many forms—whether it's masons doing brickwork, roofers, road workers, electricians, or the people who master logistical planning to ensure shipments reach their destinations on time and in order.

One friend of mine, John, is especially impressive. I'm always amazed at how quickly he can take information from a meeting and translate it into countless spreadsheets, mapping out everything we discussed. When I learned he came from NASA, I wasn't surprised. He has the unique ability to turn words and ideas into visual flow charts.

Each of us has a special talent or gift. Take a moment to look at your hands. These hands, given to you by the Father, carry a purpose. Whether your hands are used for literal work or symbolic of your other talents, like intelligence, the point is: they have a purpose.

However, many people discover their special skill but miss their true purpose. We often forget to ask the Father, "Lord, you gave me this gift. What do you want me to do with it?"

Most people use their skills in a practical way—perhaps as a means to provide for their families. But even in that, the talent still serves God, if we live as a light in the workplace. God has placed us in this time, in this moment, so we can be the light others need to find Jesus. So, how are you using the talent God has given you to serve Him?

In this chapter, God called two men by name to be the builders of all the items we've read about. What an incredible honor! But their talent didn't end with the completion of the project. They possessed those gifts before the calling, and they carried them beyond the task. Even if they spent the rest of their lives making "ordinary" furniture, their work would still be a reminder—both to them and to those who appreciated their craftsmanship—of the wonderful grace God showed them in granting them that talent.

Through our talents, even something as simple as a chair or a spreadsheet can give praise to our Father in Heaven, as long as we recognize that it comes from Him, not from our own "intelligence."

We should recognize and use our talents in ways that promote the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

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Even when our talents no longer provide for our families, such as in retirement, our work isn't finished. Every day the Father wakes us up, He has a plan for us to use what He's given us to influence and bring awareness to a dark and dying world.

Bezalel and Oholiab

1 Then the LORD said to Moses, 2 "See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, 3 and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills-- 4 to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, 5 to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of crafts. 6 Moreover, I have appointed Oholiab son of Ahisamak, of the tribe of Dan, to help him. Also I have given ability to all the skilled workers to make everything I have commanded you: 7 the tent of meeting, the ark of the covenant law with the atonement cover on it, and all the other furnishings of the tent-- 8 the table and its articles, the pure gold lampstand and all its accessories, the altar of incense, 9 the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, the basin with its stand-- 10 and also the woven garments, both the sacred garments for Aaron the priest and the garments for his sons when they serve as priests, 11 and the anointing oil and fragrant incense for the Holy Place. They are to make them just as I commanded you."

The Sabbath

12 Then the LORD said to Moses, 13 "Say to the Israelites, 'You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that I am the LORD, who makes you holy.

14 " 'Observe the Sabbath, because it is holy to you. Anyone who desecrates it is to be put to death; those who do any work on that day must be cut off from their people. 15 For six days work is to be done, but the seventh day is a day of sabbath rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day is to be put to death. 16 The Israelites are to observe the Sabbath, celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant. 17 It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.' " *[It may seem unusual that God would bring up this commandment again, but its placement here suggests it holds special significance. In the context of this chapter, it's clear that God wants to remind us, even when we're engaged in great work or a significant project for Him, not to forget to stop, rest, and worship Him. Often, we prioritize and elevate our work to the point where it becomes an idol. No matter how important the work may seem—and this particular section is certainly one of the greatest—God still calls us to pause and rest in Him.]*

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18 When the LORD finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the covenant law, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God.

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Chapter 32

I used to be a real “redneck” when I was younger. Growing up in Texas and then moving to Los Angeles through a divorce, I clung to everything country. Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson, The Charlie Daniels Band—anything “hard” country, I was into. The bills of my ball cap were so curved they nearly touched at the ends. I was a “rebel” in the West. I couldn’t wait to get out of California and head back to Texas, maybe even become a truck driver and see the good ol’ U.S.A.

Some of that came true. I made it back to Texas, and I ended up working in transportation. Along the way, after some tough times and stubborn choices, I found the Lord. I loved every minute of learning more about Jesus. Church was great, but the music was a little too “rock” for me. It took time, but eventually, I discovered Christian country music. Bruce Carroll and Paul Overstreet became two of my favorites. My path was changing. Little by little, I started finding more peace and love in my heart, and less pride and ego. I wish I could say I stayed on that path without straying. But... no.

As a Christian now for a while, I’ve had my fair share of setbacks. I can never seem to understand how one week I can be so close to the Father, only to find myself back in the world the next. From time to time, I would find myself looking back. Some might call it “nostalgia,” that sentimental longing or wistful affection for a period in the past, often before I came to the Lord. But when that glance backward turns into a longing for the past, it can be dangerous. How long can we take our eyes off God before we lose our way?

This is similar to what happens in this chapter of the Bible. It’s easy to sit in judgment of Israel. I mean, in just five short months, God had done one amazing thing after another. But after Moses left for just 40 days, these people went completely off the rails! But if we’re honest with ourselves, I bet most of us can’t go even 40 days without slipping up.

They made a bad choice right off the bat. God brought them to the mountain earlier in the book and began speaking to them, but they said it was too much. They chose to go back and asked Moses to be their mediator instead. But when Moses wasn’t there, they started looking around. They wanted that “old-time religion,” but without Moses, they tried to make one up for themselves. In less than 40 days of living without God, they had turned back to the world.

The Bible says not to forsake the fellowship of believers. In other words, we’re meant to stay connected to a Bible-based, Jesus-centered church or fellowship. None of us are called to be lone rangers. God created us to encourage, strengthen, and protect one another. My brothers in Christ can also help me get back on track when I start gazing too long in the

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rear-view mirror, or miss too many fellowships. So if you know someone who has disconnected, this may be speaking to you to connect with them. If it's you, then this message is certainly for you! Get back to, and reconnect your relationship with God.

The Golden Calf

1 When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, *[How do you react when God is not working on your time table, but causes what you think is a delay?]* "Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, *[Listen how they disassociate themselves from Moses...." this fellow" "this guy". And it wasn't Moses who brought them out of Egypt – It was God. Exodus 6:7]* we don't know what has happened to him."

2 Aaron answered them, "Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me." 3 So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. 4 He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, *[literal – young bull. This was a very well-known and recognized image. For 400 years, they saw this bull, one of the highest deities in Egypt.]* fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, "These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt."

5 When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, "Tomorrow there will be a festival to the LORD." 6 So the next day the people rose early and sacrificed burnt offerings and presented fellowship offerings. *[They now replaced relationship with religion.]* Afterward they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry. *[The verb tense suggests sexual "playing". From religion, it was an easy step into immorality]*

7 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt. 8 They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, 'These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.'

9 "I have seen these people," the LORD said to Moses, "and they are a stiff-necked people. 10 Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation."

11 But Moses sought the favor of the LORD his God. "LORD," he said, "why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand? 12 Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth?' Turn from your

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fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people. *[Moses the mediator – Just like Jesus.]* 13 Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel. *[Notice Moses does not say Jacob, the man of the flesh, but uses his spiritual new name “Israel” here. Moses was making a point with God.]* to whom you swore by your own self: 'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever.' " 14 Then the LORD relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened. *[God knew He would not destroy Israel. But he purposely put Moses through the test of becoming an intercessor for Israel. Something he would get a lot of experience doing as time went on. God used this to train Moses to be the leader God wanted him to be.]*

15 Moses turned and went down the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands. They were inscribed on both sides, front and back. 16 The tablets were the work of God; the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets.

17 When Joshua heard the noise of the people shouting, he said to Moses, "There is the sound of war in the camp." 18 Moses replied: "It is not the sound of victory, it is not the sound of defeat; it is the sound of singing that I hear."

19 When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain. 20 And he took the calf the people had made and burned it in the fire; then he ground it to powder, scattered it on the water and made the Israelites drink it.

21 He said to Aaron, "What did these people do to you, that you led them into such great sin?" 22 "Do not be angry, my lord," Aaron answered. "You know how prone these people are to evil. 23 They said to me, 'Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him.' 24 So I told them, 'Whoever has any gold jewelry, take it off.' Then they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!" *[Look how Aaron's story — almost word for word! But then had a little twist compared to verse 3.]*

25 Moses saw that the people were running wild and that Aaron had let them get out of control and so become a laughingstock to their enemies. 26 So he stood at the entrance to the camp and said, "Whoever is for the LORD, come to me." And all the Levites rallied to him.

27 Then he said to them, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Each man strap a sword to his side. Go back and forth through the camp from one end to the other, each killing his brother and friend and neighbor.' " 28 The Levites did as Moses commanded, and that day about three thousand of the people died. *[This represented about 1/10 of the*

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total that came out of Egypt. These were not the only ones involved, but most likely the most flagrant, or perhaps the leaders encouraging others to fall away.] 29 Then Moses said, "You have been set apart to the LORD today, for you were against your own sons and brothers, and he has blessed you this day."

30 The next day Moses said to the people, "You have committed a great sin. But now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin." 31 So Moses went back to the LORD and said, "Oh, what a great sin these people have committed! They have made themselves gods of gold. 32 But now, please forgive their sin—but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written." 33 The LORD replied to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book. 34 Now go, lead the people to the place I spoke of, and my angel will go before you. However, when the time comes for me to punish, I will punish them for their sin."

35 And the LORD struck the people with a plague because of what they did with the calf Aaron had made.

BOOK OF EXODUS

Chapter 33

When I was young, my father taught me how to swim. We would go to the public pool, and while he swam around, I clung to the edge of the pool. Little by little, he taught me to float. He would support me with his hand and lay me gently in the water. He showed me how to kick and paddle, always holding me steady.

Then, one day, the big moment came. We went to the pool, and as usual, he jumped in while I stayed at the edge. This time, he grabbed my hands, stretched them out in front of me, and told me to kick. I felt like Superman flying through the air, with my dad walking backward, guiding us around the pool. We completed one lap together.

After that, he placed me on the edge of the pool, stepped about six feet away, and said, "Okay, son, now swim to me." Nervously, I hesitated. He reassured me, "I'm right here. I won't let anything happen to you. It's a short distance; you can do it." So, I pushed off, stretched my arms as far as I could, and began kicking and paddling with all my might. But as I looked at him, I realized I wasn't getting any closer to his outstretched arms. I kept kicking and paddling, worried if I could stay afloat. Just before I was about to cry out for help, I finally reached his arms. In reality, it was his arms that reached me. He scooped me up and turned me around. "Look! You swam half the pool all by yourself!" It was then that I realized that, all along, my dad had been walking backward with his arms stretched out, guiding me toward him. At the time, I thought it was a cruel joke, but it was his way of showing me that I could swim. He needed me to realize my own ability. Until I took that step of faith, I would never be convinced.

Our Father in Heaven is the ultimate parent. One thing that stood out to me was the Tent of Meeting that Moses built. It wasn't something God specifically told him to do; Moses simply wanted to draw closer to God. The tent was outside the camp, with its door open to all. But when God's presence came, the people stood at the doorways of their own tents from a distance, worshipping. They stayed comfortable, watching from the edge of the pool, unwilling to step forward. They didn't commit to getting closer to God.

How many times have we been in the position to go "all-in" with our Father, but held back? I know I've missed the mark many times in my walk with God. But the good news is, He is still here! His arms are still reaching out to you, saying, "I'm right here. You can do it. I won't let you down." All you have to do is commit, push off, and keep your eyes on Him.

1 Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Leave this place, you and the people you brought up out of Egypt, and go up to the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants.' 2 I will send an angel before you and drive out the

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Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. 3 Go up to the land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way."

4 When the people heard these distressing words, they began to mourn and no one put on any ornaments. *[taking off their jewelry was a symbol of modesty and humility, sadness to the point of stripping off anything that might bring joy. When true reality of your depravity hits your soul, trinkets are meaningless.]* 5 For the LORD had said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites, 'You are a stiff-necked *[in the sense of a stubborn ox or mule resisting their master. Not just stubborn, but with active resistance.]* people. If I were to go with you even for a moment, I might destroy you. Now take off your ornaments and I will decide what to do with you.' " 6 So the Israelites stripped off their ornaments at Mount Horeb.

The Tent of Meeting

7 Now Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the "tent of meeting." *[The tabernacle had not yet been built, but Moses took the steps of faith to build his own tent of meeting, not in defiance, but rather as a need to still connect with God.]* Anyone inquiring of the LORD would go to the tent of meeting outside the camp. 8 And whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people rose and stood at the entrances to their tents, watching Moses until he entered the tent. 9 As Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the LORD spoke with Moses. 10 Whenever the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance to the tent, they all stood and worshiped, each at the entrance to their tent. *[notice the "safe distance." They again had the opportunity to go forward, just like Joshua did, but they stayed back]* 11 The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. Then Moses would return to the camp, but his young aide Joshua son of Nun did not leave the tent.

Moses and the Glory of the Lord

12 Moses said to the LORD, "You have been telling me, 'Lead these people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, 'I know you by name and you have found favor with me.' 13 If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people."

14 The LORD replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." 15 Then Moses said to him, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. 16 How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go

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with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?"

17 And the LORD said to Moses, "I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name." 18 Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory."

19 And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. 20 But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." *[Moses' desire to be in close relationship with God led him to make this request. However, he was unaware of what he was truly asking for. Similarly, as we walk with Jesus and experience God's holy presence, we often feel a deep longing to draw closer. Yet, the reality is that our natural bodies cannot withstand the full holiness of God's presence. Everything in our physical nature would disintegrate, including our fallen form, because nothing imperfect can endure in God's direct presence. So our Father made it possible to see/dwell/touch him, through our Savior – Jesus.]*

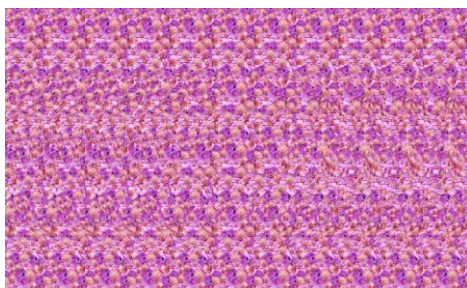
21 Then the LORD said, "There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. 22 When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. 23 Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; *[more literally understood as: "after effects"]* but my face must not be seen."

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Chapter 34

Does anyone remember stereograms? These images were often found in newspapers, magazines, and books in the 1990s and early 2000s. You had to focus your eyes in a special way to reveal a hidden 3D image within what seemed like a random pattern of colors or shapes.

Here's an example:



It's all about how you focus your eyes. Most of the time, I struggled to see the picture. But every now and then, when I got the focus just right, the image would pop out, and I thought it was really cool!

Reading the Bible can be like that, too. We can clearly see what's obvious, but when we put on our "Jesus glasses," it changes our focus. This chapter is full of information. It has a straightforward, logical storyline, and the mental picture is clear. But when we focus just right, something new emerges – the shadow of Jesus' second coming!

We already know that Moses is a type and shadow of Jesus in many ways. But what struck me in this chapter was the parallel to Jesus coming down from the clouds. In verse 5, the "Shekinah Glory" rests on top of the mountain. Moses then comes down from that glory, bringing with him the perfect Law of God (Moses' first coming, the Law was broken and shattered). Moses' face radiated with God's glory, and people could hardly look at him. This reminds me of Revelation 1:7, which says, "Look, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the people on earth will mourn because of Him."

The Holy Bible certainly beats any stereogram I've ever seen! And it's far more reliable. Just keep your heart focused on Him, and He'll help you see things clearly.

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The New Stone Tablets

1 The LORD said to Moses, "Chisel out two stone tablets like the first ones, and I will write on them the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke. 2 Be ready in the morning, and then come up on Mount Sinai. Present yourself to me there on top of the mountain. 3 No one is to come with you or be seen anywhere on the mountain; not even the flocks and herds may graze in front of the mountain."

4 So Moses chiseled out two stone tablets like the first ones and went up Mount Sinai early in the morning, as the LORD had commanded him; and he carried the two stone tablets in his hands. 5 Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD. 6 And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, *[Literally: YAHWEH, repeated perhaps to represent His unchangingness.]* the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, 7 maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation." *[This has less to do with "generational curses" and more to do with God's continued accountability of sin. "Generational curse" has long been a justification for giving in to sin by many, "My mom or grandfathers sinned, so I am cursed in this sin." First, if one is a Believer, they are in no way bound to curses, for Jesus redeemed us from the curse of sin and death. With that said, a generational curse can very much be a generational inclination, or temptation to one specific sin over another. It is not uncommon to see the same "type" of sin offered to a family. Alcoholism, immorality, anger, etc. These spiritual forces may camp within a family group and offer the same temptation to all. However, the temptation of sin is not sin. Only one giving into that temptation. So, we are all still very accountable for every choice we make without the justification of "generational curses."]*

8 Moses bowed to the ground at once and worshiped. 9 "Lord," he said, "if I have found favor in your eyes, then let the Lord go with us. Although this is a stiff-necked people, forgive our wickedness and our sin, and take us as your inheritance."

The Covenant Renewed

10 Then the LORD said: "I am making a covenant with you. *[God had already established an unconditional covenant with Abraham. One that still exists today. That covenant is one of pure grace, regardless of the choices or behavior of Israel. But because of the sovereign choice of God alone. This covenant now spoken of will be a conditional covenant. Renewed after Israel's sin, this is one that involved Israel directly and is*

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based on their choices and action. This reintroduces more specific details of Mosaic Covenant, which included the Law.] Before all your people I will do wonders never before done in any nation in all the world. The people you live among will see how awesome is the work that I, the LORD, will do for you. 11 Obey what I command you today. I will drive out before you the Amorites, Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. 12 Be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the land where you are going, or they will be a snare among you. 13 Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones and cut down their Asherah poles. [Don't keep ungodly things around to influence you.] 14 Do not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, [unwilling to take second place before anything. Another way of confirming the first Commandment, God ONLY] is a jealous God.

15 "Be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the land; *[repeated again from verse 12 for our emphasis. Mankind in our sin nature tends to allow outside influences to distract us away from God.]* for when they prostitute themselves to their gods and sacrifice to them, they will invite you and you will eat their sacrifices. 16 And then you choose some of their daughters as wives for your sons and those daughters prostitute themselves to their gods, they will lead your sons to do the same.

17 "Do not make any idols. 18 "Celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread. For seven days [number of perfection] eat bread made without yeast [without sin], as I commanded you. Do this at the appointed time in the month of Aviv, for in that month you came out of Egypt. [Came out of the "world"] [Sounds a lot like what Jesus did for us!]

19 "The first offspring of every womb belongs to me, *[As Jesus was the firstborn of all creation]* including all the firstborn males of your livestock, whether from herd or flock. 20 Redeem the firstborn donkey [represents fallen man] with a lamb. [represents Jesus] but if you do not redeem it, break its neck. [Unredeemed/unsaved man – the wages of sin is death] Redeem all your firstborn sons. [God does not require human sacrifice; He will fill that role. Instead, He wanted the Lamb to take the place as a substitute for the later LAMB.] "No one is to appear before me empty-handed.

21 "Six days you shall labor, but on the seventh day you shall rest; even during the plowing season and harvest you must rest. [Even with a busy schedule, don't put work before God.]

22 "Celebrate the Festival of Weeks with the firstfruits of the wheat harvest, and the Festival of Ingathering at the turn of the year. 23 Three times a year all your men are to appear before the Sovereign LORD, the God of Israel. 24 I will drive out nations before you and

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enlarge your territory, and no one will covet your land when you go up three times each year to appear before the LORD your God.

25 "Do not offer the blood of a sacrifice to me along with anything containing yeast, *[Jesus' blood was pure, without sin, offered to God on our behalf.]* and do not let any of the sacrifice from the Passover Festival remain until morning. 26 "Bring the best of the firstfruits of your soil to the house of the LORD your God. "Do not cook a young goat in its mother's milk." *[This was a practice of perversity by other pagan cultures. To take like giving milk of a mother only to then boil her own offspring with that substance. It speaks of immorality and perversity, and God makes a distinguishing call to Israel for purity, compassion, and separation from the world's way. *This verse is why Jewish Kosher laws separate milk and meat from each other.]*

27 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel." 28 Moses was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant--the Ten Commandments.

The Radiant Face of Moses

29 When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant *[Literal: shot forth beams]* because he had spoken with the LORD. 30 When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant, and they were afraid to come near him. 31 But Moses called to them; so Aaron and all the leaders of the community came back to him, and he spoke to them. 32 Afterward all the Israelites came near him, and he gave them all the commands the LORD had given him on Mount Sinai.

33 When Moses finished speaking to them, he put a veil over his face. 34 But whenever he entered the LORD's presence to speak with him, he removed the veil until he came out. And when he came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, 35 they saw that his face was radiant. Then Moses would put the veil back over his face until he went in to speak with the LORD.

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

Conclusion of Exodus

Chapters 35 – 40

The final chapters of Exodus are addressed as a unified subject. When you read them, you'll notice they largely repeat the instructions God gave Moses on the mountain. The key difference is that in the earlier chapters, God provided Moses with the *plan*. Here, we witness the *implementation* of that plan.

Why is it significant that Moses was instructed by the Holy Spirit to rewrite all these details? There are many spiritual layers to this question. Upon reflection, it becomes clear that while God was giving Moses the plans, His people were below, losing hope and being drawn back to the world (evidenced by the golden calf). Our Father was aware of what was happening, yet despite their lack of faith, He continued to give Moses the instructions.

When Moses returned to the camp, Israel was in full rebellion. The Father then issued penalties, and harsh consequences fell upon Israel. Moses interceded through prayer, and for a time, it seemed as though Israel might no longer remain God's chosen people. Yet, this was exactly what the enemy had planned all along! Satan was working throughout this ordeal, attempting to turn Israel away from God and provoke Him to anger, hoping He would destroy them. Satan sought to manipulate the circumstances so that the events of chapters 35–40 would never unfold. This wasn't the first time, nor would it be the last time, Satan used mankind to try to thwart God's plan. Remember, the Tabernacle and its furnishings are symbolic shadows of Jesus and His mission. In Chapter 32, during Israel's rebellion, Satan sought to prevent the Tabernacle from being built.

Fast forward about 1,300 to 1,400 years, and Satan would try again to stop God's plan, this time attempting to hinder the coming of the True Tabernacle. He inspired King Herod to attempt to kill the baby Jesus.

Thus, these final chapters of Exodus offer a fitting conclusion to the book, showing that God's plan was put into action despite the enemy's efforts. They also illustrate that the human heart can transform from being self-centered to God-centered. It starts with a reminder of the Sabbath regulation—learning to cease fighting against God and instead rest in Him. Notice that, following this, Moses called for “everyone who is willing” to give. With the right heart, the people gave so generously that Moses had to declare, “Enough!”

The book concludes with the undeniable assurance that God, in His infinite sovereignty, will bring His plans and purposes to fruition. This truth is a profound comfort

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to all who call on the name of Jesus. No matter what we face in life, our God, our Father, and our divinely appointed destiny will prevail.

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

Chapter 35

Sabbath Regulations

1 Moses assembled the whole Israelite community and said to them, "These are the things the LORD has commanded you to do: 2 For six days, work is to be done, but the seventh day shall be your holy day, a day of sabbath rest to the LORD. Whoever does any work on it is to be put to death. 3 Do not light a fire in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath day."

Materials for the Tabernacle

4 Moses said to the whole Israelite community, "This is what the LORD has commanded: 5 From what you have, take an offering for the LORD. Everyone who is willing is to bring to the LORD an offering of gold, silver and bronze; 6 blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen; goat hair; 7 ram skins dyed red and another type of durable leather; acacia wood; 8 olive oil for the light; spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense; 9 and onyx stones and other gems to be mounted on the ephod and breastpiece.

10 "All who are skilled among you are to come and make everything the LORD has commanded: 11 the tabernacle with its tent and its covering, clasps, frames, crossbars, posts and bases; 12 the ark with its poles and the atonement cover and the curtain that shields it; 13 the table with its poles and all its articles and the bread of the Presence; 14 the lampstand that is for light with its accessories, lamps and oil for the light; 15 the altar of incense with its poles, the anointing oil and the fragrant incense; the curtain for the doorway at the entrance to the tabernacle; 16 the altar of burnt offering with its bronze grating, its poles and all its utensils; the bronze basin with its stand; 17 the curtains of the courtyard with its posts and bases, and the curtain for the entrance to the courtyard; 18 the tent pegs for the tabernacle and for the courtyard, and their ropes; 19 the woven garments worn for ministering in the sanctuary--both the sacred garments for Aaron the priest and the garments for his sons when they serve as priests."

20 Then the whole Israelite community withdrew from Moses' presence, 21 and everyone who was willing and whose heart moved them came and brought an offering to the LORD for the work on the tent of meeting, for all its service, and for the sacred garments. 22 All who were willing, men and women alike, came and brought gold jewelry of all kinds: brooches, earrings, rings and ornaments. They all presented their gold as a wave offering to the LORD. 23 Everyone who had blue, purple or scarlet yarn or fine linen, or goat hair, ram skins dyed red or the other durable leather brought them. 24 Those presenting an offering of silver or bronze brought it as an offering to the LORD, and everyone who had acacia wood

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for any part of the work brought it. 25 Every skilled woman spun with her hands and brought what she had spun--blue, purple or scarlet yarn or fine linen. 26 And all the women who were willing and had the skill spun the goat hair. 27 The leaders brought onyx stones and other gems to be mounted on the ephod and breastpiece. 28 They also brought spices and olive oil for the light and for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense. 29 All the Israelite men and women who were willing brought to the LORD freewill offerings for all the work the LORD through Moses had commanded them to do.

Bezalel and Oholiab

30 Then Moses said to the Israelites, "See, the LORD has chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, 31 and he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills-- 32 to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, 33 to cut and set stones, to work in wood and to engage in all kinds of artistic crafts. 34 And he has given both him and Oholiab son of Ahisamak, of the tribe of Dan, the ability to teach others. 35 He has filled them with skill to do all kinds of work as engravers, designers, embroiderers in blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen, and weavers--all of them skilled workers and designers.

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

Chapter 36

1 So Bezalel, Oholiab and every skilled person to whom the LORD has given skill and ability to know how to carry out all the work of constructing the sanctuary are to do the work just as the LORD has commanded."

2 Then Moses summoned Bezalel and Oholiab and every skilled person to whom the LORD had given ability and who was willing to come and do the work. 3 They received from Moses all the offerings the Israelites had brought to carry out the work of constructing the sanctuary. And the people continued to bring freewill offerings morning after morning. 4 So all the skilled workers who were doing all the work on the sanctuary left what they were doing 5 and said to Moses, "The people are bringing more than enough for doing the work the LORD commanded to be done."

6 Then Moses gave an order and they sent this word throughout the camp: "No man or woman is to make anything else as an offering for the sanctuary." And so the people were restrained from bringing more, 7 because what they already had was more than enough to do all the work.

The Tabernacle

8 All those who were skilled among the workers made the tabernacle with ten curtains of finely twisted linen and blue, purple and scarlet yarn, with cherubim woven into them by expert hands. 9 All the curtains were the same size--twenty-eight cubits long and four cubits wide. 10 They joined five of the curtains together and did the same with the other five. 11 Then they made loops of blue material along the edge of the end curtain in one set, and the same was done with the end curtain in the other set. 12 They also made fifty loops on one curtain and fifty loops on the end curtain of the other set, with the loops opposite each other. 13 Then they made fifty gold clasps and used them to fasten the two sets of curtains together so that the tabernacle was a unit.

14 They made curtains of goat hair for the tent over the tabernacle--eleven altogether. 15 All eleven curtains were the same size--thirty cubits long and four cubits wide. 16 They joined five of the curtains into one set and the other six into another set. 17 Then they made fifty loops along the edge of the end curtain in one set and also along the edge of the end curtain in the other set. 18 They made fifty bronze clasps to fasten the tent together as a unit. 19 Then they made for the tent a covering of ram skins dyed red, and over that a covering of the other durable leather.

20 They made upright frames of acacia wood for the tabernacle. 21 Each frame was ten cubits long and a cubit and a half wide, 22 with two projections set parallel to each other.

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They made all the frames of the tabernacle in this way. 23 They made twenty frames for the south side of the tabernacle 24 and made forty silver bases to go under them--two bases for each frame, one under each projection. 25 For the other side, the north side of the tabernacle, they made twenty frames 26 and forty silver bases--two under each frame. 27 They made six frames for the far end, that is, the west end of the tabernacle, 28 and two frames were made for the corners of the tabernacle at the far end. 29 At these two corners the frames were double from the bottom all the way to the top and fitted into a single ring; both were made alike. 30 So there were eight frames and sixteen silver bases--two under each frame.

31 They also made crossbars of acacia wood: five for the frames on one side of the tabernacle, 32 five for those on the other side, and five for the frames on the west, at the far end of the tabernacle. 33 They made the center crossbar so that it extended from end to end at the middle of the frames. 34 They overlaid the frames with gold and made gold rings to hold the crossbars. They also overlaid the crossbars with gold.

35 They made the curtain of blue, purple and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen, with cherubim woven into it by a skilled worker. 36 They made four posts of acacia wood for it and overlaid them with gold. They made gold hooks for them and cast their four silver bases. 37 For the entrance to the tent they made a curtain of blue, purple and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen--the work of an embroiderer; 38 and they made five posts with hooks for them. They overlaid the tops of the posts and their bands with gold and made their five bases of bronze.

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

Chapter 37

The Ark

1 Bezalel made the ark of acacia wood--two and a half cubits long, a cubit and a half wide, and a cubit and a half high. 2 He overlaid it with pure gold, both inside and out, and made a gold molding around it. 3 He cast four gold rings for it and fastened them to its four feet, with two rings on one side and two rings on the other. 4 Then he made poles of acacia wood and overlaid them with gold. 5 And he inserted the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark to carry it.

6 He made the atonement cover of pure gold--two and a half cubits long and a cubit and a half wide. 7 Then he made two cherubim out of hammered gold at the ends of the cover. 8 He made one cherub on one end and the second cherub on the other; at the two ends he made them of one piece with the cover. 9 The cherubim had their wings spread upward, overshadowing the cover with them. The cherubim faced each other, looking toward the cover.

The Table

10 They made the table of acacia wood--two cubits long, a cubit wide and a cubit and a half high. 11 Then they overlaid it with pure gold and made a gold molding around it. 12 They also made around it a rim a handbreadth wide and put a gold molding on the rim. 13 They cast four gold rings for the table and fastened them to the four corners, where the four legs were. 14 The rings were put close to the rim to hold the poles used in carrying the table. 15 The poles for carrying the table were made of acacia wood and were overlaid with gold. 16 And they made from pure gold the articles for the table--its plates and dishes and bowls and its pitchers for the pouring out of drink offerings.

The Lambstand

17 They made the lampstand of pure gold. They hammered out its base and shaft, and made its flowerlike cups, buds and blossoms of one piece with them. 18 Six branches extended from the sides of the lampstand--three on one side and three on the other. 19 Three cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms were on one branch, three on the next branch and the same for all six branches extending from the lampstand. 20 And on the lampstand were four cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms. 21 One bud was under the first pair of branches extending from the lampstand, a second bud under the second pair, and a third bud under the third pair--six branches in all. 22 The buds and the branches were all of one piece with the lampstand, hammered out of pure gold.

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23 They made its seven lamps, as well as its wick trimmers and trays, of pure gold. 24 They made the lampstand and all its accessories from one talent of pure gold.

The Altar of Incense

25 They made the altar of incense out of acacia wood. It was square, a cubit long and a cubit wide and two cubits high--its horns of one piece with it. 26 They overlaid the top and all the sides and the horns with pure gold, and made a gold molding around it. 27 They made two gold rings below the molding--two on each of the opposite sides--to hold the poles used to carry it. 28 They made the poles of acacia wood and overlaid them with gold.

29 They also made the sacred anointing oil and the pure, fragrant incense--the work of a perfumer.

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

Chapter 38

The Altar of Burnt Offering

1 They built the altar of burnt offering of acacia wood, three cubits high; it was square, five cubits long and five cubits wide. 2 They made a horn at each of the four corners, so that the horns and the altar were of one piece, and they overlaid the altar with bronze. 3 They made all its utensils of bronze--its pots, shovels, sprinkling bowls, meat forks and firepans. 4 They made a grating for the altar, a bronze network, to be under its ledge, halfway up the altar. 5 They cast bronze rings to hold the poles for the four corners of the bronze grating. 6 They made the poles of acacia wood and overlaid them with bronze. 7 They inserted the poles into the rings so they would be on the sides of the altar for carrying it. They made it hollow, out of boards.

The Basin for Washing

8 They made the bronze basin and its bronze stand from the mirrors of the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting.

The Courtyard

9 Next they made the courtyard. The south side was a hundred cubits long and had curtains of finely twisted linen, 10 with twenty posts and twenty bronze bases, and with silver hooks and bands on the posts. 11 The north side was also a hundred cubits long and had twenty posts and twenty bronze bases, with silver hooks and bands on the posts.

12 The west end was fifty cubits wide and had curtains, with ten posts and ten bases, with silver hooks and bands on the posts. 13 The east end, toward the sunrise, was also fifty cubits wide. 14 Curtains fifteen cubits long were on one side of the entrance, with three posts and three bases, 15 and curtains fifteen cubits long were on the other side of the entrance to the courtyard, with three posts and three bases. 16 All the curtains around the courtyard were of finely twisted linen. 17 The bases for the posts were bronze. The hooks and bands on the posts were silver, and their tops were overlaid with silver; so all the posts of the courtyard had silver bands.

18 The curtain for the entrance to the courtyard was made of blue, purple and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen--the work of an embroiderer. It was twenty cubits long and, like the curtains of the courtyard, five cubits high, 19 with four posts and four bronze bases. Their hooks and bands were silver, and their tops were overlaid with silver. 20 All the tent pegs of the tabernacle and of the surrounding courtyard were bronze.

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The Materials Used

21 These are the amounts of the materials used for the tabernacle, the tabernacle of the covenant law, which were recorded at Moses' command by the Levites under the direction of Ithamar son of Aaron, the priest. 22 (Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, made everything the LORD commanded Moses; 23 with him was Oholiab son of Ahisamak, of the tribe of Dan--an engraver and designer, and an embroiderer in blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen.) 24 The total amount of the gold from the wave offering used for all the work on the sanctuary was 29 talents and 730 shekels, according to the sanctuary shekel.

25 The silver obtained from those of the community who were counted in the census was 100 talents and 1,775 shekels, according to the sanctuary shekel-- 26 one beka per person, that is, half a shekel, according to the sanctuary shekel, from everyone who had crossed over to those counted, twenty years old or more, a total of 603,550 men. 27 The 100 talents of silver were used to cast the bases for the sanctuary and for the curtain--100 bases from the 100 talents, one talent for each base. 28 They used the 1,775 shekels to make the hooks for the posts, to overlay the tops of the posts, and to make their bands.

29 The bronze from the wave offering was 70 talents and 2,400 shekels. 30 They used it to make the bases for the entrance to the tent of meeting, the bronze altar with its bronze grating and all its utensils, 31 the bases for the surrounding courtyard and those for its entrance and all the tent pegs for the tabernacle and those for the surrounding courtyard.

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

Chapter 39

The Priestly Garments

1 From the blue, purple and scarlet yarn they made woven garments for ministering in the sanctuary. They also made sacred garments for Aaron, as the LORD commanded Moses.

The Ephod

2 They made the ephod of gold, and of blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and of finely twisted linen. 3 They hammered out thin sheets of gold and cut strands to be worked into the blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen--the work of skilled hands. 4 They made shoulder pieces for the ephod, which were attached to two of its corners, so it could be fastened. 5 Its skillfully woven waistband was like it--of one piece with the ephod and made with gold, and with blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and with finely twisted linen, as the LORD commanded Moses.

6 They mounted the onyx stones in gold filigree settings and engraved them like a seal with the names of the sons of Israel. 7 Then they fastened them on the shoulder pieces of the ephod as memorial stones for the sons of Israel, as the LORD commanded Moses.

The Breastpiece

8 They fashioned the breastpiece--the work of a skilled craftsman. They made it like the ephod: of gold, and of blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and of finely twisted linen. 9 It was square--a span long and a span wide--and folded double. 10 Then they mounted four rows of precious stones on it. The first row was carnelian, chrysolite and beryl; 11 the second row was turquoise, lapis lazuli and emerald; 12 the third row was jacinth, agate and amethyst; 13 the fourth row was topaz, onyx and jasper. They were mounted in gold filigree settings. 14 There were twelve stones, one for each of the names of the sons of Israel, each engraved like a seal with the name of one of the twelve tribes.

15 For the breastpiece they made braided chains of pure gold, like a rope. 16 They made two gold filigree settings and two gold rings, and fastened the rings to two of the corners of the breastpiece. 17 They fastened the two gold chains to the rings at the corners of the breastpiece, 18 and the other ends of the chains to the two settings, attaching them to the shoulder pieces of the ephod at the front. 19 They made two gold rings and attached them to the other two corners of the breastpiece on the inside edge next to the ephod. 20 Then they made two more gold rings and attached them to the bottom of the shoulder pieces on the front of the ephod, close to the seam just above the waistband of the ephod. 21 They tied the rings of the breastpiece to the rings of the ephod with blue cord, connecting it to the

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waistband so that the breastpiece would not swing out from the ephod--as the LORD commanded Moses.

Other Priestly Garments

22 They made the robe of the ephod entirely of blue cloth--the work of a weaver-- 23 with an opening in the center of the robe like the opening of a collar, and a band around this opening, so that it would not tear. 24 They made pomegranates of blue, purple and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen around the hem of the robe. 25 And they made bells of pure gold and attached them around the hem between the pomegranates. 26 The bells and pomegranates alternated around the hem of the robe to be worn for ministering, as the LORD commanded Moses.

27 For Aaron and his sons, they made tunics of fine linen--the work of a weaver-- 28 and the turban of fine linen, the linen caps and the undergarments of finely twisted linen. 29 The sash was made of finely twisted linen and blue, purple and scarlet yarn--the work of an embroiderer--as the LORD commanded Moses.

30 They made the plate, the sacred emblem, out of pure gold and engraved on it, like an inscription on a seal: holy to the Lord. 31 Then they fastened a blue cord to it to attach it to the turban, as the LORD commanded Moses.

Moses Inspects the Tabernacle

32 So all the work on the tabernacle, the tent of meeting, was completed. The Israelites did everything just as the LORD commanded Moses. 33 Then they brought the tabernacle to Moses: the tent and all its furnishings, its clasps, frames, crossbars, posts and bases; 34 the covering of ram skins dyed red and the covering of another durable leather and the shielding curtain; 35 the ark of the covenant law with its poles and the atonement cover; 36 the table with all its articles and the bread of the Presence; 37 the pure gold lampstand with its row of lamps and all its accessories, and the olive oil for the light; 38 the gold altar, the anointing oil, the fragrant incense, and the curtain for the entrance to the tent; 39 the bronze altar with its bronze grating, its poles and all its utensils; the basin with its stand; 40 the curtains of the courtyard with its posts and bases, and the curtain for the entrance to the courtyard; the ropes and tent pegs for the courtyard; all the furnishings for the tabernacle, the tent of meeting; 41 and the woven garments worn for ministering in the sanctuary, both the sacred garments for Aaron the priest and the garments for his sons when serving as priests.

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

42 The Israelites had done all the work just as the LORD had commanded Moses. 43 Moses inspected the work and saw that they had done it just as the LORD had commanded. So Moses blessed them.

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Chapter 40

Setting Up the Tabernacle

1 Then the LORD said to Moses: 2 "Set up the tabernacle, the tent of meeting, on the first day of the first month. 3 Place the ark of the covenant law in it and shield the ark with the curtain. 4 Bring in the table and set out what belongs on it. Then bring in the lampstand and set up its lamps. 5 Place the gold altar of incense in front of the ark of the covenant law and put the curtain at the entrance to the tabernacle.

6 "Place the altar of burnt offering in front of the entrance to the tabernacle, the tent of meeting; 7 place the basin between the tent of meeting and the altar and put water in it. 8 Set up the courtyard around it and put the curtain at the entrance to the courtyard.

9 "Take the anointing oil and anoint the tabernacle and everything in it; consecrate it and all its furnishings, and it will be holy. 10 Then anoint the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils; consecrate the altar, and it will be most holy. 11 Anoint the basin and its stand and consecrate them.

12 "Bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance to the tent of meeting and wash them with water. 13 Then dress Aaron in the sacred garments, anoint him and consecrate him so he may serve me as priest. 14 Bring his sons and dress them in tunics. 15 Anoint them just as you anointed their father, so they may serve me as priests. Their anointing will be to a priesthood that will continue throughout their generations." 16 Moses did everything just as the LORD commanded him.

17 So the tabernacle was set up on the first day of the first month in the second year. 18 When Moses set up the tabernacle, he put the bases in place, erected the frames, inserted the crossbars and set up the posts. 19 Then he spread the tent over the tabernacle and put the covering over the tent, as the LORD commanded him.

20 He took the tablets of the covenant law and placed them in the ark, attached the poles to the ark and put the atonement cover over it. 21 Then he brought the ark into the tabernacle and hung the shielding curtain and shielded the ark of the covenant law, as the LORD commanded him.

22 Moses placed the table in the tent of meeting on the north side of the tabernacle outside the curtain 23 and set out the bread on it before the LORD, as the LORD commanded him.

24 He placed the lampstand in the tent of meeting opposite the table on the south side of the tabernacle 25 and set up the lamps before the LORD, as the LORD commanded him.

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

26 Moses placed the gold altar in the tent of meeting in front of the curtain 27 and burned fragrant incense on it, as the LORD commanded him.

28 Then he put up the curtain at the entrance to the tabernacle. 29 He set the altar of burnt offering near the entrance to the tabernacle, the tent of meeting, and offered on it burnt offerings and grain offerings, as the LORD commanded him.

30 He placed the basin between the tent of meeting and the altar and put water in it for washing, 31 and Moses and Aaron and his sons used it to wash their hands and feet. 32 They washed whenever they entered the tent of meeting or approached the altar, as the LORD commanded Moses.

33 Then Moses set up the courtyard around the tabernacle and altar and put up the curtain at the entrance to the courtyard. And so Moses finished the work.

The Glory of the Lord

34 Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. 35 Moses could not enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

36 In all the travels of the Israelites, whenever the cloud lifted from above the tabernacle, they would set out; 37 but if the cloud did not lift, they did not set out—until the day it lifted. 38 So the cloud of the LORD was over the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, in the sight of all the Israelites during all their travels.

BOOK OF LEVITICUS

BOOK OF LEVITICUS

Chapter 1

Recently, my wife told me about a conversation she had with someone who said he wanted to start reading the Bible. So, he picked it up and opened it to the book of Numbers. There, he read the story about a man who was gathering wood on the Sabbath. The man was brought before Moses, and God instructed the people to stone him. (Number 15:32-36)

Naturally, this young man was shocked. His response was, “God seems so mean. The man was probably just trying to make breakfast or stay warm.”

His reaction got me thinking.

First, I remembered feeling the same way when I was younger. I tried reading the Bible and struggled to understand these harsh-sounding judgments. I couldn’t wrap my head around how a loving God could demand such severe consequences. I just didn’t get it.

It also made me realize how quickly we judge and put a label on God. After reading just a few verses, we might decide that God is cruel, unfair, or unkind. We close the book and think, “*If that’s what God is like, I want nothing to do with Him.*” Honestly, I am super glad my Heavenly Father doesn’t sum me up that quickly.

But that points to a bigger issue: **our ignorance of God’s Word.**

Opening the Bible at random and expecting it to make sense is like walking into the middle of a movie and trying to write a review after watching just one scene. Without knowing the backstory or context, we’re bound to misunderstand what’s really going on.

The same is true when we read the Old Testament. Many of the stories and laws can seem confusing or harsh unless we understand the bigger picture.

That’s why I’ve decided to start sharing some thoughts and insights from other parts of the Old Testament. My hope is to offer more clarity on the relationship between God, Israel, and the rest of the world during that time.

The most important thing to remember is this: all of this happened before Jesus fulfilled the Law. Back then, the Law was “The Standard” by which Israel lived. But even those laws were pointing forward—to Jesus. There was a reason for everything God commanded. His plan was, and always has been, redemption through Jesus.

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So, with that in mind, let's begin to discover how, even in the duties and demands of the Law, we can find signs of our Savior.

The Brunt Offering

1 The LORD called to Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting. He said, 2 "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'When anyone among you brings an offering to the LORD, bring as your offering an animal from either the herd or the flock.

3 " If the offering is a burnt offering from the herd, you are to offer a male without defect. *[Jesus was sinless, without blemish or defect]* You must present it voluntarily at the entrance to the tent of meeting *[Jesus was also our willing sacrifice]* so that it will be acceptable to the LORD. 4 You are to lay your hand on the head *[a sign of transferring guilt. We must give our heart to Jesus.]* of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on your behalf to make atonement *[covering]* for you. *[Jesus was our substitute sacrifice for sin]* 5 You are to slaughter the young bull before the LORD, *[this symbolized and reminds us that sin brings death, and only by death and the shedding of blood, can sin be atoned. Every sacrificial death points to the ultimate sacrifice that Jesus will die for us, so that we do not have to die eternally.]* and then Aaron's sons the priests shall bring the blood and splash it against the sides of the altar *[Jesus' blood was splashed on the cross for our sin]* at the entrance to the tent of meeting. 6 You are to skin the burnt offering and cut it into pieces. 7 The sons of Aaron the priest are to put fire on the altar and arrange wood on the fire. 8 Then Aaron's sons the priests shall arrange the pieces, including the head and the fat, on the wood that is burning on the altar. 9 You are to wash the internal organs and the legs with water, and the priest is to burn all of it *[burning and fire is a sign of judgement]* on the altar. It is a burnt offering, a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the LORD. *[God was pleased with Jesus' offering of himself]*

10 " If the offering is a burnt offering from the flock, from either the sheep or the goats, you are to offer a male *[Jesus]* without defect. 11 You are to slaughter it at the north side of the altar before the LORD, and Aaron's sons the priests shall splash its blood against the sides of the altar. 12 You are to cut it into pieces, and the priest shall arrange them, including the head and the fat, on the wood that is burning on the altar. 13 You are to wash the internal organs and the legs with water, and the priest is to bring all of them *[Jesus gave himself completely for our redemption]* and burn them on the altar. It is a burnt offering, a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the LORD.

14 " If the offering to the LORD is a burnt offering of birds, you are to offer a dove or a young pigeon. 15 The priest shall bring it to the altar, wring off the head and burn it on the altar; its blood shall be drained out on the side of the altar. 16 He is to remove the crop and

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the feathers and throw them down east of the altar where the ashes are. 17 He shall tear it open by the wings, not dividing it completely, and then the priest shall burn it on the wood that is burning on the altar. It is a burnt offering, a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the LORD. *[Jesus gave himself to all classes of people and made himself accessible to all]*

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Chapter 2

For many years, I was very skeptical about the Church as an organization. I grew up around conflicting teachings—from Jehovah's Witnesses to Southern Baptists to Presbyterians—and eventually, I became pretty much agnostic. To me, the Church seemed like it only cared about one thing: getting my money.

I saw TV preachers asking for donations in exchange for "healing" cloths. Some even claimed that if people didn't give, God would take them to heaven—and they meant that as a threat! (To be honest, I prayed God *would* take them so we could get better programming on TV).

Needless to say, I was suspicious. Even after I gave my life to Jesus in a small Baptist church, I listened carefully every Sunday when the offering time came, waiting for the "hook."

Then one Sunday, the preacher said something I never expected. It felt like he was speaking directly to me. He said, "Giving to God is an act of worship and celebration. God doesn't need your money. We trust God to provide, so we don't want anything that's given out of guilt. If you feel anxious or pressured to give, please—keep your money. It won't help you spiritually. You'll just be a few dollars poorer. Until you learn to give with joy—keep your money."

I was stunned. He had just read my heart out loud from the pulpit. And then he did something even more surprising. As the ushers walked down the aisles with the offering plates, he said, "*By the way, if anyone is in need, please feel free to take from the plate as it passes. God wants you to know that He loves you and is here for you.*"

I nearly fell out of my seat. When the plate came to me, I looked down and saw the offerings others had placed inside. I passed it along without giving. I didn't feel judged or guilty—but I did feel something. That day, the sermon faded from my mind, but the preacher's words about giving stayed with me. This church had no hidden agenda. Only grace. Only room for me to search my own heart.

That moment changed how I see giving. Now, over 30 years later, every time an offering is taken, I remember the gift Jesus gave me—and how that preacher gave me the space to discover joyful giving on my own.

This brings us to the grain offering in Leviticus chapter 2. This offering is all about giving from our work and giving with a thankful heart. It was a voluntary offering—just like Jesus' gift to us. As we look at this offering, I'll point out some of the beautiful ways it reflects

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Jesus. His shadow is all over this offering and the offerings to come. Everywhere we look in the Levitical teachings, we will find Jesus.

All these acts and duties were signs for hundreds of years that pointed toward him, his coming, his death, and our hope. It's really very cool!!

The Grain Offering

1 " When anyone brings [*offers, voluntarily gives*] a grain offering to the LORD, their offering is to be of the finest flour. They are to pour olive oil [*symbol of the Holy Spirit*] on it, put incense [*symbol of prayer*] on it 2 and take it to Aaron's sons the priests. The priest shall take a handful of the flour and oil, together with all the incense, and burn [*fire often represents judgment, but not just the negative side, for judgment also purifies. Burning can also represent God's presence and holiness. i.e., the burning bush. Judgement is often a result of being in the holiness of God.*] this as a memorial portion on the altar, a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the LORD. 3 The rest of the grain offering belongs to Aaron and his sons; it is a most holy part of the food offerings presented to the LORD.

4 " If you bring a grain offering baked in an oven, it is to consist of the finest flour: either thick loaves made without yeast [*yeast represents sin, worldliness, the flesh*] and with olive oil mixed in or thin loaves made without yeast and brushed with olive oil. 5 If your grain offering is prepared on a griddle, it is to be made of the finest flour mixed with oil, and without yeast. 6 Crumble it and pour oil on it; it is a grain offering. 7 If your grain offering is cooked in a pan, it is to be made of the finest flour and some olive oil. 8 Bring the grain offering made of these things to the LORD; present it to the priest, who shall take it to the altar. 9 He shall take out the memorial portion from the grain offering and burn it on the altar as a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the LORD. 10 The rest of the grain offering belongs to Aaron and his sons; it is a most holy part of the food offerings presented to the LORD.

11 " Every grain offering you bring to the LORD must be made without yeast, for you are not to burn any yeast or honey [*honey artificially sweetens the bread. God doesn't want "show", he wants us as we are.*] in a food offering presented to the LORD. 12 You may bring them to the LORD as an offering of the firstfruits, but they are not to be offered on the altar as a pleasing aroma. 13 Season all your grain offerings with salt. [*salt draws out the "real". It preserves, cures, purifies, and sustains.*] Do not leave the salt of the covenant of your God out of your grain offerings; add salt to all your offerings.

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14 " If you bring a grain offering of firstfruits to the LORD, offer crushed heads of new grain roasted in the fire. 15 Put oil and incense on it; it is a grain offering. 16 The priest shall burn the memorial portion of the crushed grain and the oil, together with all the incense, as a food offering presented to the LORD.

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Chapter 3

This next offering is something truly special. As we reflect on the Old Testament offerings, it's important to remember that each one is a shadow—a reflection—of Jesus, who was to come. These offerings are no longer about the process or method as much as they were about the purpose behind them. The key is understanding the heart behind each one.

This particular offering is often called the Fellowship Offering, though I personally prefer calling it the Peace Offering. It was voluntary—given either between individuals or by a person alone with God. It expressed gratitude, thankfulness, and a desire for deeper connection. No matter who was involved, God was always included, because He is the source and sustainer of our peace.

There's one major truth this offering highlight: True peace can only be found in and with God, our Father.

One part of this offering that really stood out to me was the mention of fat. God gets the fat. At first glance, that might sound funny or insignificant—but in the context of that time, fat was the best part. It was the richest, most flavorful, most desirable portion. And not just the obvious fat, but the deepest fat within the body.

This is symbolic. God doesn't just want what's good—He wants the best. The deepest part of us. He wants our wholehearted worship, not just what's convenient or easy.

Living in a land of abundance, we often equate giving with financial generosity. And while writing a check or swiping a card is meaningful, we need to ask: Is this really my best?

That question challenged me. Truthfully, it's often easier for me to give money than to give the deeper parts of myself. But the "fat" of our lives—the best part—might not be our bank account.

It might be:

- Your talent – Are you using your gifts to glorify God and serve others? Do you have a voice, a skill, or a craft that could lift others up in worship or service?
- Your intelligence – Maybe you're sharp in business or strategy, but haven't yet used those strengths to disciple others or build God's Kingdom.
- Your time – Do you give your energy to career or goals, but struggle to offer your time to yourself?

So, I leave you with this challenge: What is the "fat" portion of your life? What's the deepest, best part of who you are—and are you offering it to God? Reflect and pray on how

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you might present that part of yourself as an offering to the One who gave His best—Himself—to bring us peace, family, church, or community?

The Fellowship Offering (or Peace Offering)

1 " If your offering is a fellowship offering, and you offer an animal from the herd, whether male or female, you are to present before the LORD an animal without defect. 2 You are to lay your hand on the head of your offering. *[symbolizing the sincerity of your heart]* and slaughter it at the entrance to the tent of meeting. Then Aaron's sons the priests shall splash the blood against the sides of the altar. *[always remembering Jesus on the cross: The author of our Peace]* 3 From the fellowship offering you are to bring a food offering to the LORD: the internal organs and all the fat that is connected to them, 4 both kidneys with the fat on them near the loins, and the long lobe of the liver, which you will remove with the kidneys. 5 Then Aaron's sons are to burn it on the altar on top of the burnt offering that is lying on the burning wood; it is a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the LORD.

6 " If you offer an animal from the flock as a fellowship offering to the LORD, you are to offer a male or female without defect. *[this offering is not about atonement for sin, rather a celebration of unity and gratitude. By allowing both genders, it speaks to the inclusivity of Jesus for everyone.]* 7 If you offer a lamb, you are to present it before the LORD, 8 lay your hand on its head and slaughter it in front of the tent of meeting. Then Aaron's sons shall splash its blood against the sides of the altar. 9 From the fellowship offering you are to bring a food offering to the LORD: its fat, the entire fat tail cut off close to the backbone, the internal organs and all the fat that is connected to them, 10 both kidneys with the fat on them near the loins, and the long lobe of the liver, which you will remove with the kidneys. 11 The priest shall burn them on the altar as a food offering presented to the LORD.

12 " If your offering is a goat, you are to present it before the LORD, 13 lay your hand on its head and slaughter it in front of the tent of meeting. Then Aaron's sons shall splash its blood against the sides of the altar. 14 From what you offer you are to present this food offering to the LORD: the internal organs and all the fat that is connected to them, 15 both kidneys with the fat on them near the loins, and the long lobe of the liver, which you will remove with the kidneys. 16 The priest shall burn them on the altar as a food offering, a pleasing aroma. All the fat is the LORD's.

17 " This is a lasting ordinance *[Hebrew: huqqa. A law, rule, custom for a specific place or people only.]* for the generations to come, *[Hebrew: dor. Means a linear space of time. It has a beginning and end]* wherever you live: You must not eat any fat or any blood.'

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Chapter 4

Growing up, I had some pretty wacky ideas about God.

When I lived in Texas, most of my spiritual exposure came from Jehovah's Witness teachings. Later, in Los Angeles, my view of God was shaped more by television than anything else. The most "God" I got was watching *The Greatest Story Ever Told* or *The Ten Commandments* when they aired once a year.

Needless to say, my understanding of God was built on a mix of ignorance and misinformation.

But honestly, I don't think I was all that different from a lot of people—back then or even now. Many of us let pop culture, personal opinions, or social trends shape what we believe about God, heaven, and the afterlife. Even our ideas about right and wrong get reshaped by what we see and hear in the world. There are endless opinions out there—but when it comes down to it, there's only one truth.

That brings us to Leviticus chapter 4, which is a really interesting passage. It outlines four types of people in two broad groups. Spiritually, we can see this as a picture of the division between those who believe in Jesus and those who don't—or, as I like to think of them, "pre-Christians."

This chapter deals with the sin offering for unintentional sin—in other words, when someone sins without realizing at the time that what they were doing was wrong. Who can't relate to that?

When I was younger, I sinned in ignorance all the time. That's part of what made me so "dumb" back then—I hadn't yet learned what was wrong and what wasn't. Some of my sins were the result of factual ignorance—I simply didn't have the information I needed.

Some came from moral ignorance—I had never been taught what was right, and I assumed that if everyone else did it, it must be okay.

Others were rooted in willful (or vincible) ignorance—when I could have known better but chose not to find out. Then there's social or invincible ignorance—the kind of not-knowing that only experience can reveal, like customs or values you'd never even encountered before.

What I love about this chapter is how it shows that no matter where you are in your walk with God—whether you believe in Jesus or not—we all carry some level of ignorance. And the chapter starts from the top down: first the priest (the highest spiritual role), then

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the spiritual community, and only then the rest of the world, including unredeemed leaders and individuals.

There's a clear message here for believers: always start with yourself. As David prayed in Psalm 139:23–24:

“Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! See if there's any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

The good news? We don't have to sacrifice animals to be made right when we realize we've sinned in ignorance. Jesus already made the sacrifice.

All we need to do is acknowledge our sin, give our hearts to Him, and then take what remains—our pride, our flesh, our ego—and throw it on the ash heap. Jesus makes it simple. Just open your heart and ask God to show you where ignorance still lives in you. He'll be glad to help—He wants to. And in my own life, I've found that the root of most of my ignorance is often baked into pride.

The Sin (of Ignorance) Offering

1 The LORD said to Moses, 2 “Say to the Israelites: ‘When anyone sins unintentionally *[or in ignorance]* and does what is forbidden in any of the LORD's commands—

3 “If the anointed priest sins, *[starting with the spiritual leader. Not just the pastors, elders, or deacons, because every Believer in Christ is a priest, even if it is only in your home. (Men! I am looking at you very strongly on this one. But this also includes all parents, and single-family household.)]* bringing guilt on the people, he must bring to the LORD a young bull without defect as a sin offering for the sin he has committed. 4 He is to present the bull at the entrance to the tent of meeting before the LORD. He is to lay his hand on its head and slaughter it there before the LORD. 5 Then the anointed priest shall take some of the bull's blood and carry it into the tent of meeting. 6 He is to dip his finger into the blood and sprinkle some of it seven times before the LORD, in front of the curtain of the sanctuary. 7 The priest shall then put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of fragrant incense that is before the LORD in the tent of meeting. The rest of the bull's blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering at the entrance to the tent of meeting. 8 He shall remove all the fat from the bull of the sin offering--all the fat that is connected to the internal organs, 9 both kidneys with the fat on them near the loins, and the long lobe of the liver, which he will remove with the kidneys-- 10 just as the fat is removed from the ox sacrificed as a fellowship offering. Then the priest shall burn them on the altar of burnt offering. 11 But the hide of the bull and all its flesh, as well as the head and legs, the internal organs and the intestines-- 12 that is, all the rest of the bull--he must take outside the camp

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to a place ceremonially clean, where the ashes are thrown, and burn it there in a wood fire on the ash heap.

13 " If the whole Israelite community [*Still speaking on the spiritual shadow. This can relate directly to a church, but not just the "organized" church. "Where two or more gather in my name" (Matthew 18:20) any size gathering, formal or informal of Believers.*] sins unintentionally and does what is forbidden in any of the LORD's commands, even though the community is unaware of the matter, when they realize their guilt 14 and the sin they committed becomes known, the assembly must bring a young bull as a sin offering and present it before the tent of meeting. 15 The elders of the community are to lay their hands on the bull's head before the LORD, and the bull shall be slaughtered before the LORD. 16 Then the anointed priest is to take some of the bull's blood into the tent of meeting. 17 He shall dip his finger into the blood and sprinkle it before the LORD seven times in front of the curtain. 18 He is to put some of the blood on the horns of the altar that is before the LORD in the tent of meeting. The rest of the blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering at the entrance to the tent of meeting. 19 He shall remove all the fat from it and burn it on the altar, 20 and do with this bull just as he did with the bull for the sin offering. In this way the priest will make atonement for the community, and they will be forgiven. 21 Then he shall take the bull outside the camp and burn it as he burned the first bull. This is the sin offering for the community.

22 " When a leader [*An individual non-Believer with influence. Where many of us were prior to inviting Jesus into our lives.*] sins unintentionally and does what is forbidden in any of the commands of the LORD his God, when he realizes his guilt 23 and the sin he has committed becomes known, he must bring as his offering a male goat without defect. 24 He is to lay his hand on the goat's head and slaughter it at the place where the burnt offering is slaughtered before the LORD. It is a sin offering. 25 Then the priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and pour out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar. 26 He shall burn all the fat on the altar as he burned the fat of the fellowship offering. In this way the priest will make atonement for the leader's sin, and he will be forgiven.

27 " If any member of the community [*Everyone, regardless of our influence. Thus, we have the demonstration of the words, "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23) No one is left out of guilt.*] sins unintentionally and does what is forbidden in any of the LORD's commands, when they realize their guilt 28 and the sin they have committed becomes known, they must bring as their offering for the sin they committed a female goat without defect. 29 They are to lay their hand on the head of the sin offering and slaughter it at the place of the burnt offering. 30 Then the priest is to take some

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of the blood with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and pour out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar. 31 They shall remove all the fat, just as the fat is removed from the fellowship offering, and the priest shall burn it on the altar as an aroma pleasing to the LORD. In this way the priest will make atonement for them, and they will be forgiven.

32 " If someone brings a lamb as their sin offering, they are to bring a female without defect. 33 They are to lay their hand on its head and slaughter it for a sin offering at the place where the burnt offering is slaughtered. 34 Then the priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and pour out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar. 35 They shall remove all the fat, just as the fat is removed from the lamb of the fellowship offering, and the priest shall burn it on the altar on top of the food offerings presented to the LORD. In this way the priest will make atonement for them for the sin they have committed, and they will be forgiven.

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Chapter 5

My wife and I have been married for almost 20 years at the time of writing this. That might sound like a long time to some, but I know others who've been married much longer—so to them, we might still seem like newlyweds.

When I was younger and just starting out in marriage, I'd meet couples who had been together for 20 years or more and think, "Wow, they must really have this marriage thing figured out." Now that I'm almost there myself, I realize, "Wow, I still have so much to learn!"

One thing I have learned is that relationships are always growing and changing. You never truly "arrive." Over time, some early struggles do get worked out—especially when both people put in the effort. The issues may come up less often and might not feel as intense. But challenges still come. There's always something new to face and grow through together.

I think I've mentioned this before, especially for those of you who've read along with me over the years, but it's worth saying again because it fits so well with this chapter of Leviticus. One thing I really appreciate about my wife is her willingness to help me correct myself. When we were first married, her pointing out where I was off track could be frustrating. But as I've grown to understand her heart, I've come to see that her corrections were acts of love. She wasn't trying to control or criticize me out of pride. She wanted to help me become the man God created me to be.

That's part of being partners in life. It reminds me of Proverbs 27:17:

"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another."

It's a great verse—but the process isn't always easy. Still, I challenge you to pause and really listen when those sharpening moments come. Consider what's being said before you react.

This verse came to mind while I read this chapter in Leviticus, especially because of the repeated phrases like "become aware" and "come to realize." The truth is, we all do wrong things. It's just part of being human. God knows this, and in Leviticus, He makes room for that. Sometimes we sin without even realizing it; other times, we know exactly what we're doing. Either way, God gives us a way to restore the relationship.

It all starts with awareness. But awareness is just the beginning. Once we recognize something's wrong, we have to choose how to respond. What we do next shapes our relationships—with others and with God.

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Yes, Jesus has already forgiven all our sins—past, present, and future. But when we become aware of our sin and bring it to Him, that's part of staying in an active relationship with God. And like any relationship, it takes effort from both sides. The more you put in, the more you get out. The deeper the love, the deeper the connection.

This chapter in Leviticus is about responsibility and staying connected to God. Back then, they showed that through offering sacrifices. For us, the sacrifice is Jesus. The method has changed, but the heart behind it hasn't. Confession and connection are still just as important today as they were back then.

Confession isn't about feeling ashamed or beating yourself up. It's about seeing sin clearly and remembering how much we need Jesus. It reminds us of His grace and mercy—shown through His constant forgiveness. Not just once, but every day.

1 " If anyone sins because they do not speak up when they hear a public charge to testify regarding something they have seen or learned about, they will be held responsible. *[often referred to as the sin of omission. Shutting up, not getting involved, burying your head in the sand when you know something, but fear the consequences, or just plain don't care how your silence may cause another to suffer.]*

2 " If anyone becomes aware that they are guilty--if they unwittingly touch anything ceremonially unclean (whether the carcass of an unclean animal, wild or domestic, or of any unclean creature that moves along the ground) and they are unaware that they have become unclean, but then they come to realize their guilt; 3 or if they touch human uncleanness (anything that would make them unclean) even though they are unaware of it, but then they learn of it and realize their guilt; 4 or if anyone thoughtlessly takes an oath to do anything, whether good or evil (in any matter one might carelessly swear about) even though they are unaware of it, but then they learn of it and realize their guilt-- 5 when anyone becomes aware that they are guilty in any of these matters, they must confess in what way they have sinned. 6 As a penalty for the sin they have committed, they must bring to the LORD a female lamb or goat from the flock as a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement for them for their sin.

7 " Anyone who cannot afford a lamb is to bring two doves or two young pigeons to the LORD as a penalty for their [trespass] *[a trespass is knowingly crossing a boundary against the law]* sin --one for a sin offering *[atonement or payment of sin always has to be dwelt with first]* and the other for a burnt offering. *[the burnt offering symbolizes the renewed commitment and holiness. First the sin, then the cleansing.]* 8 They are to bring them to the priest, who shall first offer the one for the sin offering. He is to wring its head from its neck, not dividing it completely, 9 and is to splash some of the blood of the sin

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offering against the side of the altar; the rest of the blood must be drained out at the base of the altar. It is a sin offering. 10 The priest shall then offer the other as a burnt offering in the prescribed way and make atonement for them for the sin they have committed, and they will be forgiven. *[Just as Jesus atoned for our sins and guilt, and through that we are made clean and forgiven.]*

11 ' If, however, they cannot afford two doves or two young pigeons, they are to bring as an offering for their sin a tenth of an ephah of the finest flour for a sin offering. They must not put olive oil or incense on it, because it is a sin offering. 12 They are to bring it to the priest, who shall take a handful of it as a memorial portion and burn it on the altar on top of the food offerings presented to the LORD. It is a sin offering. 13 In this way the priest will make atonement for them for any of these sins they have committed, and they will be forgiven. *[Jesus made a way possible for all to receive forgiveness.]* The rest of the offering will belong to the priest, as in the case of the grain offering.' "

The Guilt Offering

14 The LORD said to Moses: 15 'When anyone is unfaithful to the LORD by sinning unintentionally in regard to any of the LORD's holy things, *[Here we can miss an important key as we wander through these nuances of Old Testament Law. What are the real Holy Things of God? If we remember Matthew 22:37-40 where Jesus defined the two priorities for God's law: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself." All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.]* they are to bring to the LORD as a penalty a ram from the flock, one without defect and of the proper value in silver, according to the sanctuary shekel. It is a guilt offering. 16 They must make restitution for what they have failed to do in regard to the holy things, pay an additional penalty of a fifth of its value and give it all to the priest. *[There will be times that more than a confession to God may be needed when you have sinned against another, even unintentionally. Especially if you caused them to stumble in their walk with God.]* The priest will make atonement for them with the ram as a guilt offering, and they will be forgiven.

17 'If anyone sins and does what is forbidden in any of the LORD's commands, even though they do not know it, they are guilty and will be held responsible. 18 They are to bring to the priest as a guilt offering a ram from the flock, one without defect and of the proper value. In this way the priest will make atonement for them for the wrong they have committed unintentionally, and they will be forgiven. 19 It is a guilt offering; they have been guilty of wrongdoing against the LORD.'

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Chapter 6

I'm going to combine the next two chapters—Chapter 6 and Chapter 7—because they really flow together.

I've taken some time to think and pray about these chapters. One thing that stood out to me as I've been reading Leviticus is how easy it is to get lost in all the details. Have you ever felt that way? Maybe you've gone through a time when everything felt overwhelming—job problems, family problems, church problems, marriage, or financial struggles. It feels like issues are hitting you from every direction. You start out feeling like you've got things under control, but before long, it feels like you're trying to bail out a sinking boat with a thimble.

You deal with one problem, only to realize another one has slipped in while you weren't looking. You're not sinking, but you're not moving forward either—you're just treading water.

That's kind of where I found myself. Honestly, it describes a little of my life right now! Ha ha. So, I took a break. I stopped trying to force everything to fit and just stepped back.

I had to do something I often forget to do when life gets busy—I surrendered. Quietly. I asked the Father to guide me. Then I simply listened and read His Word in silence. And again, something stood out to me. A passage from Matthew 22 came to mind, where Jesus tells us the greatest commandments:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

And suddenly it hit me—these chapters in Leviticus are laid out the same way. The early chapters talk about our relationship with God—His redemptive nature and how He draws us to Himself. Starting in Chapter 5 and continuing on, the focus shifts to how we relate to other people.

Yes, there's a lot of symbolism and deep meaning in the actions and offerings described. I'll point out some of those as we go. But at the heart of it, these chapters show two key things: our relationship with God, and our relationship with others. Even in all the small details, God's voice is steady and clear.

The message hasn't changed: He loves me. He loves you. And He calls us to love and serve Him—by loving and serving others.

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1 The LORD said to Moses: 2 'If anyone sins and is unfaithful to the LORD by deceiving a neighbor about something entrusted to them or left in their care or about something stolen, or if they cheat their neighbor, 3 or if they find lost property and lie about it, or if they swear falsely about any such sin that people may commit-- 4 when they sin in any of these ways and realize their guilt, they must return what they have stolen or taken by extortion, or what was entrusted to them, or the lost property they found, 5 or whatever it was they swore falsely about. They must make restitution in full, add a fifth of the value to it and give it all to the owner on the day they present their guilt offering. 6 And as a penalty they must bring to the priest, that is, to the LORD, their guilt offering, a ram from the flock, one without defect and of the proper value. 7 In this way the priest will make atonement for them before the LORD, and they will be forgiven for any of the things they did that made them guilty." *[These were sins against other people, but they were also sins against God. For God loves people.]*

The Burnt Offering

8 The LORD said to Moses: 9 'Give Aaron and his sons this command: 'These are the regulations for the burnt offering: The burnt offering is to remain on the altar hearth throughout the night, till morning, and the fire must be kept burning on the altar. 10 The priest shall then put on his linen clothes, with linen undergarments next to his body, and shall remove the ashes of the burnt offering that the fire has consumed on the altar and place them beside the altar. 11 Then he is to take off these clothes and put on others, and carry the ashes outside the camp to a place that is ceremonially clean. 12 The fire on the altar must be kept burning; it must not go out. Every morning the priest is to add firewood and arrange the burnt offering on the fire and burn the fat of the fellowship offerings on it. 13 The fire must be kept burning on the altar continuously; it must not go out. *[We can easily see the shadow of God's love, sacrifice, judgment, and purifying always continuing in our lives, but also our "fire" for Him is not just for Sundays. It is a daily, always-present walk with Him. Through this constant "fire," our lives improve, and our relationship with God deepens.]*

The Grain Offering

14 ' These are the regulations for the grain offering: Aaron's sons are to bring it before the LORD, in front of the altar. 15 The priest is to take a handful of the finest flour and some olive oil, together with all the incense on the grain offering, and burn the memorial portion on the altar as an aroma pleasing to the LORD. 16 Aaron and his sons shall eat the rest of it, but it is to be eaten without yeast in the sanctuary area; they are to eat it in the courtyard of the tent of meeting. 17 It must not be baked with yeast; I have given it as their share of the food offerings presented to me. Like the sin offering and the guilt offering, it is most holy. 18

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Any male descendant of Aaron may eat it. For all generations to come it is his perpetual share of the food offerings presented to the LORD. Whatever touches them will become holy.' "*[We can see the Last Supper, and the Bread of Life being offered to all. All who partake will join the royal priesthood and be made holy – redeemed by Jesus.]*

19 The LORD also said to Moses, 20 "This is the offering Aaron and his sons are to bring to the LORD on the day he is anointed: a tenth of an ephah of the finest flour as a regular grain offering, half of it in the morning and half in the evening. 21 It must be prepared with oil on a griddle; bring it well-mixed and present the grain offering broken in pieces as an aroma pleasing to the LORD. 22 The son who is to succeed him as anointed priest shall prepare it. It is the LORD's perpetual share and is to be burned completely. 23 Every grain offering of a priest shall be burned completely; it must not be eaten."

The Sin Offering

24 The LORD said to Moses, 25 "Say to Aaron and his sons: 'These are the regulations for the sin offering: The sin offering is to be slaughtered before the LORD in the place the burnt offering is slaughtered; it is most holy. 26 The priest who offers it shall eat it; it is to be eaten in the sanctuary area, in the courtyard of the tent of meeting. 27 Whatever touches any of the flesh will become holy, and if any of the blood is spattered on a garment, you must wash it in the sanctuary area. 28 The clay pot the meat is cooked in must be broken; but if it is cooked in a bronze pot, the pot is to be scoured and rinsed with water. *[The "blood" transfers the sin figuratively here. When sin soaks into something, there is no way to cleanse it. So it must be destroyed. Yet, if sin only touches something that has been tempered by fire, such as a bronze pot – it has already been judged and cleansed from within. It then only needs to be cleansed. Can you see the difference between those with Jesus and without? You can see the need and God's desire that none shall perish but all come to eternal life through the cleansing power of Jesus.]* 29 Any male in a priest's family may eat it; it is most holy. 30 But any sin offering whose blood is brought into the tent of meeting to make atonement in the Holy Place must not be eaten; it must be burned up.

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Chapter 7

The Guilt Offering

1 " These are the regulations for the guilt [*Offense, Fault, Trespass*] offering, which is most holy: 2 The guilt offering is to be slaughtered in the place where the burnt offering is slaughtered, and its blood is to be splashed against the sides of the altar. [*This gives a good visual of the price that must be paid, and has been paid for our "choices" to walk contrary to God.*] 3 All its fat shall be offered: the fat tail and the fat that covers the internal organs, 4 both kidneys with the fat on them near the loins, and the long lobe of the liver, which is to be removed with the kidneys. 5 The priest shall burn them on the altar as a food offering presented to the LORD. It is a guilt offering. 6 Any male in a priest's family may eat it, but it must be eaten in the sanctuary area; it is most holy.

7 " The same law applies to both the sin offering and the guilt offering: They belong to the priest who makes atonement with them. 8 The priest who offers a burnt offering for anyone may keep its hide for himself. 9 Every grain offering baked in an oven or cooked in a pan or on a griddle belongs to the priest who offers it, 10 and every grain offering, whether mixed with olive oil or dry, belongs equally to all the sons of Aaron.

The Fellowship Offering

11 " These are the regulations for the fellowship offering anyone may present to the LORD:

12 " If they offer it as an expression of thankfulness, then along with this thank offering they are to offer thick loaves made without yeast and with olive oil mixed in, thin loaves made without yeast and brushed with oil, and thick loaves of the finest flour well-kneaded and with oil mixed in. 13 Along with their fellowship offering of thanksgiving they are to present an offering with thick loaves of bread made with yeast. [*The priest offering was accomplished by the priest holding the unleavened bread (sinless man) in one hand and the leavened bread (sin-filled man) in the other. He would then wave this before the Lord. This is a remarkable symbol of Jesus and Man. But reveals to us that we, in our sinful state, may still come before the Lord and fellowship with Him, due to the sinless redemption of Jesus. This is a wonderful symbol of the hope we have, and gives us reason to celebrate.*] 14 They are to bring one of each kind as an offering, a contribution to the LORD; it belongs to the priest who splashes the blood of the fellowship offering against the altar. 15 The meat of their fellowship offering of thanksgiving must be eaten on the day it is offered; they must leave none of it till morning.

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16 "If, however, their offering is the result of a vow or is a freewill offering, the sacrifice shall be eaten on the day they offer it, but anything left over may be eaten on the next day. 17 Any meat of the sacrifice left over till the third day must be burned up. 18 If any meat of the fellowship offering is eaten on the third day, the one who offered it will not be accepted. It will not be reckoned to their credit, for it has become impure; the person who eats any of it will be held responsible.

19 "Meat that touches anything ceremonially unclean must not be eaten; it must be burned up. As for other meat, anyone ceremonially clean may eat it. 20 But if anyone who is unclean eats any meat of the fellowship offering belonging to the LORD, they must be cut off from their people. 21 Anyone who touches something unclean—whether human uncleanness or an unclean animal or any unclean creature that moves along the ground—and then eats any of the meat of the fellowship offering belonging to the LORD must be cut off from their people." *[This mirrors 1 Corinthians 11:27-28 "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthy, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a person examine themselves, and so let them eat of that bread and drink of that cup." It means: take the communion in a worthy manner. Use that time to confess your sins. Use the breaking of bread before the Lord to do a self-inventory.]*

Eating Fat and Blood Forbidden

22 The LORD said to Moses, 23 "Say to the Israelites: 'Do not eat any of the fat of cattle, sheep or goats. 24 The fat of an animal found dead or torn by wild animals may be used for any other purpose, but you must not eat it. 25 Anyone who eats the fat of an animal from which a food offering may be presented to the LORD must be cut off from their people. 26 And wherever you live, you must not eat the blood of any bird or animal. 27 Anyone who eats blood must be cut off from their people.' " *[The fat is the best portion and belongs to God. Reminding us to give to God what is God. The blood is the sinful portion of mankind. Reminding us symbolically to avoid sin. This symbolic message contains a life of sermons for each of us. Give your best to God, and avoid enjoying sin.]*

The Priest Share

28 The LORD said to Moses, 29 "Say to the Israelites: 'Anyone who brings a fellowship offering to the LORD is to bring part of it as their sacrifice to the LORD. 30 With their own hands *[God does not want us to delegate our faithfulness to Him. He wants it to be personal, and only personal.]* they are to present the food offering to the LORD; they are to bring the fat, together with the breast, and wave the breast before the LORD as a wave offering. 31 The priest shall burn the fat on the altar, but the breast belongs to Aaron and his

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sons. 32 You are to give the right thigh of your fellowship offerings to the priest as a contribution. 33 The son of Aaron who offers the blood and the fat of the fellowship offering shall have the right thigh as his share. 34 From the fellowship offerings of the Israelites, I have taken the breast that is waved and the thigh that is presented and have given them to Aaron the priest and his sons as their perpetual share from the Israelites.' "

35 This is the portion of the food offerings presented to the LORD that were allotted to Aaron and his sons on the day they were presented to serve the LORD as priests. 36 On the day they were anointed, the LORD commanded that the Israelites give this to them as their perpetual share for the generations to come.

37 These, then, are the regulations for the burnt offering, the grain offering, the sin offering, the guilt offering, the ordination offering and the fellowship offering, 38 which the LORD gave Moses at Mount Sinai in the Desert of Sinai on the day he commanded the Israelites to bring their offerings to the LORD.

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Chapter 8

One of my struggles early in life was trying to understand church. I would sometimes visit my dad's church in Texas. I remember the preacher standing at a fancy, decorated pulpit, wearing a long black robe with a colorful stole around his shoulders. The choir also wore robes, and there were a lot of shiny, special items at the front of the church.

There was a long table that held a big Bible, a bowl with bread, and a beautiful gold cup. As a child, all of this felt mysterious. It just looked very formal and fancy. I also remember how my siblings and I had to stay very quiet when we entered the sanctuary. And it always felt cold in there. (But, since it was Texas, I can now say I appreciate the air conditioning! Ha).

Maybe you have memories like this, too. In some ways, church has changed a lot over the years, but we still hold on to many old traditions. The key is finding a healthy balance. Our Christian faith is rich in symbolism, and remembering the past can help encourage our faith today. Some traditional practices can still be meaningful—if we understand them.

But sometimes traditions become the focus, and we lose sight of the real purpose. When that happens, it becomes just a religious routine. Friends, don't do something just because it's always been done. Instead, try to understand *why* it's done. If it honors God, it's a good thing. If it's only about keeping tradition for tradition's sake, it may be time to take a second look.

I bring this up because the chapter we're looking at has created a lot of tradition in the church—specifically around setting apart and ordaining priests. But I want us to take a step back and look at it from a higher view. Put on your "Jesus glasses" and see it as a shadow of something greater.

We have the New Testament, and we know that every person who has given their heart to Jesus is a priest in God's eyes. Yes, there are people in full-time ministry—but they aren't the only priests. They are ministers, which literally means "servants." We are ministers too.

This is where a lot of confusion happens. Many people think paid church staff are somehow more spiritual. But they're not. Don't sell yourself short. You are just as much a priest and minister as they are. The only difference is *where* and *how* you serve, compared to where and how they serve.

I'm thankful for my pastors. They encourage and build me up so I can go out and do the work God has called me to in my job, my life, and my relationships.

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If you look closely at this chapter, you'll see a picture of your own ordination as a priest. You have been set apart for God's service. You've been washed clean through the water and blood of Jesus. You've admitted your sin, trusted in Jesus' sacrifice, committed to follow Him, and are learning to listen for His voice.

This chapter is actually a beautiful one. It shows the transformation and calling God gave to the priests back then—but it also points to the same transformation and calling He gives each of us through Jesus.

The Ordination of Aaron and His Sons

1 The LORD said to Moses, 2 "Bring Aaron and his sons, their garments, the anointing oil, the bull for the sin offering, the two rams and the basket containing bread made without yeast, 3 and gather the entire assembly at the entrance to the tent of meeting." *[True service begins with God's call on one's life. It is not something that can be achieved through human ambition or determination.]* 4 Moses did as the LORD commanded him, *[Seven times this phrase will be repeated. Moses demonstrates the right posture of heart toward God.]* and the assembly gathered at the entrance to the tent of meeting.

5 Moses said to the assembly, "This is what the LORD has commanded to be done." 6 Then Moses brought Aaron and his sons forward and washed them with water. *[Service to God begins with us being cleansed by the Blood of the Lamb and the baptism with the Holy Spirit.]* 7 He put the tunic on Aaron, tied the sash around him, clothed him with the robe and put the ephod on him. He also fastened the ephod with a decorative waistband, which he tied around him. 8 He placed the breastpiece on him and put the Urim and Thummim in the breastpiece. 9 Then he placed the turban on Aaron's head and set the gold plate, the sacred emblem, on the front of it, as the LORD commanded Moses.

10 Then Moses took the anointing oil and anointed the tabernacle and everything in it, and so consecrated them. 11 He sprinkled some of the oil on the altar seven times, anointing the altar and all its utensils and the basin with its stand, to consecrate them. 12 He poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head and anointed him to consecrate him. 13 Then he brought Aaron's sons forward, put tunics on them, tied sashes around them and fastened caps on them, as the LORD commanded Moses.

14 He then presented the bull for the sin offering, *[No one is above needing the grace and forgiveness of God. No matter how high we go, or how many we lead – our sin needs to be reconciled with God.]* and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on its head, *[Confession/ acknowledgement]* 15 Moses slaughtered the bull and took some of the blood, and with his finger he put it on all the horns of the altar to purify the altar. He poured out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar. So he consecrated it to make atonement for

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it. 16 Moses also took all the fat around the internal organs, the long lobe of the liver, and both kidneys and their fat, and burned it on the altar. 17 But the bull with its hide and its flesh and its intestines he burned up outside the camp, as the LORD commanded Moses.

18 He then presented the ram for the burnt offering, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on its head. [*transferring and acceptance*] 19 Then Moses slaughtered the ram and splashed the blood against the sides of the altar. 20 He cut the ram into pieces and burned the head, the pieces and the fat. 21 He washed the internal organs and the legs with water and burned the whole ram on the altar. It was a burnt offering, a pleasing aroma, a food offering presented to the LORD, as the LORD commanded Moses.

22 He then presented the other ram, the ram for the ordination, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on its head. [*commitment*] 23 Moses slaughtered the ram and took some of its blood and put it on the lobe of Aaron's right ear, on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot. 24 Moses also brought Aaron's sons forward and put some of the blood on the lobes of their right ears, on the thumbs of their right hands and on the big toes of their right feet. [*Not only do we see a glimpse of Jesus on the cross here, but symbolically it shows the power of his blood to open our hearing/listening to God, strengthen our hands for Gods work/act, and guide us in our walk (relationship) with God.*] Then he splashed blood against the sides of the altar. 25 After that, he took the fat, the fat tail, all the fat around the internal organs, the long lobe of the liver, both kidneys and their fat and the right thigh. 26 And from the basket of bread made without yeast, which was before the LORD, he took one thick loaf, one thick loaf with olive oil mixed in, and one thin loaf, and he put these on the fat portions and on the right thigh. 27 He put all these in the hands of Aaron and his sons, and they waved them before the LORD as a wave offering. [*symbolizing what we receive from God, we acknowledge and give back to God*] 28 Then Moses took them from their hands and burned them on the altar on top of the burnt offering as an ordination offering, a pleasing aroma, a food offering presented to the LORD. 29 Moses also took the breast, which was his share of the ordination ram, and waved it before the LORD as a wave offering, as the LORD commanded Moses.

30 Then Moses took some of the anointing oil and some of the blood from the altar and sprinkled them on Aaron and his garments and on his sons and their garments. So he consecrated Aaron and his garments and his sons and their garments.

31 Moses then said to Aaron and his sons, "Cook the meat at the entrance to the tent of meeting and eat it there with the bread from the basket of ordination offerings, as I was commanded: 'Aaron and his sons are to eat it.' 32 Then burn up the rest of the meat and the bread. 33 Do not leave the entrance to the tent of meeting for seven days, until the days of your ordination are completed, for your ordination will last seven days. [*Our service, our*

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life, our dedication to God is not a part-time venture. This shows perfect separation from the world, showing that we, too, make a full life commitment when we give our hearts to Jesus. He set us apart. "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." 1 Peter 2:9] 34 What has been done today was commanded by the LORD to make atonement for you. 35 You must stay at the entrance to the tent of meeting day and night for seven days and do what the LORD requires, so you will not die; for that is what I have been commanded.'

36 So Aaron and his sons did everything the LORD commanded through Moses.

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Chapter 9

My wife and I have been watching a series called *The Chosen*, and we're really enjoying it. I would gladly recommend it to anyone. It's very well made. While the creators do take some creative liberty for storytelling, the message is strong and true to the heart of the Bible. One thing it does really well is show Jesus as someone real—someone people can relate to and feel close to.

After watching, we often find ourselves having deep conversations with others. The show brings up questions that people might not normally think to ask. I especially love seeing how Jesus shows compassion when He heals. Many times, I've found myself getting emotional watching those powerful moments between Jesus, the people He heals, and His disciples.

I also enjoy watching the disciples' reactions as they witness one miracle after another. It makes me imagine what it would've been like to be there—to feel the sun, smell the air, and look into the eyes of our Savior. To learn from Him, and even laugh with Him.

There are a few moments in the series, just like in the New Testament, when Jesus gives His disciples the authority to go out—to teach, heal the sick, cast out demons, and even raise the dead.

Over the years, I've heard many people ask, "Does God still do miracles today?" or "Why don't we see the same wonders now?" I believe with all my heart that God *does* want to move in powerful ways today. But often, we miss the key that starts that "engine." And actually, it's something God already showed us long ago—in Leviticus 9.

If we focus only on the rituals in that chapter, we might miss the deeper meaning. And if we forget that we are the priests of today, we might miss it again. So let's take a fresh look.

Leviticus 9 comes right after the priests were consecrated. That word "consecration" in Hebrew means "full hands." The priests came before God empty-handed, and He filled their hands with His power. They continued to offer sacrifices for sin—because even as believers, we still fall short and need grace.

But look what came next: the priests were called to serve. They stood in the gap for the people. They offered sacrifices, worked hard, and gave their time—not for praise or attention, but to help others spiritually and honor God. It wasn't easy or quick. It was more than just writing a check. They had to get involved.

Then something amazing happened. God's presence came down in power. The people were amazed—and they praised Him.

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If you look at Jesus' miracles, they always pointed back to God. Yes, they blessed the people directly, but even more, they showed God's love to everyone watching.

So if you want to see God move today, here's the simple truth: Keep your heart focused on Him. Go out and bless others in His name. Give God the glory in everything. When God is the main focus, His presence shows up—and people get to experience that same sense of wonder.

The Priests Begin Their Ministry

1 On the eighth day Moses summoned Aaron and his sons and the elders of Israel. 2 He said to Aaron, "Take a bull calf for your sin offering and a ram for your burnt offering, both without defect, and present them before the LORD. 3 Then say to the Israelites: 'Take a male goat for a sin offering, a calf and a lamb—both a year old and without defect—for a burnt offering, 4 and an ox and a ram for a fellowship offering to sacrifice before the LORD, together with a grain offering mixed with olive oil. For today the LORD will appear to you.'

5 They took the things Moses commanded to the front of the tent of meeting, and the entire assembly came near and stood before the LORD. 6 Then Moses said, "This is what the LORD has commanded you to do, so that the glory of the LORD may appear to you."

7 Moses said to Aaron, "Come to the altar and sacrifice your sin offering and your burnt offering and make atonement for yourself and the people; sacrifice the offering that is for the people and make atonement for them, as the LORD has commanded."

8 So Aaron came to the altar and slaughtered the calf as a sin offering for himself. 9 His sons brought the blood to him, and he dipped his finger into the blood and put it on the horns of the altar; the rest of the blood he poured out at the base of the altar. 10 On the altar he burned the fat, the kidneys and the long lobe of the liver from the sin offering, as the LORD commanded Moses; 11 the flesh and the hide he burned up outside the camp.

12 Then he slaughtered the burnt offering. His sons handed him the blood, and he splashed it against the sides of the altar. 13 They handed him the burnt offering piece by piece, including the head, and he burned them on the altar. 14 He washed the internal organs and the legs and burned them on top of the burnt offering on the altar.

15 Aaron then brought the offering that was for the people. He took the goat for the people's sin offering and slaughtered it and offered it for a sin offering as he did with the first one.

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16 He brought the burnt offering and offered it in the prescribed way. 17 He also brought the grain offering, took a handful of it and burned it on the altar in addition to the morning's burnt offering.

18 He slaughtered the ox and the ram as the fellowship offering for the people. His sons handed him the blood, and he splashed it against the sides of the altar. 19 But the fat portions of the ox and the ram--the fat tail, the layer of fat, the kidneys and the long lobe of the liver-- 20 these they laid on the breasts, and then Aaron burned the fat on the altar. 21 Aaron waved the breasts and the right thigh before the LORD as a wave offering, as Moses commanded.

22 Then Aaron lifted his hands toward the people and blessed them. And having sacrificed the sin offering, the burnt offering and the fellowship offering, he stepped down.

23 Moses and Aaron then went into the tent of meeting. When they came out, they blessed the people; and the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people. 24 Fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat portions on the altar. And when all the people saw it, they shouted for joy and fell facedown.

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Chapter 10

As many of you know, I grew up around some unusual belief systems. Maybe some of you did too. While doing a bit of research, I learned that there are around 4,500 religions in the world today that are outside of the foundational Christian faith—meaning, they don't hold to core Christian doctrines like the absolute divinity of Jesus or the Trinity.

Together, these religions represent about 6 billion people out of the approximately 8.1 billion people on Earth today. And this group doesn't just include followers of other faiths—it also includes people who consider themselves “non-religious” but still hold to a secular worldview. In a way, that's like having a non-religious religion—a system of belief without acknowledging God.

We all hear about these different life philosophies. People trying to explain where life came from. Others trying to define—or redefine—what morality is. Some even mix parts of the Bible with their own ideas to make exceptions for certain behaviors while condemning others. Honestly, it can get messy and confusing.

But here's the thing—God knew this would happen. He knows the enemy—Satan—and how badly he wants to be like God. Satan constantly tries to imitate or replace God in people's lives, turning hearts away from the Father and toward himself. Sometimes, it only takes a small deviation to lead someone off the right path.

Even in churches I've visited, I've heard strange ideas—like “prosperity angels.” It's a reminder that not everything that sounds spiritual is from God.

In Leviticus 10, we see an example of this. In the previous chapter (Leviticus 9), something amazing happened: the priests were ordained and began their ministry. They made the required sacrifices, and God responded by sending fire from heaven to consume the offering—a sign of His presence. The people worshiped and celebrated.

But then, in chapter 10, two priests—Nadab and Abihu—brought a different fire before the Lord. They added incense to it and presented it as an offering. On the surface, it might not seem like a big deal. But in the Bible, fire often represents God's presence, power, and holiness. So offering a “different fire” was like presenting a counterfeit presence.

Likewise, incense often symbolizes prayer, devotion, and worship. By putting it on a fire God didn't command, they were essentially saying, “Here's another way to worship.” They were offering an alternative path.

We still hear this idea today: “Your truth is your truth, and my truth is mine. We're both right.” But God's Word tells a different story.

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As I read this chapter, a verse from Proverbs came to mind:

“There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to destruction.”
(Proverbs 14:12)

And Jesus said:

“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”
(John 14:6)

So be careful, brothers and sisters, of any teaching or preaching that doesn't point clearly back to Jesus and the cross. The Bible has one message from beginning to end—the redemptive work of God through Jesus Christ. Don't let anyone “tickle your ears” with ideas about hidden formulas or special knowledge apart from Jesus Christ crucified for us all.

The Death of Nadab and Abihu

1 Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, contrary to his command. 2 So fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. 3 Moses then said to Aaron, “This is what the LORD spoke of when he said: “ ‘Among those who approach me I will be proved holy; in the sight of all the people I will be honored.’ ” Aaron remained silent.

4 Moses summoned Mishael and Elzaphan, sons of Aaron's uncle Uzziel, and said to them, “Come here; carry your cousins outside the camp, away from the front of the sanctuary.” 5 So they came and carried them, still in their tunics, outside the camp, as Moses ordered.

6 Then Moses said to Aaron and his sons Eleazar and Ithamar, “Do not let your hair become unkempt and do not tear your clothes, or you will die and the LORD will be angry with the whole community. But your relatives, all the Israelites, may mourn for those the LORD has destroyed by fire. 7 Do not leave the entrance to the tent of meeting or you will die, because the LORD's anointing oil is on you.” So they did as Moses said.

8 Then the LORD said to Aaron, 9 “You and your sons are not to drink wine or other fermented drink whenever you go into the tent of meeting, or you will die. This is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, 10 so that you can distinguish between the holy and the common, between the unclean and the clean, 11 and so you can teach the Israelites all the decrees the LORD has given them through Moses.” *[God desires that we worship Him with clear brains, full willingness, and a natural heart postured toward Him. Not by any form of medicated help, whether drink or otherwise. He wants OUR devotion, not a medicated, mystic, false devotion.]*

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12 Moses said to Aaron and his remaining sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, "Take the grain offering left over from the food offerings prepared without yeast and presented to the LORD and eat it beside the altar, for it is most holy. 13 Eat it in the sanctuary area, because it is your share and your sons' share of the food offerings presented to the LORD; for so I have been commanded. 14 But you and your sons and your daughters may eat the breast that was waved and the thigh that was presented. Eat them in a ceremonially clean place; they have been given to you and your children as your share of the Israelites' fellowship offerings. 15 The thigh that was presented and the breast that was waved must be brought with the fat portions of the food offerings, to be waved before the LORD as a wave offering. This will be the perpetual share for you and your children, as the LORD has commanded."

16 When Moses inquired about the goat of the sin offering and found that it had been burned up, he was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's remaining sons, and asked, 17 "Why didn't you eat the sin offering in the sanctuary area? It is most holy; it was given to you to take away the guilt of the community by making atonement for them before the LORD. 18 Since its blood was not taken into the Holy Place, you should have eaten the goat in the sanctuary area, as I commanded."

19 Aaron replied to Moses, "Today they sacrificed their sin offering and their burnt offering before the LORD, but such things as this have happened to me. Would the LORD have been pleased if I had eaten the sin offering today?" 20 When Moses heard this, he was satisfied.

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Chapter 11

I do like shrimp and crab! Whether fried, baked, or boiled, I've always enjoyed a good shrimp or crab platter. Then I got older.

One Monday morning, I woke up feeling like my big toe was broken. It hurt *that* bad. I couldn't, for the life of me, figure out what had happened. I tried to walk it off, but the pain was so sharp I had to use a cane for several days. Eventually, the pain passed. Still, I never figured out how I could've possibly sprained my toe while sleeping!

A few weeks later, it happened again. This time, I went to my doctor. He asked about my diet. I told him I ate normal foods — meat, seafood, veggies. Some fried, some baked, just the usual. I also mentioned that I had recently started drinking a small glass of wine before bed — about 4 ounces — to help me sleep. Apparently, I said the magic words.

He told me I had gout. Ugh. What a horrible word! It just *sounds* awful. I asked what it was, and he explained that gout is a type of arthritis — also known as the “King's disease” — caused by high uric acid levels from rich foods and drinks like shellfish and wine.

He gave me a list of foods to avoid. Sadly, that meant shellfish, wine, and other rich “goodies.” Basically, it was a healthy diet full of what you *should* eat — not necessarily the tasty stuff. I was bummed. No more shrimp. No more crab. No more lobster. I also had to avoid simple sugars, especially anything with high fructose corn syrup (which, by the way, is in *everything*).

I wasn't too upset about the wine — I'd only started that habit recently. But the food restrictions? That was tough.

For the most part, I stick to the diet. Every now and then — especially around Christmas — I break the sugar rule. And, understandably, I pay for it. The gout has even moved from my toe to my elbow. But it still reminds me it's there. So now, I try to count the cost before breaking the rules.

Now to Chapter 11. I've always liked this chapter. It's an interesting chapter. There's deep spiritual meaning in it, but also a very cool *practical* side that shows how much our Heavenly Father loves us. Long before modern science, He gave us a plan for what's good for our bodies. Good nutrition didn't start with the USDA!

It's easy to focus on the practical side of the chapter — and that's important — but let's look deeper, at the spiritual shadow behind it. The Old Testament often points to truths in

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the New Testament, and this chapter is no different. It presents a clear division between clean and unclean.

When we eat, we put things into our body — and our body reacts. Some things strengthen us (the “clean”); others cause harm (the “unclean”). God designed our bodies to respond that way.

In the same way, Jesus taught that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, and we are to guard what we allow inside. Bitterness, envy, strife, jealousy, rage, vengeance, lust, idolatry, selfishness — these things may taste sweet at first, but once taken in, they begin to tear down our spiritual health. They become barriers between us and God — and between us and others.

In contrast, God invites us to fill ourselves with spiritual nutrition:

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

These spiritual fruits build us up. They strengthen our hearts toward God and deepen our relationships with others.

Here’s the really cool part: these aren’t just spiritual ideas. These “foods” — good and bad — also affect our physical health. It’s a double impact.

So as you read Leviticus 11, ask yourself: What unclean things might I be allowing into my life — body *or* soul? What good things am I taking in — even if they’re hard to swallow at first, like Brussels sprouts?

In the end, the long-term benefit far outweighs the momentary flavor.

Clean and Unclean Foods

1 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, 2 “Say to the Israelites: ‘Of all the animals that live on land, these are the ones you may eat: 3 You may eat any animal that has a divided hoof and that chews the cud.

4 “ ‘There are some that only chew the cud or only have a divided hoof, but you must not eat them. The camel, though it chews the cud, does not have a divided hoof; it is ceremonially unclean for you. 5 The hyrax, though it chews the cud, does not have a divided hoof; it is unclean for you. 6 The rabbit, though it chews the cud, does not have a divided hoof; it is unclean for you. 7 And the pig, though it has a divided hoof, does not chew the cud; it is unclean for you. 8 You must not eat their meat or touch their carcasses; they are unclean for you.

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9 " 'Of all the creatures living in the water of the seas and the streams you may eat any that have fins and scales. 10 But all creatures in the seas or streams that do not have fins and scales--whether among all the swarming things or among all the other living creatures in the water--you are to regard as unclean. 11 And since you are to regard them as unclean, you must not eat their meat; you must regard their carcasses as unclean. 12 Anything living in the water that does not have fins and scales is to be regarded as unclean by you.

13 " 'These are the birds you are to regard as unclean and not eat because they are unclean: the eagle, the vulture, the black vulture, 14 the red kite, any kind of black kite, 15 any kind of raven, 16 the horned owl, the screech owl, the gull, any kind of hawk, 17 the little owl, the cormorant, the great owl, 18 the white owl, the desert owl, the osprey, 19 the stork, any kind of heron, the hoopoe and the bat.

20 " 'All flying insects that walk on all fours are to be regarded as unclean by you. 21 There are, however, some flying insects that walk on all fours that you may eat: those that have jointed legs for hopping on the ground. 22 Of these you may eat any kind of locust, katydid, cricket or grasshopper. 23 But all other flying insects that have four legs you are to regard as unclean. 24 " 'You will make yourselves unclean by these; whoever touches their carcasses will be unclean till evening. 25 Whoever picks up one of their carcasses must wash their clothes, and they will be unclean till evening.

26 " 'Every animal that does not have a divided hoof or that does not chew the cud is unclean for you; whoever touches the carcass of any of them will be unclean. 27 Of all the animals that walk on all fours, those that walk on their paws are unclean for you; whoever touches their carcasses will be unclean till evening. 28 Anyone who picks up their carcasses must wash their clothes, and they will be unclean till evening. These animals are unclean for you.

29 " 'Of the animals that move along the ground, these are unclean for you: the weasel, the rat, any kind of great lizard, 30 the gecko, the monitor lizard, the wall lizard, the skink and the chameleon. 31 Of all those that move along the ground, these are unclean for you. Whoever touches them when they are dead will be unclean till evening. 32 When one of them dies and falls on something, that article, whatever its use, will be unclean, whether it is made of wood, cloth, hide or sackcloth. Put it in water; it will be unclean till evening, and then it will be clean. 33 If one of them falls into a clay pot, everything in it will be unclean, and you must break the pot. 34 Any food you are allowed to eat that has come into contact with water from any such pot is unclean, and any liquid that is drunk from such a pot is unclean. 35 Anything that one of their carcasses falls on becomes unclean; an oven or cooking pot must be broken up. They are unclean, and you are to regard them as unclean. 36 A spring, however, or a cistern for collecting water remains clean, but anyone who touches one of

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these carcasses is unclean. 37 If a carcass falls on any seeds that are to be planted, they remain clean. 38 But if water has been put on the seed and a carcass falls on it, it is unclean for you.

39 " If an animal that you are allowed to eat dies, anyone who touches its carcass will be unclean till evening. 40 Anyone who eats some of its carcass must wash their clothes, and they will be unclean till evening. Anyone who picks up the carcass must wash their clothes, and they will be unclean till evening.

41 " Every creature that moves along the ground is to be regarded as unclean; it is not to be eaten. 42 You are not to eat any creature that moves along the ground, whether it moves on its belly or walks on all fours or on many feet; it is unclean. 43 Do not defile yourselves by any of these creatures. Do not make yourselves unclean by means of them or be made unclean by them. 44 I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy. Do not make yourselves unclean by any creature that moves along the ground. 45 I am the LORD, who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy.

46 " These are the regulations concerning animals, birds, every living thing that moves about in the water and every creature that moves along the ground. 47 You must distinguish between the unclean and the clean, between living creatures that may be eaten and those that may not be eaten.' "

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Chapter 12

The first ten chapters of *Leviticus* mostly talk about how we're supposed to worship God. The rest of the book focuses more on how we're supposed to walk with God in our daily lives. When we look at it that way—and realize there's both a practical and spiritual message in it—we start to see some really meaningful lessons about our relationship with Jesus and Our Heavenly Father. He's all over these pages if we take the time to look.

Now, Chapter 12 can be a little tough for some of us—especially for men. It talks about childbirth and purification laws. At first, it might seem like it's just for women. But I'd challenge that. This chapter is about babies—and since all of us were babies once, it actually relates to *everyone*.

What stood out to me was the offering that had to be made every time a child was born: a sin offering and an offering for atonement. That might make you ask, "Why? How can a newborn baby have sin?" And that's a fair question. Even Jesus had these offerings made for Him after His birth—and He was without sin.

So, what's the point of the offering?

Well, the fact that the offering was made even for Jesus tells us it wasn't about personal sin. It wasn't for the mother either—having a baby isn't a sin; it's something God blesses and encourages. So why the offering?

It's actually a reminder that we're all born into a broken world. From the very beginning of life, the Bible is showing us that the world needs to be made right again—that we all need redemption.

Romans 8:3 says that, "God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering, and so he condemned sin in the flesh." And Ephesians 5:2 "Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

So, with every child born, boy or girl, from the first days of their life, there was demonstrated visually the need for the redemption that Jesus would later fulfill.

I think that's just so powerful—and honestly, really cool.

Purification After Childbirth

1 The LORD said to Moses, 2 "Say to the Israelites: 'A woman who becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son will be ceremonially unclean for seven days, just as she is unclean during her monthly period. 3 On the eighth day the boy is to be circumcised. 4 Then the woman must wait thirty-three days to be purified from her bleeding. She must not touch

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anything sacred or go to the sanctuary until the days of her purification are over. 5 If she gives birth to a daughter, for two weeks the woman will be unclean, as during her period. Then she must wait sixty-six days to be purified from her bleeding. *[There is a wonderful practical usefulness that many miss in these verses. We associate "unclean" with sinfulness or dirtiness. But in fact, this time of separation was an Old Testament equivalent of FMLA. With the loss of blood, women were weakened. It gave them time to restore their strength. It gave them time to bond with their baby. It gave them time to recover before the husband could make other "demands"]*

6 " When the days of her purification for a son or daughter are over, she is to bring to the priest at the entrance to the tent of meeting a year-old lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a dove for a sin offering. 7 He shall offer them before the LORD to make atonement for her, and then she will be ceremonially clean from her flow of blood.

" These are the regulations for the woman who gives birth to a boy or a girl. 8 But if she cannot afford a lamb, she is to bring two doves or two young pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering. In this way the priest will make atonement for her, and she will be clean. ' "

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Chapter 13

Remember your teenage years? Especially around the time of puberty? The age of pimples? I sure do. It hit me hard in tenth grade—my first year of high school. I was still awkward, still figuring myself out, and now stepping into a new environment where all the girls suddenly looked like women. Some of the older guys even had light mustaches and a full coat of body hair. I felt totally out of place—and super self-conscious.

Then came the acne. No matter how often I washed my face, the pimples kept showing up like uninvited guests. And since I have really light skin, every spot would turn a nice shade of red. So even when there weren't actual bumps, my face looked blotchy and irritated. Just great, right? I was trying so hard to be "cool," but instead I looked like a science experiment gone wrong—like a leper or something.

It was a rough time. I would scrub, poke, and press at my face constantly. Sometimes I could even *feel* a pimple coming before it appeared—a tender spot under the skin that warned me something was about to erupt. It blows my mind that I actually had a girlfriend during that phase. (Must've been my charm! Ha).

Those years? They were awkward. Our bodies were changing, nothing felt right, and we barely recognized ourselves. Whether it was in high school or before, most of us had a phase where everything felt off. A phase of discomfort, insecurity, and self-loathing.

Now, think about this: Have you ever wondered what sin looks like to God?

Leviticus 13 may seem like an odd place to find a spiritual lesson, but it actually paints a powerful picture. It's not the easiest chapter to read—especially if you start picturing all the skin diseases being described. But I've come to really respect what God was doing through Israel. They were tasked with showing the world spiritual truths through very real, very physical laws and rituals.

In this chapter, we get a practical image of how God sees sin. Leprosy in the Bible has often symbolized sin. It starts beneath the surface, quietly growing, until it eventually breaks out for all to see. Once it manifests, there's no hiding it anymore. And here's something even deeper: leprosy kills nerves. The longer someone has it, the less they feel pain. That's a lot like sin. At first, it bothers us—we feel convicted. But if we keep living in it, we stop feeling anything. Our hearts grow numb. That's when things really start to fall apart—spiritually, emotionally, even physically.

Even worse? Leprosy is contagious. Just like sin. It spreads through contact. We all know there are environments where sin thrives—places or people that make it easy to be

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pulled in. This isn't to say we should live in a bubble, but we do need to be wise about who and what we allow to influence us.

What really struck me in this chapter, though, was the role of the priest. They were deeply involved with the person who was unclean—not as a judge, but as someone who examined, guided, and cared. The priest didn't look at the afflicted person with criticism, but with concern. Their job was to help the person recognize the issue and then move toward healing and restoration.

That's our job too.

We are the children of the High Priest, Jesus. And when someone around us is dealing with “spiritual leprosy”—when sin has started to take over—we are called to minister to them, not condemn them. Like the priests in Leviticus, we are meant to speak truth with love, to help others see their condition, and to walk with them toward wholeness.

Jesus is our High Priest. He's also the Great Physician for all those struggling with the spiritual disease of sin. And we, as His Church, get to be part of that healing process. Not by standing above people, but by walking beside them. By pointing them to the One who can truly make them clean.

Regulations About Defiling Skin Diseases

1 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, 2 “When anyone has a swelling or a rash or a shiny spot on their skin that may be a defiling skin disease, they must be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons who is a priest. 3 The priest is to examine the sore on the skin, and if the hair in the sore has turned white and the sore appears to be more than skin deep, it is a defiling skin disease. When the priest examines that person, he shall pronounce them ceremonially unclean. 4 If the shiny spot on the skin is white but does not appear to be more than skin deep and the hair in it has not turned white, the priest is to isolate the affected person for seven days. 5 On the seventh day the priest is to examine them, and if he sees that the sore is unchanged and has not spread in the skin, he is to isolate them for another seven days. 6 On the seventh day the priest is to examine them again, and if the sore has faded and has not spread in the skin, the priest shall pronounce them clean; it is only a rash. They must wash their clothes, and they will be clean. 7 But if the rash does spread in their skin after they have shown themselves to the priest to be pronounced clean, they must appear before the priest again. 8 The priest is to examine that person, and if the rash has spread in the skin, he shall pronounce them unclean; it is a defiling skin disease.

9 “When anyone has a defiling skin disease, they must be brought to the priest. 10 The priest is to examine them, and if there is a white swelling in the skin that has turned the hair

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white and if there is raw flesh in the swelling, 11 it is a chronic skin disease and the priest shall pronounce them unclean. He is not to isolate them, because they are already unclean.

12 "If the disease breaks out all over their skin and, so far as the priest can see, it covers all the skin of the affected person from head to foot, 13 the priest is to examine them, and if the disease has covered their whole body, he shall pronounce them clean. Since it has all turned white, they are clean. 14 But whenever raw flesh appears on them, they will be unclean. 15 When the priest sees the raw flesh, he shall pronounce them unclean. The raw flesh is unclean; they have a defiling disease. 16 If the raw flesh changes and turns white, they must go to the priest. 17 The priest is to examine them, and if the sores have turned white, the priest shall pronounce the affected person clean; then they will be clean.

18 "When someone has a boil on their skin and it heals, 19 and in the place where the boil was, a white swelling or reddish-white spot appears, they must present themselves to the priest. 20 The priest is to examine it, and if it appears to be more than skin deep and the hair in it has turned white, the priest shall pronounce that person unclean. It is a defiling skin disease that has broken out where the boil was. 21 But if, when the priest examines it, there is no white hair in it and it is not more than skin deep and has faded, then the priest is to isolate them for seven days. 22 If it is spreading in the skin, the priest shall pronounce them unclean; it is a defiling disease. 23 But if the spot is unchanged and has not spread, it is only a scar from the boil, and the priest shall pronounce them clean.

24 "When someone has a burn on their skin and a reddish-white or white spot appears in the raw flesh of the burn, 25 the priest is to examine the spot, and if the hair in it has turned white, and it appears to be more than skin deep, it is a defiling disease that has broken out in the burn. The priest shall pronounce them unclean; it is a defiling skin disease. 26 But if the priest examines it and there is no white hair in the spot and if it is not more than skin deep and has faded, then the priest is to isolate them for seven days. 27 On the seventh day the priest is to examine [*the literal word means to: see, perceive, look after, learn about, give attention, discern. Notice it does not say to condemn. The mission was to serve the hurting*] that person, and if it is spreading in the skin, the priest shall pronounce them unclean; it is a defiling skin disease. 28 If, however, the spot is unchanged and has not spread in the skin but has faded, it is a swelling from the burn, and the priest shall pronounce them clean; it is only a scar from the burn.

29 "If a man or woman has a sore on their head or chin, 30 the priest is to examine the sore, and if it appears to be more than skin deep and the hair in it is yellow and thin, the priest shall pronounce them unclean; it is a defiling skin disease on the head or chin. 31 But if, when the priest examines the sore, it does not seem to be more than skin deep and there is no black hair in it, then the priest is to isolate the affected person for seven days. 32 On

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the seventh day the priest is to examine the sore, and if it has not spread and there is no yellow hair in it and it does not appear to be more than skin deep, 33 then the man or woman must shave themselves, except for the affected area, and the priest is to keep them isolated another seven days. 34 On the seventh day the priest is to examine the sore, and if it has not spread in the skin and appears to be no more than skin deep, the priest shall pronounce them clean. They must wash their clothes, and they will be clean. 35 But if the sore does spread in the skin after they are pronounced clean, 36 the priest is to examine them, and if he finds that the sore has spread in the skin, he does not need to look for yellow hair; they are unclean. 37 If, however, the sore is unchanged so far as the priest can see, and if black hair has grown in it, the affected person is healed. They are clean, and the priest shall pronounce them clean.

38 "When a man or woman has white spots on the skin, 39 the priest is to examine them, and if the spots are dull white, it is a harmless rash that has broken out on the skin; they are clean.

40 "A man who has lost his hair and is bald is clean. 41 If he has lost his hair from the front of his scalp and has a bald forehead, he is clean. 42 But if he has a reddish-white sore on his bald head or forehead, it is a defiling disease breaking out on his head or forehead. 43 The priest is to examine him, and if the swollen sore on his head or forehead is reddish-white like a defiling skin disease, 44 the man is diseased and is unclean. The priest shall pronounce him unclean because of the sore on his head.

45 "Anyone with such a defiling disease must wear torn clothes, let their hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of their face and cry out, 'Unclean! Unclean!' 46 As long as they have the disease, they remain unclean. They must live alone; they must live outside the camp.

Regulations About Defiling Molds

47 "As for any fabric that is spoiled with a defiling mold--any woolen or linen clothing, 48 any woven or knitted material of linen or wool, any leather or anything made of leather-- 49 if the affected area in the fabric, the leather, the woven or knitted material, or any leather article, is greenish or reddish, it is a defiling mold and must be shown to the priest. 50 The priest is to examine the affected area and isolate the article for seven days. 51 On the seventh day he is to examine it, and if the mold has spread in the fabric, the woven or knitted material, or the leather, whatever its use, it is a persistent defiling mold; the article is unclean. 52 He must burn the fabric, the woven or knitted material of wool or linen, or any leather article that has been spoiled; because the defiling mold is persistent, the article must be burned.

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53 "But if, when the priest examines it, the mold has not spread in the fabric, the woven or knitted material, or the leather article, 54 he shall order that the spoiled article be washed. Then he is to isolate it for another seven days. 55 After the article has been washed, the priest is to examine it again, and if the mold has not changed its appearance, even though it has not spread, it is unclean. Burn it, no matter which side of the fabric has been spoiled. 56 If, when the priest examines it, the mold has faded after the article has been washed, he is to tear the spoiled part out of the fabric, the leather, or the woven or knitted material. 57 But if it reappears in the fabric, in the woven or knitted material, or in the leather article, it is a spreading mold; whatever has the mold must be burned. 58 Any fabric, woven or knitted material, or any leather article that has been washed and is rid of the mold, must be washed again. Then it will be clean."

59 These are the regulations concerning defiling molds in woolen or linen clothing, woven or knitted material, or any leather article, for pronouncing them clean or unclean.

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Chapter 14

You know, sometimes we read chapters like Leviticus 14 and think, “*What’s this got to do with me?*” All this talk about skin diseases, birds, priests, and rituals—it can feel distant, ancient, almost irrelevant. But then you look a little closer. You realize this chapter is not just about skin—it’s about shame. It’s about being cut off, unclean, untouchable. It’s about the kind of brokenness we still carry today.

Consider this: You’ve been isolated for weeks—months, maybe even years. Not because of something you did wrong, but because something happened to you. Something visible. Something others were afraid of. A disease, yes—but more than that: rejection. People pulled back. Your name faded. You learned to live outside the camp.

Now imagine someone—the priest—walks *out to you*. He doesn’t wait for you to crawl your way back to the temple. He comes out into your exile. He sees you. He examines your healing. He doesn’t flinch. He doesn’t shame you. He says, “Let’s get you back home.” That’s Leviticus 14.

There are people all around us—maybe you’re one of them—carrying invisible versions of leprosy. It might not show up on your skin, but you can feel it in how people look at you... or don’t. A failed marriage. A moral failure. A history of addiction. A depression you can’t shake. The job you lost. The time you went to jail. The child you don’t talk to anymore. It feels like you carry a sign that says: UNCLEAN.

And here’s the hope: God doesn’t wait for you to fix yourself first. Like the priest in Leviticus 14, He comes *out to you*. And if you’re a follower of Christ, you’re invited to do the same for others.

Maybe at your job, there’s someone who’s been sidelined—a co-worker going through a divorce, someone who’s messed up, or just awkward and excluded. You can act as a “priest” in that space. Not by preaching, but by showing up, by dignifying the person the office treats like they’re less-than. A kind word. A real conversation. A reminder that they’re not invisible.

In your church or community, maybe someone left because they felt judged or just broken. The role of the priest wasn’t to enforce the walls—it was to open the doors, to facilitate *healing and return*. Who around you needs that? Not just about theology, but presence. Like Jesus, who touched the leper before healing him (Mark 1:41), we’re called to lead with compassion.

If you’re the one feeling unclean, know this: God doesn’t need you to be perfect before you come back. In Leviticus 14, the person didn’t offer a sacrifice until after the priest came

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out and declared healing. That means the act of coming back didn't cause healing—it recognized it.

Maybe you're further along than you think. Maybe God already sees your heart shifting, the healing starting, the shame breaking. He's coming to meet you. He's not waiting at the altar; He's walking toward your exile.

And then there's that strange ritual—two birds, one killed, one set free. It's hauntingly beautiful. One bird dies; the other soars. It's a picture of Jesus, taking death so we can fly. Your freedom has already been paid for. You're not stuck. You're not condemned. You've been given wings.

So, what now? Leviticus 14 asks us: Will we see others through the lens of healing, not just history? Will we step outside the walls of comfort to bring people back into community? Will we let God meet us in our own places of shame and declare us clean? And if we call ourselves Christians—"a royal priesthood"—will we act like priests? Not judges. Not spectators. But Restorers.

Cleansing From Defiling Skin Diseases

1 The LORD said to Moses, 2 "These are the regulations for any diseased person at the time of their ceremonial cleansing, when they are brought to the priest: 3 The priest is to go outside the camp and examine them. If they have been healed of their defiling skin disease, 4 the priest shall order that two live clean birds and some cedar wood, scarlet yarn and hyssop be brought for the person to be cleansed. 5 Then the priest shall order that one of the birds be killed over fresh water in a clay pot. 6 He is then to take the live bird and dip it, together with the cedar wood, the scarlet yarn and the hyssop, into the blood of the bird that was killed over the fresh water. 7 Seven times he shall sprinkle the one to be cleansed of the defiling disease, and then pronounce them clean. After that, he is to release the live bird in the open fields.

8 "The person to be cleansed must wash their clothes, shave off all their hair and bathe with water; then they will be ceremonially clean. After this they may come into the camp, but they must stay outside their tent for seven days. 9 On the seventh day they must shave off all their hair; they must shave their head, their beard, their eyebrows and the rest of their hair. They must wash their clothes and bathe themselves with water, and they will be clean.

10 "On the eighth day they must bring two male lambs and one ewe lamb a year old, each without defect, along with three-tenths of an ephah of the finest flour mixed with olive oil for a grain offering, and one log of oil. 11 The priest who pronounces them clean shall

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present both the one to be cleansed and their offerings before the LORD at the entrance to the tent of meeting.

12 "Then the priest is to take one of the male lambs and offer it as a guilt offering, along with the log of oil; he shall wave them before the LORD as a wave offering. 13 He is to slaughter the lamb in the sanctuary area where the sin offering and the burnt offering are slaughtered. Like the sin offering, the guilt offering belongs to the priest; it is most holy. 14 The priest is to take some of the blood of the guilt offering and put it on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, on the thumb of their right hand and on the big toe of their right foot. 15 The priest shall then take some of the log of oil, pour it in the palm of his own left hand, 16 dip his right forefinger into the oil in his palm, and with his finger sprinkle some of it before the LORD seven times. 17 The priest is to put some of the oil remaining in his palm on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, on the thumb of their right hand and on the big toe of their right foot, on top of the blood of the guilt offering. 18 The rest of the oil in his palm the priest shall put on the head of the one to be cleansed and make atonement for them before the LORD.

19 "Then the priest is to sacrifice the sin offering and make atonement for the one to be cleansed from their uncleanness. After that, the priest shall slaughter the burnt offering 20 and offer it on the altar, together with the grain offering, and make atonement for them, and they will be clean.

21 "If, however, they are poor and cannot afford these, they must take one male lamb as a guilt offering to be waved to make atonement for them, together with a tenth of an ephah of the finest flour mixed with olive oil for a grain offering, a log of oil, 22 and two doves or two young pigeons, such as they can afford, one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering.

23 "On the eighth day they must bring them for their cleansing to the priest at the entrance to the tent of meeting, before the LORD. 24 The priest is to take the lamb for the guilt offering, together with the log of oil, and wave them before the LORD as a wave offering. 25 He shall slaughter the lamb for the guilt offering and take some of its blood and put it on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, on the thumb of their right hand and on the big toe of their right foot. 26 The priest is to pour some of the oil into the palm of his own left hand, 27 and with his right forefinger sprinkle some of the oil from his palm seven times before the LORD. 28 Some of the oil in his palm he is to put on the same places he put the blood of the guilt offering--on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, on the thumb of their right hand and on the big toe of their right foot. 29 The rest of the oil in his palm the priest shall put on the head of the one to be cleansed, to make atonement for them before the LORD. 30 Then he shall sacrifice the doves or the young pigeons, such as

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the person can afford, 31 one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering, together with the grain offering. In this way the priest will make atonement before the LORD on behalf of the one to be cleansed."

32 These are the regulations for anyone who has a defiling skin disease and who cannot afford the regular offerings for their cleansing.

Cleansing From Defiling Molds

33 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, 34 "When you enter the land of Canaan, which I am giving you as your possession, and I put a spreading mold in a house in that land, 35 the owner of the house must go and tell the priest, 'I have seen something that looks like a defiling mold in my house.' 36 The priest is to order the house to be emptied before he goes in to examine the mold, so that nothing in the house will be pronounced unclean. After this the priest is to go in and inspect the house. 37 He is to examine the mold on the walls, and if it has greenish or reddish depressions that appear to be deeper than the surface of the wall, 38 the priest shall go out the doorway of the house and close it up for seven days. 39 On the seventh day the priest shall return to inspect the house. If the mold has spread on the walls, 40 he is to order that the contaminated stones be torn out and thrown into an unclean place outside the town. 41 He must have all the inside walls of the house scraped and the material that is scraped off dumped into an unclean place outside the town. 42 Then they are to take other stones to replace these and take new clay and plaster the house.

43 "If the defiling mold reappears in the house after the stones have been torn out and the house scraped and plastered, 44 the priest is to go and examine it and, if the mold has spread in the house, it is a persistent defiling mold; the house is unclean. 45 It must be torn down--its stones, timbers and all the plaster--and taken out of the town to an unclean place.

46 "Anyone who goes into the house while it is closed up will be unclean till evening. 47 Anyone who sleeps or eats in the house must wash their clothes.

[This next part is a wonderful picture of the atonement Jesus made for us on the cross and the power of his blood on us to free us from sin.] 48 "But if the priest comes to examine it and the mold has not spread after the house has been plastered, he shall pronounce the house clean, because the defiling mold is gone. 49 To purify the house he is to take two birds and some cedar wood, scarlet yarn and hyssop. 50 He shall kill one of the birds over fresh water in a clay pot. 51 Then he is to take the cedar wood, the hyssop, [The same branch they dipped sour wine in and held to Jesus' mouth on the cross] the scarlet yarn and the live bird, dip them into the blood of the dead bird and the fresh water, and sprinkle the house seven times. 52 He shall purify the house with the bird's blood, the fresh water, the live bird, the cedar wood, the hyssop and the scarlet yarn. 53 Then he is to release

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the live bird in the open fields outside the town. In this way he will make atonement for the house, and it will be clean."

54 These are the regulations for any defiling skin disease, for a sore, 55 for defiling molds in fabric or in a house, 56 and for a swelling, a rash or a shiny spot, 57 to determine when something is clean or unclean. These are the regulations for defiling skin diseases and defiling molds.

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Chapter 15

Have you ever felt like no matter how hard you try, you can't quite stay clean? Maybe you've washed your hands a hundred times during flu season, or double-checked your phone for malware after clicking something suspicious. Cleanliness matters to us physically—but what about spiritually?

Reading Leviticus 15 might seem strange at first. It's a chapter all about bodily discharges and the rules for staying "clean." But behind the detailed instructions is a powerful truth that still matters today.

In Leviticus 15, God gives the Israelites specific instructions about what makes a person ritually "unclean." Things like normal bodily functions—discharges, menstruation, even sexual intimacy—required washing and time before someone could return to worship or community life.

These weren't punishments. These were reminders: living in a fallen world meant living separated from the perfection of God. Even natural parts of life couldn't enter His holy presence without a form of cleansing.

God was teaching a deeper lesson: holiness isn't just about avoiding evil—it's about being set apart for Him. Even if something isn't sinful, it can still remind us that we live in a world affected by sin and imperfection.

Think of a cleanroom in a tech lab. The tiniest particle of dust can ruin a microchip. Not because the dust is evil, but because it doesn't belong in that environment. The same is true with God's presence—it requires absolute purity, which none of us has on our own.

Leviticus 15 sets the stage for what Jesus came to fulfill. His blood doesn't just *symbolize* cleansing—it is the cleansing (Hebrews 9:13-14). He came not just to cover impurity but to remove it entirely. We don't need repeated rituals anymore because Jesus' sacrifice was once for all. Still, the lesson remains: We are utterly dependent on Him to be made right with God.

Even things that are good and God-ordained—like marriage—are temporary. Jesus said there will be no marriage in heaven (Matthew 22:30), not because marriage is bad, but because it belongs to this world, not the next.

Everything in eternity will center fully on God. Our attention, our desires, and our worship won't be divided. That's what Leviticus is pointing toward: a place where nothing from the natural world—no reminders of our fallen state—can remain in God's direct presence. Leviticus 15 isn't just about ritual law. It's about showing us how separated we are

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from God—even in our natural state. But it also points us to our hope: Jesus, who makes a way for us to draw near.

So next time you think about what it means to be "clean," remember—it's not about how holy you *feel*. It's about whether you've come to Jesus to be made clean. Because in the end, God isn't just looking for clean hands—He's looking for a pure heart.

Discharges Causing Uncleaness

1 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, 2 "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'When any man has an unusual bodily discharge, such a discharge is unclean. 3 Whether it continues flowing from his body or is blocked, it will make him unclean. *[This is a dignified way to address discharges that are not "normal" Such as from an STD or other non-sexual disease.]* This is how his discharge will bring about uncleaness:

4 " 'Any bed the man with a discharge lies on will be unclean, and anything he sits on will be unclean. 5 Anyone who touches his bed must wash their clothes and bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening. 6 Whoever sits on anything that the man with a discharge sat on must wash their clothes and bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening.

7 " 'Whoever touches the man who has a discharge must wash their clothes and bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening. 8 " 'If the man with the discharge spits on anyone who is clean, they must wash their clothes and bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening.

9 " 'Everything the man sits on when riding will be unclean, 10 and whoever touches any of the things that were under him will be unclean till evening; whoever picks up those things must wash their clothes and bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening.

11 " 'Anyone the man with a discharge touches without rinsing his hands with water must wash their clothes and bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening.

12 " 'A clay pot that the man touches must be broken, and any wooden article is to be rinsed with water. *[The general principle is that when an unclean thing touches the clean, the clean becomes unclean. This principle is reversed in Jesus. When Jesus – who was clean in every sense – touched the unclean, it made that person wholly clean.]*

13 " 'When a man is cleansed from his discharge, he is to count off seven days for his ceremonial cleansing; he must wash his clothes and bathe himself with fresh water, and he will be clean. *[representing the baptism we have in Jesus, the new birth.]* 14 On the eighth day he must take two doves or two young pigeons and come before the LORD to the entrance

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to the tent of meeting and give them to the priest. 15 The priest is to sacrifice them, the one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. In this way he will make atonement before the LORD for the man because of his discharge.

16 " 'When a man has an emission of semen, he must bathe his whole body with water, and he will be unclean till evening. 17 Any clothing or leather that has semen on it must be washed with water, and it will be unclean till evening. 18 When a man has sexual relations with a woman and there is an emission of semen, both of them must bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening. *[This was not an act of condemnation by God regarding sexual encounters. But rather a distinct separation between Israel and the other cultures around which incorporated inappropriate sexual acts as a form of pagan worship.]*

19 " 'When a woman has her regular flow of blood, the impurity of her monthly period will last seven days, and anyone who touches her will be unclean till evening.

20 " 'Anything she lies on during her period will be unclean, and anything she sits on will be unclean. 21 Anyone who touches her bed will be unclean; they must wash their clothes and bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening. 22 Anyone who touches anything she sits on will be unclean; they must wash their clothes and bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening. 23 Whether it is the bed or anything she was sitting on, when anyone touches it, they will be unclean till evening.

24 " 'If a man has sexual relations with her and her monthly flow touches him, he will be unclean for seven days; any bed he lies on will be unclean. *[We have already looked at and understand the important significance of the symbol of blood. But this also has another message- one of rest for the woman, and restraint for the man. This really speaks loudly against the idea of "if it feels good, do it". God is not opposed to sex. But even here shows that the Father does not want us to be governed and controlled by our passions.]*

25 " 'When a woman has a discharge of blood for many days at a time other than her monthly period or has a discharge that continues beyond her period, she will be unclean as long as she has the discharge, just as in the days of her period. 26 Any bed she lies on while her discharge continues will be unclean, as is her bed during her monthly period, and anything she sits on will be unclean, as during her period. 27 Anyone who touches them will be unclean; they must wash their clothes and bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening.

28 " 'When she is cleansed from her discharge, she must count off seven days, and after that she will be ceremonially clean. 29 On the eighth day she must take two doves or two

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young pigeons and bring them to the priest at the entrance to the tent of meeting. 30 The priest is to sacrifice one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. In this way he will make atonement for her before the LORD for the uncleanness of her discharge. [*This is an abnormal bleeding or discharge, like the one spoken of for men earlier.*]

31 'You must keep the Israelites separate from things that make them unclean, so they will not die in their uncleanness for defiling my dwelling place, which is among them.' '

32 These are the regulations for a man with a discharge, for anyone made unclean by an emission of semen, 33 for a woman in her monthly period, for a man or a woman with a discharge, and for a man who has sexual relations with a woman who is ceremonially unclean.

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Chapter 16

Have you ever been in a situation where you had so much to say, you didn't even know where to start? Or maybe someone asked you to briefly explain something so deep, so rich, that you didn't know how to do it justice? That's exactly how I felt reading Leviticus 16.

There is so much meaning packed into this chapter that I hardly know where to begin—except to say this: Jesus is everywhere in this chapter. And yes, I know I've said that before in previous chapters... but this one? WOW. This one is on a whole other level.

Leviticus 16 describes what's known as the Day of Atonement—or in Hebrew, Yom Kippur. Maybe you've heard that term before, whether from Jewish friends or TV shows. It is the holiest day on the Jewish calendar, the one day each year when the entire nation of Israel was covered—atoned for—by the actions of the High Priest.

This was no symbolic gesture. It was a literal day, a solemn and sacred appointment with God. In 2025, Yom Kippur will fall on October 1–2 on our calendar. (That's because the Hebrew calendar is lunar-based, while ours is solar and Gregorian—so the dates shift slightly each year.)

Rather than diving deep into every nuance—and there are many!—I want to invite you to read this chapter and underline every place where you see Jesus foreshadowed. From the High Priest... to the sacrifices... to the scapegoat... to the blood... to the mercy seat—it's all a shadow pointing to Christ.

And it's not a stretch. It's exactly what the book of Hebrews tells us. Jesus is the fulfillment of the entire Day of Atonement. He is our great High Priest, He is our sacrificial Lamb, He is our scapegoat, and He is the veil that was torn so we could enter God's presence. All of it was pointing to Him.

Now here's something beautiful to consider. Just as other Old Testament feasts had literal New Testament fulfillments—Passover, for example, was fulfilled in Jesus' crucifixion—Yom Kippur also has a literal fulfillment coming.

That future fulfillment will take place at the Second Coming of Jesus, when national Israel will be redeemed, just as prophesied (Romans 11:25–27). The entire nation will finally recognize their Messiah and turn to Him.

Beyond its national and prophetic meaning, this chapter also speaks to something deeply personal and spiritual. It describes something that many of us know by a different name: "The day I got saved."

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Think about it. That moment when the blood of Jesus was applied to your heart, when your sins were forgiven, when your guilt was carried away like the scapegoat into the wilderness—that was your Day of Atonement.

It was the day when your High Priest, Jesus, made atonement for you—not with the blood of bulls or goats, but with His own blood, once and for all.

When was your Day of Atonement? Have you had it yet? If not, today could be that day. And if you have—never forget what it cost, and how complete it is.

“By one offering, He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.” – Hebrews 10:14

Leviticus 16 may seem ancient, but it tells the greatest story ever told: that a Holy God made a way for sinful people to be made clean—not temporarily, but eternally.

That way is Jesus. He is our atonement. He is our access. He is our eternal hope.

The Day of Atonement

1 The LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron who died when they approached the LORD. 2 The LORD said to Moses: “Tell your brother Aaron that he is not to come whenever he chooses into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the ark, or else he will die. For I will appear in the cloud over the atonement cover.

3 “This is how Aaron [The High Priest] is to enter the Most Holy Place: He must first bring a young bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. 4 He is to put on the sacred linen tunic, with linen undergarments next to his body; he is to tie the linen sash around him and put on the linen turban. These are sacred garments; so he must bathe himself with water before he puts them on. 5 From the Israelite community he is to take two male goats for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. *[always remember that the payment of sin is blood, or life. Even with the first sin of Adam and Eve, God had to take a life to cover Adam and Eve’s nakedness.]*

6 “Aaron is to offer the bull for his own sin offering to make atonement for himself and his household. 7 Then he is to take the two goats and present them before the LORD at the entrance to the tent of meeting. 8 He is to cast lots for the two goats—one lot for the LORD and the other for the scapegoat. 9 Aaron shall bring the goat whose lot falls to the LORD and sacrifice it for a sin offering. 10 But the goat chosen by lot as the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the LORD to be used for making atonement by sending it into the wilderness as a scapegoat.

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11 "Aaron shall bring the bull for his own sin offering to make atonement for himself and his household, and he is to slaughter the bull for his own sin offering. 12 He is to take a censer full of burning coals from the altar before the LORD and two handfuls of finely ground fragrant incense and take them behind the curtain. 13 He is to put the incense on the fire before the LORD, and the smoke of the incense will conceal the atonement cover above the tablets of the covenant law, so that he will not die. 14 He is to take some of the bull's blood and with his finger sprinkle it on the front of the atonement cover; then he shall sprinkle some of it with his finger seven times before the atonement cover.

15 "He shall then slaughter the goat for the sin offering for the people and take its blood behind the curtain and do with it as he did with the bull's blood: He shall sprinkle it on the atonement cover and in front of it. 16 In this way he will make atonement for the Most Holy Place because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites, whatever their sins have been. He is to do the same for the tent of meeting, which is among them in the midst of their uncleanness. 17 No one is to be in the tent of meeting from the time Aaron goes in to make atonement in the Most Holy Place until he comes out, having made atonement for himself, his household and the whole community of Israel.

18 "Then he shall come out to the altar that is before the LORD and make atonement for it. He shall take some of the bull's blood and some of the goat's blood and put it on all the horns of the altar. 19 He shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times to cleanse it and to consecrate it from the uncleanness of the Israelites.

20 "When Aaron has finished making atonement for the Most Holy Place, the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall bring forward the live goat. 21 He is to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites--all their sins--and put them on the goat's head. He shall send the goat away into the wilderness in the care of someone appointed for the task. 22 The goat will carry on itself all their sins to a remote place; and the man shall release it in the wilderness.

23 "Then Aaron is to go into the tent of meeting and take off the linen garments he put on before he entered the Most Holy Place, and he is to leave them there. 24 He shall bathe himself with water in the sanctuary area and put on his regular garments. Then he shall come out and sacrifice the burnt offering for himself and the burnt offering for the people, to make atonement for himself and for the people. 25 He shall also burn the fat of the sin offering on the altar.

26 "The man who releases the goat as a scapegoat must wash his clothes and bathe himself with water; afterward he may come into the camp. 27 The bull and the goat for the sin offerings, whose blood was brought into the Most Holy Place to make atonement, must

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be taken outside the camp; their hides, flesh and intestines are to be burned up. 28 The man who burns them must wash his clothes and bathe himself with water; afterward he may come into the camp.

29 "This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: On the tenth day of the seventh month you must deny yourselves and not do any work--whether native-born or a foreigner residing among you-- 30 because on this day atonement will be made for you, to cleanse you. Then, before the LORD, you will be clean from all your sins. 31 It is a day of sabbath rest, and you must deny yourselves; it is a lasting ordinance. 32 The priest who is anointed and ordained to succeed his father as high priest is to make atonement. He is to put on the sacred linen garments 33 and make atonement for the Most Holy Place, for the tent of meeting and the altar, and for the priests and all the members of the community.

34 "This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: Atonement is to be made once a year for all the sins of the Israelites." And it was done, as the LORD commanded Moses.

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Chapter 17

Do you remember any childhood prayers? I do. When I was very young — back when my dad and stepmother were still walking with Christ — they taught us how to say grace before meals: “*God is good, God is great. Let us thank Him for our food — Amen.*”

That simple prayer came to mind as I read Leviticus 17. I still say grace before meals, but this chapter and that childhood memory helped me rediscover the “why” behind it. Sometimes, it’s the little things that spark a quiet revival in your heart — and you never know when or where that might happen.

Many have misunderstood and misapplied the meaning of these verses in Leviticus. Some religious traditions have even built doctrines — like forbidding blood transfusions — based solely on them. But reducing these verses to rigid laws misses the deeper truth God was revealing.

These verses weren’t about legalism. They were about reverence. Blood is sacred because *life* is in the blood. That’s not just biology — it’s theology.

And it points directly to Jesus. The blood He shed on the cross wasn’t symbolic. It was real, it was brutal, and it was necessary. Life was given — His life — and through it, eternal life is offered to us. The sacrifices in Leviticus were shadows. Jesus was the substance.

This chapter also reminds us how serious it is to take life — whether human or animal. God is the Author of life. Every drop of blood spilled — whether in violence or in provision — matters to Him. Blood is never casual.

So even something as routine as saying grace takes on a deeper meaning. Every meal is a small reminder: something gave its life so we could be nourished. And greater still — Jesus gave His life so we could be redeemed.

Let that truth create gratitude. Let it remind you that the cross wasn’t clean or poetic — it was bloody. And it was personal. It was done for you.

Eating Blood Forbidden

1 The LORD said to Moses, 2 “Speak to Aaron and his sons and to all the Israelites and say to them: ‘This is what the LORD has commanded: 3 Any Israelite who sacrifices [*literally as an act of worship or devotion, not just for a general meal.*] an ox, a lamb or a goat in the camp or outside of it 4 instead of bringing it to the entrance to the tent of meeting to present it as an offering to the LORD in front of the tabernacle of the LORD—that person shall be considered guilty of bloodshed; they have shed blood and must be cut off from their

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people. *[God wanted people to come to Him in His presence, a central place, not a bunch of Lone Rangers doing their own thing. During this time, God was central. He wanted them to come to Him specifically. It was also directly contrary to how the pagans worshiped, in their own house, to their own god. God wanted to build corporate worship. Consider this when you feel like just living for God on your own, and not joining a local Bible Believing Church. Ask yourself why you think and feel you don't need anyone. Is it pride? Stubbornness? Unfriendliness? Traits that are not given to us by God, but self-serving? There is a big difference between "I can't fellowship with others." versus "I don't want to fellowship with others."]* 5 This is so the Israelites will bring to the LORD the sacrifices they are now making in the open fields. They must bring them to the priest, that is, to the LORD, at the entrance to the tent of meeting and sacrifice them as fellowship offerings. 6 The priest is to splash the blood against the altar of the LORD at the entrance to the tent of meeting and burn the fat as an aroma pleasing to the LORD. 7 They must no longer offer any of their sacrifices to the goat idols *[also translated as demons, or hairy ones]* to whom they prostitute themselves. *[Pagan worship was part of the Egyptian culture Israel left, and many may still participated. God wants our devotion. He will not share it with anyone or anything.]* This is to be a lasting ordinance for them and for the generations to come.'

8 "Say to them: 'Any Israelite or any foreigner residing among them who offers a burnt offering or sacrifice 9 and does not bring it to the entrance to the tent of meeting to sacrifice it to the LORD must be cut off from the people of Israel.'

10 " 'I will set my face against any Israelite or any foreigner residing among them who eats *[consumes, feeds on, devours, ingests]* blood, and I will cut them off from the people. 11 For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make *[for the purpose]* atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life. 12 Therefore I say to the Israelites, 'None of you may eat blood, nor may any foreigner residing among you eat blood.' *[Pagan religions taught that consuming blood was consuming the power behind the blood.]*

13 " 'Any Israelite or any foreigner residing among you who hunts any animal or bird that may be eaten must drain out the blood and cover it with earth, 14 because the life of every creature is its blood. *[It was a type of burial and honoring of the animal. Giving the life back to God, in the ground, where all things began.]* That is why I have said to the Israelites, "You must not eat the blood of any creature, because the life of every creature is its blood; anyone who eats it must be cut off."

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15 " 'Anyone, whether native-born or foreigner, who eats anything found dead or torn by wild animals must wash their clothes and bathe with water, and they will be ceremonially unclean till evening; then they will be clean. 16 But if they do not wash their clothes and bathe themselves, they will be held responsible.' "

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Chapter 18

Imagine someone gives you a brand-new iPhone, or better yet, a SAMSUNG FLIP! You love it, use it every day — but instead of using a phone case, you toss it around, let it drop, and leave it out in the rain. After a while, it stops working right.

Did the phone company mess up? No. You misused it — not because you're evil, but because you didn't protect what was valuable. That's kind of what God is doing in Leviticus 18. He's saying, "You're valuable. The way you live, love, and treat your body — it matters. Don't throw yourself around like you're cheap. You're not."

Leviticus 18 is one of those chapters that can feel uncomfortable to read — it lists a lot of things not to do when it comes to sex, relationships, and moral choices. It's detailed and direct. At first glance, it might seem like just a list of old, outdated rules. But when you slow down and think about *why* God gave this to His people, it starts to hit differently.

God had just brought Israel out of Egypt, a symbol of the world — out of slavery, oppression, and a culture that didn't know Him. And He was leading them into Canaan — a land full of people living by different values, worshiping false gods, and doing things that God called harmful and destructive. Another dark place. But during this journey, God was transforming them.

So what's God saying here? "I don't want you to live like where you came from...and I don't want you to blend in with where you're going. I want you to live like you belong to Me."

Let's be real: we live in a modern-day version of Canaan. Everywhere we turn — online, in music, on streaming platforms, even in conversations — we're surrounded by messages about sex, identity, and freedom that are often the complete opposite of what God says is good.

- The world says, "Do whatever feels good."
- God says, "Live in a way that brings life, not damage."
- The world says, "Your body, your rules."
- God says, "Your body is sacred — it's Mine."

Leviticus 18 isn't about killing joy. It's about holiness. It is about God wanting to get closer to us. It's about protecting us, transforming us away from darkness — and from pain we weren't designed to carry. It begins with respecting the body God has given us, about controlling the passions that were given to us by God, but not trying to be manipulated by darkness.

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Here's the grace part: This isn't about shame — it's about healing. If you've made mistakes (and we all have), Jesus doesn't cancel you — He invites you back. That's the difference between religion and relationship: Religion says, "You broke the rules — stay out." Jesus says, "You broke the rules — come to Me and I'll make you new."

God wanted Israel to stand out in Canaan — not because they were better, but because they were His. He wanted Israel to be the light in this new dark land. He wants the same for us today.

Leviticus 18 reminds us: Who you are matters, how you live matters. And you are not meant to blend in. You're meant to reflect a different kind of life — one full of grace, truth, hope, and purpose.

Make no mistake, this chapter and book reveal the walk of every Christian. We were taken out of the world and placed back into the world – but prepared and sharpened in our daily journey with Jesus to influence others toward the Lord.

Unlawful Sexual Relations

1 The LORD said to Moses, 2 "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'I am the LORD your God. 3 You must not do as they do in Egypt, where you used to live, and you must not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you. Do not follow their practices. 4 You must obey my laws and be careful to follow my decrees. I am the LORD your God. 5 Keep my decrees and laws, for the person who obeys them will live by them. I am the LORD.

6 " 'No one is to approach any close relative to have sexual relations. I am the LORD.

7 " 'Do not dishonor your father by having sexual relations with your mother. She is your mother; do not have relations with her. *[Mother]*

8 " 'Do not have sexual relations with your father's wife; that would dishonor your father. *[Step-mother]*

9 " 'Do not have sexual relations with your sister, either your father's daughter or your mother's daughter, whether she was born in the same home or elsewhere. *[Half-Sister]*

10 " 'Do not have sexual relations with your son's daughter or your daughter's daughter; that would dishonor you. *[Grand-child]*

11 " 'Do not have sexual relations with the daughter of your father's wife, born to your father; she is your sister. *[Sister]*

12 " 'Do not have sexual relations with your father's sister; she is your father's close relative. *[Aunt]*

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13 " Do not have sexual relations with your mother's sister, because she is your mother's close relative. *[Aunt]*

14 " Do not dishonor your father's brother *[Uncle]* by approaching his wife to have sexual relations; she is your aunt. *[Aunt by marriage]*

15 " Do not have sexual relations with your daughter-in-law. She is your son's wife; do not have relations with her. *[Daughter-in-Law]*

16 " Do not have sexual relations with your brother's wife; that would dishonor your brother. *[Sister-in-Law]*

17 " Do not have sexual relations with both a woman and her daughter. Do not have sexual relations with either her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter; they are her close relatives. That is wickedness. *[Your wife and her daughter from another union, or your grand-children by marriage]*

18 " Do not take your wife's sister as a rival wife and have sexual relations with her while your wife is living. *[marrying your sister-in-law while married to your wife]*

19 " Do not approach a woman to have sexual relations during the uncleanness of her monthly period.

20 " Do not have sexual relations with your neighbor's wife *[Question: Who is your neighbor?]* and defile yourself with her.

21 " Do not give any of your children to be sacrificed to Molek, for you must not profane the name of your God. I am the LORD. *[Burning an infant to death]*

22 " Do not have sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman; that is detestable. *[Homosexuality]*

23 " Do not have sexual relations with an animal and defile yourself with it. A woman must not present herself to an animal to have sexual relations with it; that is a perversion. *[Bestiality]*

24 " Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled. *["Do not conform to the patterns of the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." (Romans 12:2)]* 25 Even the land was defiled; so I punished it for its sin, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. 26 But you must keep my decrees and my laws. The native-born and the foreigners residing among you must not do any of these detestable things, 27 for all these things were done by the people who lived in the land before you, and the land became defiled. 28 And if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you.

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

29 " Everyone who does any of these detestable things--such persons must be cut off from their people. 30 Keep my requirements and do not follow any of the detestable customs that were practiced before you came and do not defile yourselves with them. I am the LORD your God." "

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Chapter 19

I was watching the news this morning, just trying to catch the weather and traffic updates—my usual routine before heading out to the grind. I'll be honest, I try to watch as little of the news as possible. I'd much rather start my day in God's Word than with all the negativity and noise of the world. But to catch the forecast and traffic, I have to sit through a few headlines too.

This morning, one of those headlines hit me hard. A 17-year-old was on the run after shooting a 15-year-old. The story was that the younger teen's brother had been selling a vape to the older boy. But then the 17-year-old tried to rob them for both the vape and some money. When the younger teen ran, the older boy shot him in the head. My heart broke at how senseless and tragic it all was.

I found myself thinking, how does someone get to the point where they think it's okay to kill over a cheap vape pen? How does a heart grow that cold to the value of life?

I remembered my grandmother saying something similar when I was a kid: "*These shows today are all about sex and violence—no wonder there's so much hatred in the world.*" And she was talking about *Road Runner and Coyote*! I used to think she was just being dramatic. But now, with all the hyper-realistic video games and entertainment that desensitize us, maybe she was on to something.

There's a problem when we cast off restraint and live like "everything is permissible." Boundaries aren't about limiting freedom—they're about guiding it. Healthy boundaries protect us and others. They allow real freedom to thrive.

As we read Leviticus 19, we see God laying out these boundaries. Not to weigh us down, but to lead us into holiness. God tells His people to be holy because He is holy. That's the reason behind it all: relationship. God desires closeness with us, but His holiness requires that we be set apart from the ways of the world.

Now, we aren't required to follow these Old Testament laws word-for-word today. Jesus fulfilled them. We're not under the law anymore—but that doesn't mean holiness no longer matters. In the New Testament, we're still called to live holy lives. God hasn't changed. His heart still longs for His people to be different—to reflect Him.

So how do we become holy? Through Jesus. He fulfilled every one of these laws perfectly. And as we walk with Him daily, He transforms us. Holiness isn't about rule-following—it's about relationship. It's about letting His love and compassion shape us, so we become more like Him.

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

To be holy means to be set apart from the world's ways. The world is full of darkness, but Jesus calls us to be a light. When we live differently—with love, kindness, and justice—people notice. And through us, they might come to know the peace that only Jesus gives.

Each verse in Leviticus 19 could be a sermon by itself. There are deep spiritual truths tucked into each command. So, as you read, don't just focus on the "dos and don'ts." Look deeper. Ask what God is saying through each command—what He wants to reveal in your heart.

Various Laws

1 The LORD said to Moses, 2 'Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.

3 " 'Each of you must respect your mother and father, *[if the younger generation are at odds with the older generation, the foundation of society will become unstable. Thus, this commandment (the 5th of 10) is a core foundational stone for the future.]* and you must observe my Sabbaths. *[carrying the 4th commandment and connecting it to the same theme. Honoring God's direction as the Highest Father, do not war against, or fight against His guidance.]* I am the LORD your God.

4 " 'Do not turn to idols *[literal: "nothings"]* or make metal gods for yourselves. I am the LORD your God. *[any idol or god we create is in reality a "nothing". It is superficial and void]*

5 " 'When you sacrifice a fellowship offering to the LORD, sacrifice it in such a way *[posture of heart matters]* that it will be accepted on your behalf. 6 It shall be eaten on the day you sacrifice it or on the next day; anything left over until the third day must be burned up. 7 If any of it is eaten on the third day, it is impure and will not be accepted. 8 Whoever eats it will be held responsible because they have desecrated what is holy to the LORD; they must be cut off from their people.

9 " 'When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. 10 Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner. I am the LORD your God. *[roughly 17% of the field is left unharvested when done like this. When can we see the compassion of God, and he wants us to share in this compassion – willingly?]*

11 " 'Do not steal. *[taking anything that you know does not belong to you]* 'Do not lie. " 'Do not deceive one another. *[in reference to using deception in order to take what doesn't belong to you.]*

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12 " Do not swear [*take an oath, use*] falsely by my name [*reputation, fame*] and so profane [*pollute, defile*] the name of your God. I am the LORD.

13 " Do not defraud or rob your neighbor. " Do not hold back the wages of a hired worker overnight. [*this is the same as stealing*]

14 " Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, [*show a lack of concern, caring, or compassion*] but fear [*reverence, honor, respect*] your God. I am the LORD. [*See how God connects our treatment of others with our love for Him?*]

15 " Do not pervert [*distort, confuse*] justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly. [*this is political dynamite. God does not honor favoritism; no matter what platform, cause, culture, or position you select. God does not show favoritism, we should do likewise. God loves us equally and will judge us equally, regardless of the political fallout. He wants us to be idealists – for His ways alone.*]

16 " Do not go about spreading slander [*a talebearer, gossip*] among your people. " Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor's life. I am the LORD.

17 " Do not hate a fellow Israelite in your heart [*mind, soul, knowledge, reflections, memory*]. Rebuke [*reason with, correct, convince*] your neighbor frankly so you will not share in their guilt.

18 " Do not seek revenge [*vengeance, or entertain vengeance*] or bear [*carry, keep, maintain*] a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.

19 " Keep my decrees. " Do not mate different kinds of animals. " Do not plant your field with two kinds of seed. " Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material. [*A sign of things done by pagans then. The spiritual application is the blending of similar things to pervert the original. i.e., Look at how many religions blend the Bible and their twisted doctrines of "faith"*]

20 " If a man sleeps with a female slave who is promised to another man but who has not been ransomed or given her freedom, there must be due punishment. Yet they are not to be put to death, because she had not been freed. 21 The man, however, must bring a ram to the entrance to the tent of meeting for a guilt offering to the LORD. 22 With the ram of the guilt offering the priest is to make atonement for him before the LORD for the sin he has committed, and his sin will be forgiven. [*abuses of power have a consequence and are not unseen by God*]

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

23 " 'When you enter the land and plant any kind of fruit tree, regard its fruit as forbidden. For three years you are to consider it forbidden; it must not be eaten. 24 In the fourth year all its fruit will be holy, an offering of praise to the LORD. 25 But in the fifth year you may eat its fruit. In this way your harvest will be increased. I am the LORD your God. *[God knew there was a time to allow things to grow. It was good for the land and the people. When fruit came, the first fruiting was to acknowledge God. Thereafter, it could sustain the people. This is a lesson for all kinds of paths of life.]*

26 " 'Do not eat any meat with the blood still in it. " 'Do not practice divination or seek omens.

27 " 'Do not cut the hair at the sides of your head or clip off the edges of your beard. *[this was a pagan practice. It speaks about separating oneself to not blend into the other religions.]*

28 " 'Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the LORD. *[also centered around pagan religious practices.]*

29 " 'Do not degrade your daughter by making her a prostitute, or the land will turn to prostitution and be filled with wickedness. *[this was about using your children in other religious practices that drew them away from God. How many parents live vicariously through their children? Directing them to live a life the parents wish they had, but not toward God? OUCH!]*

30 " 'Observe my Sabbaths and have reverence for my sanctuary. I am the LORD.

31 " 'Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them. I am the LORD your God. *[There is a spirit world beyond this world. The realm of eternity. With God, that eternity will be made known. But we should not play with, or try to gain access to, or understanding of, this realm outside of His Word, for there are only two paths to this world – Jesus and his path of Light, and Darkness and his billions of counterfeit illusions and false promises to confuse and tease people. Stay away from anything that does not directly confess Jesus is Lord. It is a false path; no matter what nice things they say!]*

32 " 'Stand up in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the LORD.

33 " 'When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. 34 The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God.

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35 " 'Do not use dishonest standards when measuring length, weight or quantity. 36 Use honest scales and honest weights, an honest ephah and an honest hin. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt.

37 " 'Keep all my decrees and all my laws and follow them. I am the LORD.' " [Mat 22:37-40] 37 *Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."*]

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

Chapter 20

I remember one time while in the service, my squad and I were out doing map and compass training. We had a clear objective, a map, some ranger beads, and our trusted compass. But though the day started out with high hopes, it soon took another turn.

I had borrowed a compass from a fellow soldier at the last minute—one that looked new and fancy on the outside but had a slightly warped needle. Over time, I veered just a few degrees off track without noticing. By the time I realized something was wrong, we were several clicks off course, lost in unfamiliar terrain, and now facing a pending storm.

What saved us? A signal tower, shining faintly through the trees. That tower, that familiar landmark, guided us to our destination.

Leviticus 20 can feel harsh at first glance—full of warnings, boundaries, and consequences. But in truth, it's not about punishment; it's about protection. God is showing His people the danger of spiritual compromise. He's saying: *"Don't follow the broken compass of the world. I've set you apart. Follow Me."*

In a culture today that celebrates whatever feels good or convenient, God's call to holiness is like that signal tower—bright, unwavering, and life-saving. It's not just about avoiding sin; it's about living in closeness with God, becoming more like Him in thought, word, and action.

If you're a follower of Jesus, Leviticus 20 is a call back to clarity. Every day, we choose which compass we follow—the world's or God's. Holiness isn't about perfection, but direction. It's choosing to walk in the Spirit, to resist compromise, to live clean in a culture that confuses light for darkness. Are there places in your life where you've let the world's compass pull you off course? Are you watching, reading, tolerating, or allowing influences from things that dull your sense of right and wrong?

If so, then know that God gives grace to repent, strength to change, and joy in obedience.

If you're not sure where you stand with God, Leviticus 20 can sound condemning. But here's the hope: Jesus already took every penalty listed in this chapter and bore it on the cross. Every sin that deserved judgment—He carried it so that you wouldn't have to. He doesn't shame you into holiness. He rescues you from it. After reading this chapter, I am personally very grateful too! For the same God who says *"Be holy"* also says, *"Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."* — Matthew 11:28

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You don't have to clean yourself up to come to God. You come, and He makes you clean. Like my squad and I in the forest, the world may have led you off-course. But the tower still shines. Christ still calls. Holiness isn't a prison—it's freedom from everything that dims your soul.

Punishment for Sin

1 The LORD said to Moses, 2 'Say to the Israelites: 'Any Israelite or any foreigner residing in Israel who sacrifices any of his children to Molek is to be put to death. The members of the community are to stone him. 3 I myself will set my face against him and will cut him off from his people; for by sacrificing his children to Molek, he has defiled my sanctuary and profaned my holy name. 4 If the members of the community close their eyes when that man sacrifices one of his children to Molek and if they fail to put him to death, 5 I myself will set my face against him and his family and will cut them off from their people together with all who follow him in prostituting themselves to Molek.

6 ' I will set my face against anyone who turns to mediums and spiritists to prostitute themselves by following them, and I will cut them off from their people.

7 ' Consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am the LORD your God.

8 Keep my decrees and follow them. I am the LORD, who makes you holy.

9 ' Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death. Because they have cursed their father or mother, their blood will be on their own head.

10 ' If a man commits adultery with another man's wife—with the wife of his neighbor—both the adulterer and the adulteress are to be put to death.

11 ' If a man has sexual relations with his father's wife, he has dishonored his father. Both the man and the woman are to be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads.

12 ' If a man has sexual relations with his daughter-in-law, both of them are to be put to death. What they have done is a perversion; their blood will be on their own heads.

13 ' If a man has sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They are to be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads.

14 ' If a man marries both a woman and her mother, it is wicked. Both he and they must be burned in the fire, so that no wickedness will be among you.

15 ' If a man has sexual relations with an animal, he is to be put to death, and you must kill the animal.

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

16 " If a woman approaches an animal to have sexual relations with it, kill both the woman and the animal. They are to be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads.

17 " If a man marries his sister, the daughter of either his father or his mother, and they have sexual relations, it is a disgrace. They are to be publicly removed from their people. He has dishonored his sister and will be held responsible.

18 " If a man has sexual relations with a woman during her monthly period, he has exposed the source of her flow, and she has also uncovered it. Both of them are to be cut off from their people.

19 " Do not have sexual relations with the sister of either your mother or your father, for that would dishonor a close relative; both of you would be held responsible.

20 " If a man has sexual relations with his aunt, he has dishonored his uncle. They will be held responsible; they will die childless.

21 " If a man marries his brother's wife, it is an act of impurity; he has dishonored his brother. They will be childless.

22 " Keep all my decrees and laws and follow them, so that the land where I am bringing you to live may not vomit you out. 23 You must not live according to the customs of the nations I am going to drive out before you. Because they did all these things, I abhorred them. 24 But I said to you, "You will possess their land; I will give it to you as an inheritance, a land flowing with milk and honey." I am the LORD your God, who has set you apart from the nations.

25 " You must therefore make a distinction between clean and unclean animals and between unclean and clean birds. Do not defile yourselves by any animal or bird or anything that moves along the ground--those that I have set apart as unclean for you. 26 You are to be holy to me because I, the LORD, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own.

27 " A man or woman who is a medium or spiritist among you must be put to death. You are to stone them; their blood will be on their own heads.' "

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Chapter 21

It was an early Saturday morning in June of 2000. I got up eagerly and put on my best suit. Then I jumped in the car and headed toward a large building where, in just a few short hours, I'd be receiving something I had worked for years to earn — my Ph.D. in Theology!

I was convinced that after that day, churches would be lining up, practically banging down my door, inviting me to join their staff and wooing me with opportunities. Surely, I thought, this degree would be the confirmation everyone needed — that my status as a priest of God would finally be affirmed by those around me, and the doors of the sanctuary would swing open wide to welcome my wise and well-earned teachings. Somewhere in the back of my mind, I even believed that this simple piece of paper would somehow change my status with God, too — as if He'd look at me differently now, more impressed, more ready to use me.

Ahhh, the ignorance of youth.

I still have that degree, of course — framed nicely and hanging in the upstairs family room. It needs dusting regularly.

There's something sobering about reading Leviticus 21. The level of holiness required from the Old Testament priests is... intense. No blemishes. No defilement. No compromise. It's not casual — it's sacred. And then I remember what Peter wrote: "*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood...*" (1 Peter 2:9). Oh, wait — that's us. You and me. In Jesus, we are now the priests.

That reality hits differently, doesn't it? Not because we wear robes, burn incense, or follow temple rituals — but because Jesus, the ultimate High Priest, brought us into a new priesthood. One not based on law, but on love. Not maintained by rituals, but by relationship. And yet... the calling is no less weighty.

Sometimes I think we forget what it means to be "set apart." Not isolated. Not superior. Not weird-for-weird's-sake. Set apart means called out from darkness — not just so we can enjoy the light — but so we can shine it.

In Leviticus 21, the priests were forbidden from blending in with the broken systems around them. They couldn't just go about life casually. Why? Because they were *representing God to the people*. Sound familiar? You, priest of Jesus, represent God in your home. In your office. In that awkward group chat. At school pickup. In every decision, every scroll, every conversation. We don't really have the option to be priest only on Sunday or Wednesday night, or not while at work. We are now born into the role.

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

Let's be honest — it's hard. It's easier to blend in than stand apart. Easier to retreat into spiritual activity than to actually live like Jesus did: humble, kind, holy, truthful, and near to the broken. Being a priest isn't about being impressive. It's not about titles, platforms, degrees, or checklists. It's about walking closely with Jesus, so closely that His presence begins to shape how we respond when we're tired, misunderstood, overlooked, or even mocked.

The priests in Leviticus had to be without blemish to even approach the altar. But here's the grace: *Jesus became the blemish for us.* He bore our unholiness so that we could be made clean — and called His. Now, he invites us to walk as priests, not with heavy robes and rules, but with hearts lit on fire by His Spirit.

So, walk into your day like a priest. Not perfect. Not pressured. But purposeful. Set apart, not to hide — but to help. Not to rule — but to represent and point the Way.

Rules for Priests

1 The LORD said to Moses, 'Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them: 'A priest must not make himself ceremonially unclean for any of his people who die, 2 except for a close relative, such as his mother or father, his son or daughter, his brother, 3 or an unmarried sister who is dependent on him since she has no husband--for her he may make himself unclean. 4 He must not make himself unclean for people related to him by marriage, and so defile himself.

5 " 'Priests must not shave their heads or shave off the edges of their beards or cut their bodies. 6 They must be holy to their God and must not profane the name of their God. Because they present the food offerings to the LORD, the food of their God, they are to be holy.

7 " 'They must not marry women defiled by prostitution or divorced from their husbands, because priests are holy to their God. 8 Regard them as holy, because they offer up the food of your God. Consider them holy, because I the LORD am holy--I who make you holy.

9 " 'If a priest's daughter defiles herself by becoming a prostitute, she disgraces her father; she must be burned in the fire.

10 " 'The high priest, the one among his brothers who has had the anointing oil poured on his head and who has been ordained to wear the priestly garments, must not let his hair become unkempt or tear his clothes. 11 He must not enter a place where there is a dead body. He must not make himself unclean, even for his father or mother, 12 nor leave the sanctuary

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of his God or desecrate it, because he has been dedicated by the anointing oil of his God. I am the LORD.

13 "The woman he marries must be a virgin. 14 He must not marry a widow, a divorced woman, or a woman defiled by prostitution, but only a virgin from his own people, 15 so that he will not defile his offspring among his people. I am the LORD, who makes him holy." "

16 The LORD said to Moses, 17 "Say to Aaron: 'For the generations to come none of your descendants who has a defect may come near to offer the food of his God. 18 No man who has any defect may come near: no man who is blind or lame, disfigured or deformed; 19 no man with a crippled foot or hand, 20 or who is a hunchback or a dwarf, or who has any eye defect, or who has festering or running sores or damaged testicles. 21 No descendant of Aaron the priest who has any defect is to come near to present the food offerings to the LORD. He has a defect; he must not come near to offer the food of his God. 22 He may eat the most holy food of his God, as well as the holy food; 23 yet because of his defect, he must not go near the curtain or approach the altar, and so desecrate my sanctuary. I am the LORD, who makes them holy.' "

24 So Moses told this to Aaron and his sons and to all the Israelites.

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

Chapter 22

As I read these chapters about the priesthood, and remember that I, too, am now part of the royal priesthood, I can't help but think about how much I've failed since becoming a Christian. I've been a poor example so many times. Most wouldn't know—I kept it all inside. But I knew. I always knew.

The mask was easy to wear. I showed up at church every Sunday, smiled, sang, and served. But inside, I was carrying things that didn't belong in a priest. I felt it especially during communion—standing before the altar, face-to-face with God. How would I come? Hiding my sin? Or giving it to Him in repentance?

Leviticus 22 shows us images of sin (leprosy, uncleanness), worship (offerings, gifts), and relationship (between priest and people). If we focus only on the literal words, we might miss the deeper message: this is about the posture of the heart—about how we approach God, and why.

When we show up to church wearing our masks, we bring an offering with a defect. We're presenting something broken, but pretending it's whole. As priests, we're called to be clean—and that cleansing comes only through Jesus. If we bring our shame, our bitterness, our jealousy, our hidden sin without repentance, our worship becomes tainted. We can't fake it before God.

Jesus doesn't want performance. He doesn't want us dressed up in religious appearances—whether flashy or humble. He just wants us real. We are stained, messy, tired, and sometimes bitter. To pretend otherwise isn't honesty—it's hiding. So take advantage, brothers and sisters, of the grace Jesus has given. Be made wholly holy. It's not about what others see; it's about what God sees. And the beautiful thing is, people often relate more to our weakness and honesty than to our polished image.

When I read these laws, I can feel the weight of them—the burden of rule after rule. And we haven't even gotten to the ordinances yet. This was a time when people's access to God was so literal—they had to go through so much just to enter His presence.

But the same God who gave those laws is still the loving God we serve now. And I'm so thankful we don't have to carry that weight. Jesus carried it for us. He fulfilled every law perfectly. That burden was never meant to save Israel—it was meant to show them that holiness could never be achieved by human hands. It was a cry for another way—for the only One in history who could carry it.

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I want to end with these personal questions just for you to ponder as a personal inventory: Is your worship sincere or polished? What “blemishes” might you be hiding from God? Are you offering God leftovers or your best?

1 The LORD said to Moses, 2 “Tell Aaron and his sons to treat with respect [*consecrate, holy, keep sacred*]/the sacred offerings [*places and things given to God*] the Israelites consecrate to me, so they will not profane my holy name. I am the LORD.

3 “Say to them: ‘For the generations to come, if any of your descendants is ceremonially unclean and yet comes near the sacred offerings that the Israelites consecrate to the LORD, that person must be cut off from my presence. I am the LORD.

4 “ ‘If a descendant of Aaron has a defiling skin disease [*leprosy – sin*] or a bodily discharge, he may not eat the sacred offerings until he is cleansed. He will also be unclean if he touches something defiled by a corpse or by anyone who has an emission of semen, 5 or if he touches any crawling thing that makes him unclean, or any person who makes him unclean, whatever the uncleanness may be. 6 The one who touches any such thing will be unclean till evening. He must not eat any of the sacred offerings unless he has bathed himself with water. 7 When the sun goes down, he will be clean, and after that he may eat the sacred offerings, for they are his food. 8 He must not eat anything found dead or torn by wild animals, and so become unclean through it. I am the LORD.

9 “ ‘The priests are to perform my service in such a way that they do not become guilty and die for treating it with contempt. I am the LORD, who makes them holy.

10 “ ‘No one outside [*stranger, not part*] a priest's family may eat the sacred offering, nor may the guest of a priest or his hired worker eat it. 11 But if a priest buys a slave with money, or if slaves are born in his household, they may eat his food. 12 If a priest's daughter marries anyone other than a priest, she may not eat any of the sacred contributions. 13 But if a priest's daughter becomes a widow or is divorced, yet has no children, and she returns to live in her father's household as in her youth, she may eat her father's food. No unauthorized person, however, may eat it.

14 “ ‘Anyone who eats a sacred offering by mistake must make restitution to the priest for the offering and add a fifth of the value to it. 15 The priests must not desecrate the sacred offerings the Israelites present to the LORD 16 by allowing them to eat the sacred offerings and so bring upon them guilt requiring payment. I am the LORD, who makes them holy.’ ”

Unacceptable Sacrifices

17 The LORD said to Moses, 18 “Speak to Aaron and his sons and to all the Israelites and say to them: ‘If any of you—whether an Israelite or a foreigner residing in Israel—presents a

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

gift for a burnt offering to the LORD, either to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering, 19 you must present a male without defect from the cattle, sheep or goats in order that it may be accepted on your behalf. 20 Do not bring anything with a defect, because it will not be accepted on your behalf. 21 When anyone brings from the herd or flock a fellowship offering to the LORD to fulfill a special vow or as a freewill offering, it must be without defect or blemish to be acceptable. 22 Do not offer to the LORD the blind, the injured or the maimed, or anything with warts or festering or running sores. Do not place any of these on the altar as a food offering presented to the LORD. 23 You may, however, present as a freewill offering an ox or a sheep that is deformed or stunted, *[an offering of gratitude – God takes us as we are with defect and all.]* but it will not be accepted in fulfillment of a vow. 24 You must not offer to the LORD an animal whose testicles are bruised, crushed, torn or cut. You must not do this in your own land, 25 and you must not accept such animals from the hand of a foreigner and offer them as the food of your God. They will not be accepted on your behalf, because they are deformed and have defects.' "

26 The LORD said to Moses, 27 "When a calf, a lamb or a goat is born, it is to remain with its mother for seven days. From the eighth day on, it will be acceptable as a food offering presented to the LORD. 28 Do not slaughter a cow or a sheep and its young on the same day.

29 "When you sacrifice a thank offering to the LORD, sacrifice it in such a way that it will be accepted on your behalf. 30 It must be eaten that same day; leave none of it till morning. I am the LORD.

31 "Keep my commands and follow them. I am the LORD. 32 Do not profane my holy name, for I must be acknowledged as holy by the Israelites. I am the LORD, who made you holy 33 and who brought you out of Egypt to be your God. I am the LORD."

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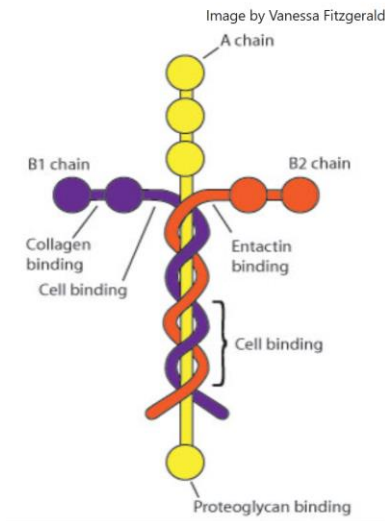
Chapter 23

Have you ever seen pictures in the clouds? When I was young (and I'll admit—even some days now), my brothers and sisters and I would go outside, lie down in the grass, and start looking for images in the sky. It felt like a competition at first, but soon it became more about finding those hidden pictures that only lasted a few minutes before the clouds drifted into something new.

I've said it before and I'll say it again—God is everywhere, if we'll just slow down and look for Him. It's amazing how often we can catch glimpses of Him in our daily lives. Just this past weekend, I came across another “Godism”—a small detail that, for me, pointed straight to the Creator.

This time it was a tiny protein called laminin. (Bear with me for a quick science moment!) Laminin is a crucial protein found in the spaces between our cells, especially in the parts of our body that hold tissues together. It acts kind of like scaffolding for our organs, skin, and blood vessels. Without laminin, our bodies would literally fall apart.

But here's what makes it really interesting: laminin is shaped like a cross. It's even described as “cruciform.”



This tiny protein, hidden inside every single person—believer or not—reminds me of God's fingerprint on creation. When I read Colossians 1:17 — “*He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together*” — it takes on a whole new level of meaning.

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

Now, onto Leviticus 23—this chapter is like a sky full of cloud pictures. Except these aren't random. God laid out eight appointed times—special days and festivals. At first glance, they might look like a list of religious holidays with specific rules. But if you look closer, you'll see a divine picture forming—one that points directly to Jesus.

Each feast has a literal, historical purpose. But each one also has a prophetic meaning, fulfilled either in Jesus' first coming or His second. In fact, five of the eight major feasts have already been fulfilled—in exact order. The remaining three are still ahead, waiting for their moment in history.

Within the text below, I'll walk through each feast briefly so you can see the picture God painted in these ancient traditions—one that's still unfolding in our lives today.

The Appointed Festivals

1 The LORD said to Moses, 2 "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'These are my appointed festivals, the appointed festivals of the LORD, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies.

The Sabbath

3 " 'There are six days when you may work, but the seventh day is a day of sabbath rest, a day of sacred assembly. You are not to do any work; wherever you live, it is a sabbath to the LORD.

[Our weekly rest – Jesus, when born, became our rest – we rest in his grace and not our works.]

The Passover

4 " 'These are the LORD's appointed festivals, the sacred assemblies you are to proclaim at their appointed times: 5 The LORD's Passover begins at twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month.

[Deliverance by the lamb's blood – Jesus, the lamb, was sacrificed for us on this day – We are redeemed from eternal death.]

The Festival of Unleavened Bread

6 On the fifteenth day of that month the LORD's Festival of Unleavened Bread begins; for seven days you must eat bread made without yeast. 7 On the first day hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work. 8 For seven days present a food offering to the LORD. And on the seventh day hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work.' "

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[Jesus was buried on this day. Representing the separation from sin, the Bread of Life. – Jesus was presented to God as an offering.]

Offering the Firstfruits

9 The LORD said to Moses, 10 "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'When you enter the land I am going to give you and you reap its harvest, bring to the priest a sheaf of the first grain you harvest. 11 He is to wave the sheaf before the LORD so it will be accepted on your behalf; the priest is to wave it on the day after the Sabbath. 12 On the day you wave the sheaf, you must sacrifice as a burnt offering to the LORD a lamb a year old without defect, 13 together with its grain offering of two-tenths of an ephah of the finest flour mixed with olive oil—a food offering presented to the LORD, a pleasing aroma—and its drink offering of a quarter of a hin of wine. 14 You must not eat any bread, or roasted or new grain, until the very day you bring this offering to your God. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live.

[Jesus rose from the dead on this festival day and marked the Firstfruit of the new land offered to us – His eternal kingdom. The first to experience resurrection.]

The Festival of Weeks

15 "From the day after the Sabbath, the day you brought the sheaf of the wave offering, count off seven full weeks. 16 Count off fifty days up to the day after the seventh Sabbath, and then present an offering of new grain to the LORD. 17 From wherever you live, bring two loaves made of two-tenths of an ephah of the finest flour, baked with yeast, as a wave offering of firstfruits to the LORD. 18 Present with this bread seven male lambs, each a year old and without defect, one young bull and two rams. They will be a burnt offering to the LORD, together with their grain offerings and drink offerings—a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the LORD. 19 Then sacrifice one male goat for a sin offering and two lambs, each a year old, for a fellowship offering. 20 The priest is to wave the two lambs before the LORD as a wave offering, together with the bread of the firstfruits. They are a sacred offering to the LORD for the priest. 21 On that same day you are to proclaim a sacred assembly and do no regular work. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live.

22 "When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and for the foreigner residing among you. I am the LORD your God.' "

[50 days after the resurrection, the day the Church was born, the Holy Spirit was poured out. The Church Age begins.]

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

The Festival of Trumpets

23 The LORD said to Moses, 24 "Say to the Israelites: 'On the first day of the seventh month you are to have a day of sabbath rest, a sacred assembly commemorated with trumpet blasts. 25 Do no regular work, but present a food offering to the LORD.' "

[The Jewish New Year, the day of the rapture of the Church. The final days, the last stage before the second coming of Jesus. The new season, the final season, focused on bringing Israel back to the Lord.]

The Day of Atonement

26 The LORD said to Moses, 27 "The tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. Hold a sacred assembly and deny yourselves, and present a food offering to the LORD. 28 Do not do any work on that day, because it is the Day of Atonement, when atonement is made for you before the LORD your God. 29 Those who do not deny themselves on that day must be cut off from their people. 30 I will destroy from among their people anyone who does any work on that day. 31 You shall do no work at all. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live. 32 It is a day of sabbath rest for you, and you must deny yourselves. From the evening of the ninth day of the month until the following evening you are to observe your sabbath."

[The second coming of Jesus and the fulfillment of Israel's national repentance. (Zechariah 12:10)]

The Festival of Tabernacles

33 The LORD said to Moses, 34 "Say to the Israelites: 'On the fifteenth day of the seventh month the LORD's Festival of Tabernacles begins, and it lasts for seven days. 35 The first day is a sacred assembly; do no regular work. 36 For seven days present food offerings to the LORD, and on the eighth day hold a sacred assembly and present a food offering to the LORD. It is the closing special assembly; do no regular work.

37 (" These are the LORD's appointed festivals, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies for bringing food offerings to the LORD--the burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings required for each day. 38 These offerings are in addition to those for the LORD's Sabbaths and in addition to your gifts and whatever you have vowed and all the freewill offerings you give to the LORD.)

39 " So beginning with the fifteenth day of the seventh month, after you have gathered the crops of the land, celebrate the festival to the LORD for seven days; the first day is a day of sabbath rest, and the eighth day also is a day of sabbath rest. 40 On the first day you are to take branches from luxuriant trees--from palms, willows and other leafy trees--and rejoice

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before the LORD your God for seven days. 41 Celebrate this as a festival to the LORD for seven days each year. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come; celebrate it in the seventh month. 42 Live in temporary shelters for seven days: All native-born Israelites are to live in such shelters 43 so your descendants will know that I had the Israelites live in temporary shelters when I brought them out of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.'

[Final fulfillment: In the New Heaven and New Earth, God will dwell with His people forever. (Revelation 21:3)]

44 So Moses announced to the Israelites the appointed festivals of the LORD.

[Isn't this just too cool?]

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

Chapter 24

The other night, the power went out at our house. It was one of those unexpected blackouts—no warning, just sudden darkness. I fumbled through drawers for a flashlight, found one with dying batteries, and finally lit a candle. It was just one tiny flame, but it changed everything. The room took on a calm, quiet glow. What surprised me most was how much effort it took to keep that one little flame alive—shielding it from drafts, trimming the wick, staying nearby.

It made me think: some things don't stay lit on their own. They need tending. Attention. Care.

At first glance, Leviticus 24 seems like just another list of Old Testament rituals—oil for lamps, bread for a table, reverence for God's name. But look again. Hidden in plain sight is a powerful picture of the Trinity: the Holy Spirit (oil), Jesus the Bread of Life, and the Father whose Name is above all names. This chapter quietly points forward to what would be revealed fully in the New Testament. It's more than ceremony—it's a call to intimacy, responsibility, and worship.

In Leviticus 24, God gives instructions that might seem like ancient temple chores at first glance—but it's more than religious duty. It's a picture of devotion, and how God invites us into the daily work of keeping His presence visible and His character honored in the world.

First, there's the oil. Pure oil, beaten from olives—not the leftovers, but the best. This was for the lamp that had to stay burning continually in the tent of meeting. It was the job of the people to bring that oil, and the priests to tend it.

And I wonder—who's bringing the oil now? Because in a world growing darker by the day, the light of God's presence doesn't come from church policies or programs. It comes from people filled with the Spirit, willing to show up and keep the flame alive through prayer, worship, and surrender. We don't create the fire, but we do have to tend it.

Then there's the bread—twelve loaves, freshly made every week, set before the Lord as a lasting covenant. It's easy to breeze past this detail, but think about it: God didn't ask for bread because He was hungry. He asked for it as a sign of relationship. He's a God who gathers people around the table. The bread was a symbol of presence—His presence among them, and their presence before Him.

That hasn't changed. Jesus would later say, "I am the Bread of Life." But what are we offering the world today? Is it something nourishing and real—or something stale, over-

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processed, and empty? It's our calling as the Church to offer Jesus to the world, not just through sermons, but through hospitality, justice, compassion, and truth that satisfies. Fresh bread—not yesterday's leftovers.

And then there's the Name. This part of the chapter takes a serious turn: a man blasphemes God's name, and the community has to deal with the weight of what that means. It's a hard passage—but the message is clear. God's name is holy. Not just the syllables we speak, but the weight of who He is. His character, His authority, His reputation. And we carry that Name not just in how we talk about God, but in how we live.

In a time when the name of God is often used for manipulation, for division, or simply treated as irrelevant, the Church body of believers is meant to honor His name by how we reflect His heart. In public and in private. In conflict and in kindness.

So maybe Leviticus 24 isn't about ritual after all. Maybe it's a quiet call to tend what matters.

Are we keeping the light of His Spirit burning? Are we offering the Bread of Life with freshness and grace? Are we honoring the Name we've been entrusted to carry?

In a dark world, these aren't just ancient duties—they're present-day invitations, not for the "religious professionals," but for all of us who dare to bear the presence of God into everyday places. So bring the oil. Bake the bread. Honor the Name. Be intentional while being the Church.

Olive Oil brought by the Israelites

1 The LORD said to Moses, 2 "Command the Israelites to bring you clear oil of pressed olives for the light so that the lamps may be kept burning continually. 3 Outside the curtain that shields the ark of the covenant law in the tent of meeting, Aaron is to tend the lamps before the LORD from evening till morning, continually. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. 4 The lamps on the pure gold lampstand before the LORD must be tended continually.

Bread Set Before the Lord

5 "Take the finest flour and bake twelve loaves of bread, using two-tenths of an ephah for each loaf. 6 Arrange them in two stacks, six in each stack, on the table of pure gold before the LORD. 7 By each stack put some pure incense as a memorial portion to represent the bread and to be a food offering presented to the LORD. 8 This bread is to be set out before the LORD regularly, Sabbath after Sabbath, on behalf of the Israelites, as a lasting covenant. 9 It belongs to Aaron and his sons, who are to eat it in the sanctuary area, because it is a most holy part of their perpetual share of the food offerings presented to the LORD."

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

A Blasphemer Put to Death

10 Now the son of an Israelite mother and an Egyptian father went out among the Israelites, and a fight broke out in the camp between him and an Israelite. 11 The son of the Israelite woman blasphemed the Name with a curse; so they brought him to Moses. (His mother's name was Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri the Danite.) 12 They put him in custody until the will of the LORD should be made clear to them.

13 Then the LORD said to Moses: 14 "Take the blasphemer outside the camp. All those who heard him are to lay their hands on his head, and the entire assembly is to stone him. 15 Say to the Israelites: 'Anyone who curses their God will be held responsible; 16 anyone who blasphemes the name of the LORD is to be put to death. The entire assembly must stone them. Whether foreigner or native-born, when they blaspheme the Name they are to be put to death.

17 " 'Anyone who takes the life of a human being is to be put to death. 18 Anyone who takes the life of someone's animal must make restitution—life for life. 19 Anyone who injures their neighbor is to be injured in the same manner: 20 fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. The one who has inflicted the injury must suffer the same injury. 21 Whoever kills an animal must make restitution, but whoever kills a human being is to be put to death. 22 You are to have the same law for the foreigner and the native-born. I am the LORD your God.'

23 Then Moses spoke to the Israelites, and they took the blasphemer outside the camp and stoned him. The Israelites did as the LORD commanded Moses.

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Chapter 25

As I look back, I find it's amazing how quickly I can mess up my life. I thought I had my whole life planned out. I knew exactly what I wanted to do. Then life took a turn.

Some events I could control, but failed to—making poor decisions. Others were out of my control. I went from knowing exactly where I was heading to a life completely off the rails.

At one point, my life was so mixed up and lost, I found myself experimenting with drugs, out of work, angry, bitter, blaming others, and even considering violent crimes as a way to ease my bitterness and survive. It was not the highlight of my life, needless to say.

I found myself at the bottom of a deep hole. Nowhere to turn. No one to turn to. I felt completely lost, and the hole just seemed to grow deeper every day. “How,” I thought, “did I ever get to this place?”

I sold my car just so I could get money to eat. Now I was without transportation. My credit was horrible, so I couldn't get another one. No money for the bus, no job to make money. It felt like an endless loop of misery. I couldn't see how things would ever change—how I could ever live a “normal” life like “everyone else.” I was in complete and utter despair.

Then one day, I found Jesus. And He offered me a “do-over.”

Oh, things didn't change overnight. But what He gave me immediately upon my surrender was something my heart didn't have, but has had ever since—hope.

I felt that burden of hopelessness lift the moment I accepted His offer. He took me as I was—nasty and all. He placed His arms around me, and it was as if He said, “I value you. And I have a plan for your life, Tim.”

Though my circumstances didn't magically disappear at that moment, hope prevailed where doom had resided. Day by day, the light of His presence grew more in me. I faced the circumstances of my situation, knowing I was not alone anymore. And little by little, my circumstances changed.

That was so many decades ago. It still amazes me when I consider where my life was going, and where my life is today—all because Jesus offered me His Year of Jubilee.

And here's what's wild—this chapter in the Bible isn't just spiritual. It has real, practical stuff too. It speaks to a deeper need in today's world of constant pushing and prodding. Rest is a need. Restoration of our resources is sorely needed.

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

But even more powerful is the spiritual shadow of Jesus here. He is our rest. He is our Great Do-Over.

No matter where we are in life, whenever we're being overwhelmed—whether it's the first time or the tenth—Jesus still offers us that Jubilee year. And when we surrender to His free offer... He restores our purpose.

The Sabbath Year

1 The LORD said to Moses at Mount Sinai, 2 "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'When you enter the land I am going to give you, the land itself must observe a sabbath to the LORD. 3 For six years sow your fields, and for six years prune your vineyards and gather their crops. 4 But in the seventh year the land is to have a year of sabbath rest, a sabbath to the LORD. Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards. 5 Do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the grapes of your untended vines. The land is to have a year of rest. 6 Whatever the land yields during the sabbath year will be food for you—for yourself, your male and female servants, and the hired worker and temporary resident who live among you, 7 as well as for your livestock and the wild animals in your land. Whatever the land produces may be eaten.

The Year of Jubilee

8 " 'Count off seven sabbath years—seven times seven years—so that the seven sabbath years amount to a period of forty-nine years. 9 Then have the trumpet sounded everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement sound the trumpet throughout your land. 10 Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each of you is to return to your family property and to your own clan. 11 The fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; do not sow and do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the untended vines. 12 For it is a jubilee and is to be holy for you; eat only what is taken directly from the fields.

13 " 'In this Year of Jubilee everyone is to return to their own property.

14 " 'If you sell land to any of your own people or buy land from them, do not take advantage of each other. 15 You are to buy from your own people on the basis of the number of years since the Jubilee. And they are to sell to you on the basis of the number of years left for harvesting crops. 16 When the years are many, you are to increase the price, and when the years are few, you are to decrease the price, because what is really being sold to you is the number of crops. 17 Do not take advantage of each other, but fear your God. I am the LORD your God.

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18 " Follow my decrees and be careful to obey my laws, and you will live safely in the land. 19 Then the land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill and live there in safety. 20 You may ask, "What will we eat in the seventh year if we do not plant or harvest our crops?" 21 I will send you such a blessing in the sixth year that the land will yield enough for three years. 22 While you plant during the eighth year, you will eat from the old crop and will continue to eat from it until the harvest of the ninth year comes in.

23 " The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you reside in my land as foreigners and strangers. 24 Throughout the land that you hold as a possession, you must provide for the redemption of the land.

25 " If one of your fellow Israelites becomes poor and sells some of their property, their nearest relative is to come and redeem what they have sold. 26 If, however, there is no one to redeem it for them but later on they prosper and acquire sufficient means to redeem it themselves, 27 they are to determine the value for the years since they sold it and refund the balance to the one to whom they sold it; they can then go back to their own property. 28 But if they do not acquire the means to repay, what was sold will remain in the possession of the buyer until the Year of Jubilee. It will be returned in the Jubilee, and they can then go back to their property.

29 " Anyone who sells a house in a walled city retains the right of redemption a full year after its sale. During that time the seller may redeem it. 30 If it is not redeemed before a full year has passed, the house in the walled city shall belong permanently to the buyer and the buyer's descendants. It is not to be returned in the Jubilee. 31 But houses in villages without walls around them are to be considered as belonging to the open country. They can be redeemed, and they are to be returned in the Jubilee.

32 " The Levites always have the right to redeem their houses in the Levitical towns, which they possess. 33 So the property of the Levites is redeemable--that is, a house sold in any town they hold--and is to be returned in the Jubilee, because the houses in the towns of the Levites are their property among the Israelites. 34 But the pastureland belonging to their towns must not be sold; it is their permanent possession.

35 " If any of your fellow Israelites become poor and are unable to support themselves among you, help them as you would a foreigner and stranger, so they can continue to live among you. 36 Do not take interest or any profit from them, but fear your God, so that they may continue to live among you. 37 You must not lend them money at interest or sell them food at a profit. 38 I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan and to be your God.

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

39 " If any of your fellow Israelites become poor and sell themselves to you, do not make them work as slaves. 40 They are to be treated as hired workers or temporary residents among you; they are to work for you until the Year of Jubilee. 41 Then they and their children are to be released, and they will go back to their own clans and to the property of their ancestors. 42 Because the Israelites are my servants, whom I brought out of Egypt, they must not be sold as slaves. 43 Do not rule over them ruthlessly, but fear your God.

44 " Your male and female slaves are to come from the nations around you; from them you may buy slaves. 45 You may also buy some of the temporary residents living among you and members of their clans born in your country, and they will become your property. 46 You can bequeath them to your children as inherited property and can make them slaves for life, but you must not rule over your fellow Israelites ruthlessly.

47 " If a foreigner residing among you becomes rich and any of your fellow Israelites become poor and sell themselves to the foreigner or to a member of the foreigner's clan, 48 they retain the right of redemption after they have sold themselves. One of their relatives may redeem them: 49 An uncle or a cousin or any blood relative in their clan may redeem them. Or if they prosper, they may redeem themselves. 50 They and their buyer are to count the time from the year they sold themselves up to the Year of Jubilee. The price for their release is to be based on the rate paid to a hired worker for that number of years. 51 If many years remain, they must pay for their redemption a larger share of the price paid for them. 52 If only a few years remain until the Year of Jubilee, they are to compute that and pay for their redemption accordingly. 53 They are to be treated as workers hired from year to year; you must see to it that those to whom they owe service do not rule over them ruthlessly.

54 " Even if someone is not redeemed in any of these ways, they and their children are to be released in the Year of Jubilee, 55 for the Israelites belong to me as servants. They are my servants, whom I brought out of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.

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Chapter 26

When I was in school, personal computers were just starting to hit the market. This was before Windows—back when everything ran on something called DOS BASIC. In one of my classes, we learned to write programs using that language.

The code was written line by line, and each line had a number—10, 15, 20, and so on. The computer would read each line in order and follow the instructions: Line 10, then 15, then 20. It was simple and logical.

But then I learned something that stuck with me. There was a command called “GOTO.” If a certain condition was met, the program could skip ahead—or jump back. You could write something like “GOTO Line 10,” and the program would return to the beginning and start over. It was like a reset, a built-in do-over.

That idea has come back to me more than once in life, especially when I read something like Leviticus 26.

The chapter begins with something beautiful. Before God ever mentions judgment or consequences, He starts with blessing. He paints a picture of what life could be like if His people walk with Him. Provision, peace, safety, joy, and the most powerful promise of all: “I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people.”

That’s always been God’s heart. He starts with the good. He desires closeness with His people. He wants wholeness, fruitfulness, and rest for those who follow Him. That’s the original design. The top of the program, so to speak.

But then... we write different lines of code.

We insert rebellion, pride, selfishness, control. And just like that, the story starts going in a different direction. In Leviticus 26, the tone shifts. From peace to terror. From harvest to famine. From freedom to exile. Line after line shows how far off course we can go when we try to run things on our own.

If the chapter ended there, it would be devastating. And honestly, some people stop reading right there—assuming that’s where the story ends.

But God doesn’t stop.

Right near the end, something unexpected happens. He says, “If they will confess their sins... I will remember my covenant.” Not just for their sake, but because of who He is. Because of His promise. Because He never forgets mercy.

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

It's like God inserts His own "GOTO" command—right into the middle of our broken code.

He tells us, "If you turn back to Me, I'll go back to the beginning. Back to blessing. Back to peace. Back to walking with you."

Not because we earned it. Not because we fixed it. But because His grace refuses to let go.

That original part—the blessing, the relationship, the rest—that's still on the table. God still wants that for us. And through Jesus, He made the way. Jesus took the curse, absorbed the exile, and carried the weight of our failure. And now the "GOTO" line is wide open again, not through law, but through grace.

And every time we return—whether for the first time or the thousandth—He takes us back to the top. Back to Himself. Back to hope.

(*) One last thought on this chapter, if you flip these two sections, putting the disobedience at the top and the rewards at the bottom, you have a shadow of the Book of Revelation for the nation of Israel!

Reward of Obedience

1 "Do not make idols or set up an image or a sacred stone for yourselves, and do not place a carved stone in your land to bow down before it. I am the LORD your God.

2 "Observe my Sabbaths and have reverence for my sanctuary. I am the LORD.

3 "If you follow my decrees and are careful to obey my commands, 4 I will send you rain in its season, and the ground will yield its crops and the trees their fruit. 5 Your threshing will continue until grape harvest and the grape harvest will continue until planting, and you will eat all the food you want and live in safety in your land.

6 "I will grant peace in the land, and you will lie down and no one will make you afraid. I will remove wild beasts from the land, and the sword will not pass through your country. 7 You will pursue your enemies, and they will fall by the sword before you. 8 Five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand, and your enemies will fall by the sword before you.

9 "I will look on you with favor and make you fruitful and increase your numbers, and I will keep my covenant with you. 10 You will still be eating last year's harvest when you will have to move it out to make room for the new. 11 I will put my dwelling place among you, and I will not abhor you. 12 I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people. 13 I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt so that you would no

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longer be slaves to the Egyptians; I broke the bars of your yoke and enabled you to walk with heads held high.

Punishment for Disobedience

14 " But if you will not listen to me and carry out all these commands, 15 and if you reject my decrees and abhor my laws and fail to carry out all my commands and so violate my covenant, 16 then I will do this to you: I will bring on you sudden terror, wasting diseases and fever that will destroy your sight and sap your strength. You will plant seed in vain, because your enemies will eat it. 17 I will set my face against you so that you will be defeated by your enemies; those who hate you will rule over you, and you will flee even when no one is pursuing you.

18 " If after all this you will not listen to me, I will punish you for your sins seven times over. 19 I will break down your stubborn pride and make the sky above you like iron and the ground beneath you like bronze. 20 Your strength will be spent in vain, because your soil will not yield its crops, nor will the trees of your land yield their fruit.

21 " If you remain hostile toward me and refuse to listen to me, I will multiply your afflictions seven times over, as your sins deserve. 22 I will send wild animals against you, and they will rob you of your children, destroy your cattle and make you so few in number that your roads will be deserted.

23 " If in spite of these things you do not accept my correction but continue to be hostile toward me, 24 I myself will be hostile toward you and will afflict you for your sins seven times over. 25 And I will bring the sword on you to avenge the breaking of the covenant. When you withdraw into your cities, I will send a plague among you, and you will be given into enemy hands. 26 When I cut off your supply of bread, ten women will be able to bake your bread in one oven, and they will dole out the bread by weight. You will eat, but you will not be satisfied.

27 " If in spite of this you still do not listen to me but continue to be hostile toward me, 28 then in my anger I will be hostile toward you, and I myself will punish you for your sins seven times over. 29 You will eat the flesh of your sons and the flesh of your daughters. 30 I will destroy your high places, cut down your incense altars and pile your dead bodies on the lifeless forms of your idols, and I will abhor you. 31 I will turn your cities into ruins and lay waste your sanctuaries, and I will take no delight in the pleasing aroma of your offerings. 32 I myself will lay waste the land, so that your enemies who live there will be appalled. 33 I will scatter you among the nations and will draw out my sword and pursue you. Your land will be laid waste, and your cities will lie in ruins. 34 Then the land will enjoy its sabbath years all the time that it lies desolate and you are in the country of your enemies; then the

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land will rest and enjoy its sabbaths. 35 All the time that it lies desolate, the land will have the rest it did not have during the sabbaths you lived in it.

36 " 'As for those of you who are left, I will make their hearts so fearful in the lands of their enemies that the sound of a windblown leaf will put them to flight. They will run as though fleeing from the sword, and they will fall, even though no one is pursuing them. 37 They will stumble over one another as though fleeing from the sword, even though no one is pursuing them. So you will not be able to stand before your enemies. 38 You will perish among the nations; the land of your enemies will devour you. 39 Those of you who are left will waste away in the lands of their enemies because of their sins; also because of their ancestors' sins they will waste away.

40 " 'But if they will confess their sins and the sins of their ancestors--their unfaithfulness and their hostility toward me, 41 which made me hostile toward them so that I sent them into the land of their enemies--then when their uncircumcised hearts are humbled and they pay for their sin, 42 I will remember my covenant with Jacob and my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land. 43 For the land will be deserted by them and will enjoy its sabbaths while it lies desolate without them. They will pay for their sins because they rejected my laws and abhorred my decrees. 44 Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them or abhor them so as to destroy them completely, breaking my covenant with them. I am the LORD their God. 45 But for their sake I will remember the covenant with their ancestors whom I brought out of Egypt in the sight of the nations to be their God. I am the LORD.' "

46 These are the decrees, the laws and the regulations that the LORD established at Mount Sinai between himself and the Israelites through Moses.

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Chapter 27

When I was a kid, a friend of mine had an old upright piano that sat like royalty in the living room. It wasn't just a piece of furniture—it had been passed down from his great-grandparents and held a kind of quiet importance in the house. It was “set apart.” It wasn't to be banged on or played with carelessly. It was for lessons, holidays, family hymns—special things.

One afternoon, He and I were at his home alone, and my friend knocked over a can of soda pop. It spilled across the piano keys and soaked inside. Some of the keys warped. The sound changed. The beauty and purpose of that piano were instantly affected.

Now, his family didn't just toss it out. But they couldn't just wipe it down either. It had to be restored. A specialist came to repair it—and it wasn't cheap. The price wasn't paid to someone who had stolen it or damaged it. The price was paid to the *one who had the authority and ability to fix what was broken* and bring the piano back to what it was meant to be.

That's the image that came to mind as I read Leviticus 27. This chapter talks about redeeming things that had been dedicated to God—people, animals, land, possessions. At first glance, it might feel overly detailed or technical. But here's the deeper message: All things have intrinsic value. And God goes to great lengths—in literal, practical terms—to demonstrate that truth.

Each person. Each offering. Each piece of land. Nothing was meaningless or disposable. If something dedicated to God became unavailable or lost, a price had to be paid to bring it back into alignment with its purpose. That's what “redemption” is—it's the price paid to restore something to its rightful place.

We shouldn't get too caught up in the literal valuations—what a person was “worth” in silver shekels, or how much a field would cost depending on the year. The point wasn't economics—it was value.

And here's the spiritual truth behind it all: If something was set apart for God, it was not to be treated casually. If it was lost, it could be redeemed. But redemption always came with a cost.

Now, think about us.

We were created by God, made in His image. That means we were always His. Dedicated from the beginning. But sin broke that relationship. It damaged the design. We didn't stop having value—we just couldn't live out our purpose anymore. And because of

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that, those who desire to return to Him—who want to live in that restored relationship—must be redeemed.

That redemption didn't come through effort, promises, or payment in silver. It came through Jesus. "*You are not your own; you were bought at a price.*" – 1 Corinthians 6:20

Jesus paid that redemption price—not to the devil, who never had a rightful claim on us—but to the Father, the rightful owner. The One who set us apart from the beginning. The One who alone can restore what was broken.

Leviticus 27 closes the "Book of Holiness" with this incredible message: We are not forgotten. We are not worthless. We are not too far gone. We are valued. And our redemption—yours and mine—has already been paid in full by our Redeemer.

Redeeming What is the Lord's

1 The LORD said to Moses, 2 "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'If anyone makes a special vow to dedicate a person to the LORD by giving the equivalent value, 3 set the value of a male between the ages of twenty and sixty at fifty shekels of silver, according to the sanctuary shekel; 4 for a female, set her value at thirty shekels; 5 for a person between the ages of five and twenty, set the value of a male at twenty shekels and of a female at ten shekels; 6 for a person between one month and five years, set the value of a male at five shekels of silver and that of a female at three shekels of silver; 7 for a person sixty years old or more, set the value of a male at fifteen shekels and of a female at ten shekels. 8 If anyone making the vow is too poor to pay the specified amount, the person being dedicated is to be presented to the priest, who will set the value according to what the one making the vow can afford.

9 " 'If what they vowed is an animal that is acceptable as an offering to the LORD, such an animal given to the LORD becomes holy. 10 They must not exchange it or substitute a good one for a bad one, or a bad one for a good one; if they should substitute one animal for another, both it and the substitute become holy. 11 If what they vowed is a ceremonially unclean animal—one that is not acceptable as an offering to the LORD—the animal must be presented to the priest, 12 who will judge its quality as good or bad. Whatever value the priest then sets, that is what it will be. 13 If the owner wishes to redeem the animal, a fifth must be added to its value.

14 " 'If anyone dedicates their house as something holy to the LORD, the priest will judge its quality as good or bad. Whatever value the priest then sets, so it will remain. 15 If the one who dedicates their house wishes to redeem it, they must add a fifth to its value, and the house will again become theirs.

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16 " If anyone dedicates to the LORD part of their family land, its value is to be set according to the amount of seed required for it--fifty shekels of silver to a homer of barley seed. 17 If they dedicate a field during the Year of Jubilee, the value that has been set remains. 18 But if they dedicate a field after the Jubilee, the priest will determine the value according to the number of years that remain until the next Year of Jubilee, and its set value will be reduced. 19 If the one who dedicates the field wishes to redeem it, they must add a fifth to its value, and the field will again become theirs. 20 If, however, they do not redeem the field, or if they have sold it to someone else, it can never be redeemed. 21 When the field is released in the Jubilee, it will become holy, like a field devoted to the LORD; it will become priestly property.

22 " If anyone dedicates to the LORD a field they have bought, which is not part of their family land, 23 the priest will determine its value up to the Year of Jubilee, and the owner must pay its value on that day as something holy to the LORD. 24 In the Year of Jubilee the field will revert to the person from whom it was bought, the one whose land it was. 25 Every value is to be set according to the sanctuary shekel, twenty gerahs to the shekel.

26 " No one, however, may dedicate the firstborn of an animal, since the firstborn already belongs to the LORD; whether an ox or a sheep, it is the LORD's. 27 If it is one of the unclean animals, it may be bought back at its set value, adding a fifth of the value to it. If it is not redeemed, it is to be sold at its set value.

28 " But nothing that a person owns and devotes to the LORD--whether a human being or an animal or family land--may be sold or redeemed; everything so devoted is most holy to the LORD.

29 " No person devoted to destruction may be ransomed; they are to be put to death.

30 " A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD. 31 Whoever would redeem any of their tithe must add a fifth of the value to it. 32 Every tithe of the herd and flock--every tenth animal that passes under the shepherd's rod--will be holy to the LORD. 33 No one may pick out the good from the bad or make any substitution. If anyone does make a substitution, both the animal and its substitute become holy and cannot be redeemed.' "

34 These are the commands the LORD gave Moses at Mount Sinai for the Israelites.

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Chapter 1

There's a defensive driving program called the Smith System, and it teaches five key principles for safe driving. One of those keys is "Aim High in Steering." It means that as we drive, we should look about 14 seconds ahead of where we're going. That way, we have time to see what's coming and adjust safely, instead of reacting suddenly in ways that might be dangerous to us or others. I fully believe in this when it comes to driving.

But this idea also applies to life.

You've probably heard the phrase, "You can't see the forest for the trees." It's the idea that we can get so caught up in what's right in front of us — especially the hard stuff — that we miss the bigger picture. Imagine being deep in a forest, surrounded by nothing but trees and leaves. It's easy to get disoriented. You might even lose hope of finding a way out, because you can't see where the forest ends.

We've all had moments like that — times when life feels overwhelming and all we can see is the trouble in front of us. In those seasons, it's easy to lose hope. When your focus is stuck on the problem, your perspective shrinks. And when that happens for long enough, it's easy to start thinking, "*Maybe this is all life has for me.*" All you can see is the bark on the tree trunks — nothing more.

Then maybe you go to church, or hear a preacher on TV, and they start talking about hope and peace. But if you're still feeling lost in the woods, that kind of promise can feel hard to believe. Naturally, your response might be doubt or disbelief.

That brings us to two characters in the Bible — both of whom were given a glimpse of what was ahead. Like "aiming high in steering," they were given a kind of spiritual preview. But even though they asked similar questions, the hearts behind those questions were very different.

First, there's Zechariah. He and his wife had prayed for a child their whole lives, and nothing happened. Eventually, they grew old, and by every logical measure, her womb was no longer capable of carrying life. Even though Zechariah was a priest, his hope had faded. When an angel told him they would have a son, he responded with doubt and disbelief. He couldn't wrap his mind around it. His reality — what he could see and understand — had

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taken over his faith. He trusted the “forest” he lived in more than the angel standing right in front of him.

Then there’s Mary. She was also visited by an angel and given a vision of what was ahead. Though her body was young and capable, she was a virgin. Her question wasn’t *if* this could happen, but *how* it would. Hers was a question of wonder and curiosity, not doubt. She wanted to understand more of God, not test Him. Zechariah asked for proof. Mary asked for insight.

There’s a powerful lesson here: It’s not wrong to question God. But we should pay attention to the posture of our hearts when we do. Are we questioning out of disbelief? Or are we questioning with faith, even if that faith is shaky?

Sometimes, like the father in Mark 9:24, we might come to God saying,

“I believe — help my unbelief.”

And that’s okay. The key is to be real with God. Be honest with yourself. Come to Him with a sincere heart. God invites you to draw close — and His promise is that He’ll draw close to you.

Introduction

1 Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, 2 just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. 3 With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, *[Luke is the most comprehensive Gospel. His account of the story of Jesus from the annunciation of John all the way to the Ascension of Jesus. Including the Book of ACTS, which could be called and considered “2 Luke”.]* most excellent Theophilus, *[a notable title, implying a highly placed Roman.]* 4 so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

The Birth of John the Baptist Foretold

5 In the time of Herod king of Judea *[A specific and definite time.]* there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. *[A specific and definite people.]* 6 Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord’s commands and decrees blamelessly. 7 But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old.

8 Once when Zechariah’s division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, 9 he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of

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the Lord and burn incense. *[Over the years, the number of priests multiplied greatly. They used the lot to determine which priest would serve and when. The lot to serve might only fall to the priest once in his lifetime. The lot fell at this exact time on Zechariah. God has perfect timing!]*¹⁰ And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshippers were praying outside.

11 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. 12 When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. *[This was not a naked baby figure. This was a mighty messenger of God.]* 13 But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. 14 He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, 15 for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. 16 He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. 17 And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous--to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." *[It is doubtful, based on Zechariah's reply to this, that he and his wife have been praying for this recently. But God still hears our prayers. His timing is not our timing, and the sincere prayer, even when not answered on our time schedule, is still heard by our Father.]*

18 Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years." *[This was a question of doubt and disbelief. The "reality of life" – his age, and the "delay" of his request closed his heart to believing God was still in control.]* 19 The angel said to him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. 20 And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time." *[We need to mute our disbelief, or it can become infectious and spread to others like a virus.]*

21 Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple. 22 When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak.

23 When his time of service was completed, he returned home. 24 After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion. *[not for the sake of shame, but for the physical and spiritual health of her and the baby.]* 25 "The Lord has done this for me," she said. "In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people."

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The Birth of Jesus Foretold

26 In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, [a town remarkable for its completely unremarkable nature. In modern terms, it would be that "one horse" town with a rundown, rusted gas station and a blinking yellow light at the one intersection as you enter and right before leaving.] 27 to a virgin pledged [literal: betrothed – a period of about a year before the marriage. More than an engagement, as a betrothal required a divorce to break. But not as intimate as a marriage, as they did not engage in a physical relationship with one another yet.] to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words [*a sign of humility that these grand words were applied toward her.*] and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30 But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. 31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

34 "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" [This was not a question of doubt, as she asked how WILL this become? It was a question of wondering curiosity and faith. It is okay to ask God, "how will this be?" when faith and not doubt is behind the question. He created us to be curious about Him.] 35 The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow [This means "to cover you with a cloud." and hints toward the Shekinah glory of God from the Old Testament.] you So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. 36 Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. 37 For no word from God will ever fail."

38 "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." [*A confirmation of her faith, even as she may not have understood every logistical detail.*] Then the angel left her.

Mary Visits Elizabeth

39 At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, 40 where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! 43 But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

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44 As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. 45 Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!"

Mary's Song

46 And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, 48 for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, 49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me--holy is his name. 50 His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. 51 He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. 52 He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. 53 He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. 54 He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful 55 to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors."

56 Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.

The Birth of John the Baptist

57 When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. 58 Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy.

59 On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah, 60 but his mother spoke up and said, "No! He is to be called John." 61 They said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who has that name."

62 Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. *[Oddly, the people around him treated Zechariah as if he were deaf, not mute. A lesson about a handicap: One limitation does not limit all of our abilities.]* 63 He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone's astonishment he wrote, "His name is John." 64 Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising God. *[even though he failed before God 9 months earlier, God gave him a second chance, just like He gives us, and Zacharias found his faith and responded.]* 65 All the neighbors were filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea people were talking about all these things. 66 Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, "What then is this child going to be?" For the Lord's hand was with him.

Zechariah's Song

67 His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied: 68 "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them. 69 He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David 70 (as he said through

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his holy prophets of long ago), 71 salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us-- 72 to show mercy to our ancestors and to remember his holy covenant, 73 the oath he swore to our father Abraham: 74 to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear 75 in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. 76 And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, 77 to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, 78 because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven 79 to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace."

80 And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the wilderness until he appeared publicly to Israel.

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Chapter 2

The wind from a butterfly's wings can cause a windstorm. Something so small, so seemingly insignificant, can lead to the fulfillment of God's greatest promise to humankind. There's a concept called the "Butterfly Effect", an idea that became popular in the 1960s. It's often phrased like this:

"A butterfly flapping its wings in Brazil can cause a tornado in Texas."

It's not meant to be taken literally. It's a metaphor from chaos theory, describing how tiny, unnoticed changes in one part of the world can eventually lead to massive, world-changing consequences elsewhere.

A real-life example? Believe it or not — a sandwich order helped start World War I.

In 1914, the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria became the spark that set off a global conflict. But what most people don't know is this:

The assassin, Gavrilo Princip, had actually failed in his first attempt.

Discouraged and hungry, he wandered the streets of Sarajevo — and stopped to grab a sandwich. At the same time, the Archduke's driver made a wrong turn — and ended up on the exact street where Princip was eating. The car stalled right in front of him. Princip looked up, saw his target, and took the shot.

That wrong turn — and maybe even the sandwich stop — led to the death of millions, the collapse of empires, and shaped the entire 20th century: World War II, the Cold War, and beyond.

In Luke 2, we see something similar. Far away from Israel, in Rome, the emperor made a decree — a census to register the people. It probably seemed routine. Bureaucratic. Just another political move.

But that one order sent a man named Joseph and his pregnant fiancée, Mary, on a journey to Bethlehem. That trip — at exactly the right time — fulfilled centuries-old prophecy and led to the birth of Jesus.

The secular world might call that the butterfly effect. A "random" decision made by a ruler who had no idea he was playing a part in God's story.

But we know better. Our faith says: "Nothing is small to God." What seems like chaos to us is often just design we haven't realized yet.

Who would've thought to thank Caesar for taxing the world?

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Yet that decree put everything in motion — leading to the hope, peace, and joy we now have through Jesus. So, when life feels unfair, heavy, or confusing — remember: Even the small, frustrating, painful moments may be part of something bigger, better, and beautiful — even if you can't see it right now.

That grief you're walking through may be the very path that leads someone else to the cross later.

Rest in your faith. God had the wheel back then — with Caesar. And that same God still has the wheel right now.

Jesus' Birth in Bethlehem

1 In those days Caesar Augustus [*A title meaning “deserving deep respect, majestic, god like qualities.”*] issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. 2 (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) 3 And everyone went to their own town to register.

4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. 5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. [*Mary had children after Jesus.*] She wrapped him in cloths [*swaddling cloths were snugly wrapped strips of cloth. A reminder also of his burial cloth.*] and placed him in a manger, [*A place of feeding. Reminding us of his words to at the last supper, break the bread and telling us to eat.*] because there was no guest room available for them. [*Jesus was born in what many believe was essentially a cave to hold animals. It was the most modest birth and, in that way, he can connect to all mankind, from the lowest to the greatest.*]

8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. [*December would have been too cold to live in the fields. December is a traditional time of remembrance and celebration of Jesus' birth, not the actual day and month. As Believers in Christ, every day is December 25 and every day is Easter Sunday!*] 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." [*A very specific place for them to look. Swaddling cloths might be common, but in a manger was very unusual. So, looking for*

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the Messiah, they directed their search in the least likely place.... The caves, not the throne.]

13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 14 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. 17 When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. 20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told. *[How appropriate that the shepherds who cared for the Temple's lambs, that would soon be offered to God, were the first to behold the Last Lamb to be offered to God for all of us.]*

21 On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.

Jesus Presented in the Temple

22 When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord 23 (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"), 24 and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons." *[Leviticus 12:2-3]*

25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. 26 It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. 27 Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, 28 Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

29 "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. 30 For my eyes have seen your salvation, 31 which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: 32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel."

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33 The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. 34 Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign [*literally: "a target that people shoot at"*] that will be spoken against, 35 so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

36 There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, 37 and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. 38 Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

Return to Nazareth

39 When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. 40 And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.

Visit to Jerusalem

41 Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover. 42 When he was twelve years old, they went up to the festival, according to the custom. 43 After the festival was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. 44 Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. 45 When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. 46 After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. 47 Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. 48 When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you."

49 "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" 50 But they did not understand what he was saying to them. [*It was customary in those days that a boy would begin to learn his father's trade at about 12 years old. Jesus fulfilled this by instructing the teachers in the temple.*]

More significant about this visit was around the same time that Israel was stripped of their right to impose capital punishment by Rome. This sent the Jews into a tail-spin for the prophecy in Genesis 49:10 said, "The scepter (ruling authority) will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come, and the

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obedience of the nations shall be his." Little did the Jews know, in their sorrow of this loss of power, the 12-year Messiah was in their midst, and this prophecy was fulfilled.]

51 Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. 52 And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.

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Chapter 3

When I first felt called to ministry, I made a pretty common American mistake—I assumed it meant I'd have my own church one day. My own congregation. I thought I was supposed to take something small and grow it into a crowd of hundreds, maybe even thousands. I mean, that's the dream, right? In America, we're taught to aim for the top. Go big or go home.

But as I grew in my faith, I started to wrestle with that image. The idea of being a senior pastor with a church of my own didn't sit right with me. I'm naturally introverted. Quiet by nature. Some folks might laugh at that now, but it's true—I've always been more comfortable behind the scenes. I was perfectly content running sound at church, tucked away in a dark booth, just doing my part without the spotlight. So I struggled to understand how someone like me could ever be called to preach to a large crowd week after week.

In the beginning, I put a lot of pressure on myself. I judged my success by that standard—and as you can imagine, I felt like I was failing pretty fast. But over time, I came to see something important: God rarely calls people to the spotlight. He often calls them to support, to serve, to prepare the way for others.

Think of your arm—it's strong and capable. But without fingers, it can't really function the way it's meant to. I've come to realize: I'm a finger. And I'm okay with that. In fact, I'm grateful. I get to be part of something bigger than myself, even if I'm not the one standing center stage.

John the Baptist was a finger, too—pointing the way to Jesus. His public ministry was short, and he spent more time in prison than in front of crowds. But look at the impact he made. In just a short time, God used him in a powerful way.

So if you feel like you've missed your moment—or that it hasn't come yet—don't lose heart. Maybe you think you're too old, too young, or that your ministry has passed you by. But God's timing isn't like ours. He created you with a purpose in mind. You don't have to force anything. Let Him lead. Keep your eyes on Jesus, live faithfully day by day, and trust that He's working it all out.

Because in the end, ministry isn't about you or me. It's always been about Jesus.

John the Baptist Prepares the Way

1 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar--when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene-- 2 during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word

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of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. *[All the names listed here point to a real historical time. And a time of serious corruption politically and religiously]* 3 He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching *[proclaiming openly]* a baptism *[a deep cleansing commitment]* of repentance *[A change of mind and heart that leads to a change of direction.]* for the forgiveness of sins. *[This baptism was not one of salvation, but of repentance, to turn away from sin. Jesus, we will find offers the baptism of salvation.]*

4 As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: "A voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. 5 Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. 6 And all people will see God's salvation.' "

7 John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! *[for "offspring of vipers" either way, this was NOT a compliment.]* Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? 8 Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. *[We all bear fruit in that which we believe. By our fruit, whatever it is, shows the world what we believe. If a Believer wants to know where they are with their walk with God, they need only look around. What evidence do you have? And what does that evidence say about what you believe? Don't worry about proving your faith to others. The fruit of your life will always speak louder than your verbal proclamations.]* And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. 9 The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."

10 "What should we do then?" the crowd asked. 11 John answered, "Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same." 12 Even tax collectors came to be baptized. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?" 13 "Don't collect any more than you are required to," he told them. 14 Then some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?" He replied, "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely--be content with your pay." *[John's instructions seem very honest and simple to us. But in a time when everything was crooked and then justified, these were eye-opening, challenging statements. Basically – to live a right and moral life with others.]*

15 The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. 16 John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17 His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the

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chaff with unquenchable fire." 18 And with many other words John exhorted the people and proclaimed the good news [*GOSPEL*] to them.

19 But when John rebuked Herod the tetrarch because of his marriage to Herodias, his brother's wife, and all the other evil things he had done, 20 Herod added this to them all: He locked John up in prison.

The Baptism and Genealogy of Jesus

21 When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened 22 and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

23 Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry. He was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph, the son of Heli, 24 the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melki, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph,

25 the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai, 26 the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josek, the son of Joda,

27 the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, 28 the son of Melki, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er,

29 the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, 30 the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim,

31 the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David, 32 the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salmon, the son of Nahshon,

33 the son of Amminadab, the son of Ram, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, 34 the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor,

35 the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah, 36 the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech,

37 the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalalel, the son of Kenan, 38 the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

Chapter 4

I love hiking in nature. Growing up, I had the chance to live in different places across different states, and that gave me the opportunity to hike all kinds of terrain—mountains, deserts, and forests. Each place had its own kind of beauty, its own pull.

Sometimes there were well-worn paths to follow. Other times, I had to make my own way. Some hikes were easy, others were tough. But each one offered its own unique reward at the end. And honestly, I didn't hike just to reach the end. The journey itself was part of the reward.

Sure, standing at the top of a mountain is amazing—but if a helicopter just dropped me off there, I don't think it would feel the same. There's something powerful about working your way up, step by step, challenge by challenge. That process changes you. Of course, I know there are some mountains where the helicopter might be the only safe option!

Funny enough, that brings me to Luke chapter 4, where Jesus is tempted in the wilderness. The devil offers Him a series of shortcuts to fulfill His role as the Messiah.

First, Satan tells Him to turn stone into bread—essentially tempting Jesus to give up His human experience to satisfy a hunger. But Jesus didn't take the bait. He chose to stay fully human, to feel what we feel, to suffer like we suffer. He *refused* the shortcut.

The other two temptations were shortcuts too—offers of glory, power, and recognition without the struggle of the cross. But Jesus knew something that we tend to forget:

The journey matters more than just getting to the end.

As believers, our eternal destination is already secured. Heaven is our home. But in this short, temporary life, the journey is where everything happens. The path is where we learn, grow, struggle, and serve. And most importantly—it's where we meet others who are still searching for the truth.

Some parts of the path will be smooth. Others will be hard. Sometimes, we'll have to make our own way through the brush. But no matter where we are, this is *the* journey God has set us on, and He is with us the whole way. As you read this chapter, look at the effects Jesus had on those around him. None of this would have occurred had he taken the shortcuts offered to him. The journey is where our Godly blessing resides.

Maybe you took a shortcut and are now feeling lost. It's okay. Seek the Father, and He will redirect you back to the path. It may be hard, but it's worth traveling. It's the only path worth traveling!

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Taking the enemy's shortcuts might make life easier in the moment—but this life isn't about personal comfort. It's about living in a way that points others to God. So be careful with shortcuts that only serve you. They might look good, but more often than not, they'll pull you away from God, not closer to Him.

Jesus Tested in the Wilderness

1 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, 2 where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

3 The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." 4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone.'" *[Jesus used scriptures to battle Satan, not some extravagant spiritual power unreachable to us.]*

5 The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. 6 And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. 7 If you worship me, it will all be yours." 8 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'"

9 The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. 10 For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; 11 they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" *[(Psalms 91:11-12) Not everyone who quotes God's Word uses it correctly. This was used to manipulate in order to get what the enemy wanted, not to glorify God.]* 12 Jesus answered, "It is said: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

13 When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

Jesus Rejected at Nazareth

14 Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. 15 He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

16 He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, 17 and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

20 Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. 21 He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

22 All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked. 23 Jesus said to them, "Surely you will quote this proverb to me: 'Physician, heal yourself!' And you will tell me, 'Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.'"

24 "Truly I tell you," he continued, "no prophet is accepted in his hometown. 25 I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. 26 Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. 27 And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed--only Naaman the Syrian."

28 All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. 29 They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him off the cliff. 30 But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.

Jesus Drives Out an Impure Spirit

31 Then he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath he taught the people. 32 They were amazed at his teaching, because his words had authority.

33 In the synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an impure spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice, 34 "Go away! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are--the Holy One of God!"

35 "Be quiet!" Jesus said sternly. "Come out of him!" Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him.

36 All the people were amazed and said to each other, "What words these are! With authority and power he gives orders to impure spirits and they come out!" 37 And the news about him spread throughout the surrounding area.

Jesus Heals Many

38 Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her. 39 So he bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait on them.

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40 At sunset, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them. 41 Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Messiah.

42 At daybreak, Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them. 43 But he said, "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent." 44 And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

Chapter 5

I like to fish—how about you? When I was growing up, my mom and stepdad used to take us up into the mountains to fish the Kern River. Trout fishing! I loved it because it was active. You'd cast your bait upstream, let it drift down into a quiet spot, and hope a trout would strike. If not, you reeled in and tried again.

We figured out a pretty simple way to catch trout there: all we needed was a treble hook (that's the one with three prongs) and three "red balls of fire" salmon eggs. As they floated downstream, they'd spin a little in the current—and it worked really well. Then I moved to Texas.

At a family reunion in Trinity, we camped by a lake. I was excited and ready. I set up my rod and reel just like I used to, baited it with salmon eggs, and cast it out. Hours passed... nothing. Not a single bite.

Finally, one of my uncles asked what I was using. I showed him. He shook his head and said, "That's the wrong bait." Then he handed me a long, purple rubber worm. I tossed it out and—after a bit of fumbling around—I finally caught a fish. Nothing to brag about, but still something.

I never really got the hang of lake fishing. A lot of folks there used bobbers and just sat still. Some even used something called "skunk bait." I don't know much about it, except that it smells awful. I couldn't imagine what kind of fish would want to eat that.

But I did learn something important: fishing can be complicated. Where you are and what you're fishing for really determines the bait you need.

I could've argued with my uncle. Told him I knew how to fish. After all, salmon eggs worked before. But if I'd stayed stuck on what worked in the past, all I would've done was donate a bunch of bait to the lake.

This might seem like a simple story about fishing—but it applies to so many parts of life. Now I want you to imagine something.

Close your eyes and picture Jesus standing on the shore, holding a fishing rod, casting His line into the water. What do you think Jesus is focused on? Sometimes we get so caught up in the bait, we forget to think about the fish. And I see this happen a lot in church. I can't tell you how many times I've seen people push back on changes to a church service:

"You want to change the name of our church?"

"You want to sing different songs?"

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"You're changing the service time?" "Casual clothes? Seriously?"

Folks, that's all just bait—those little details that might help catch someone's attention, make them curious, or feel welcome. The most important part of fishing isn't the bait—it's the line. And in this case, the line is God's Word, and it must always lead back to Jesus.

As you read this chapter, watch how Jesus speaks. Pay attention to His message. He always focuses on the people. He meets them right where they are and offers them something life-giving.

But the religious leaders? They were too focused on the old bait. So much so, they missed the very Messiah they'd been praying for.

Jesus Calls His First Disciples

1 One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. 2 He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. 3 He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." 5 Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets."

6 When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. 7 So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

8 When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" 9 For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, 10 and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people." 11 So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

Jesus Heals a Man with Leprosy

12 While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." 13 Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" And immediately the leprosy left him.

14 Then Jesus ordered him, "Don't tell anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them."

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

15 Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. 16 But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralyzed Man

17 One day Jesus was teaching, and Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there. They had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal the sick. 18 Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. 19 When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

20 When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven." 21 The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

22 Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? 23 Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? 24 But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." 25 Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. 26 Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today."

Jesus Calls Levi and Eats with Sinners

27 After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him, 28 and Levi got up, left everything and followed him.

29 Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. 30 But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"

31 Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. 32 I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Jesus Questioned About Fasting

33 They said to him, "John's disciples often fast and pray, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours go on eating and drinking." 34 Jesus answered, "Can you make the

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friends of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? 35 But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; in those days they will fast."

36 He told them this parable: "No one tears a piece out of a new garment to patch an old one. Otherwise, they will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old. 37 And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. 38 No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. 39 And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for they say, 'The old is better.'

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

Chapter 6

We live in a world full of boundaries. Some are geographical—mountains, rivers, oceans, even freeway interstates. Others are social—class, race, economics, education, language, and culture. All of these create challenges for humanity to overcome.

Think about communication for a minute. We've come a long way—from handwritten letters and spoken messages carried on foot, then by horse, ship, train, and plane. Now we can send a message around the world instantly with a text or email. Communication has its limits, but it's improved drastically.

Still, as I've grown older, I haven't seen boundaries disappear. In many ways, they've increased. When one boundary falls, others seem to rise in its place—especially social ones. Take the internet, for example. It promised to connect the world, and in many ways, it has. But it's also created a new kind of disconnection. Just go to a restaurant and look around—families sitting together, each person staring at their phone, not talking to one another but connecting with people who aren't even there. It's ironic, isn't it?

That's why the idea of boundaries really stood out to me in this chapter—especially in verses 32 to 36. When Jesus says, “*even sinners do that*,” He's pointing out something important. His love, His teaching, His commands aren't meant to stay within the safe spaces of believers. He calls us to break out of those boundaries and extend His love, grace, mercy, and compassion to people the world would least expect.

Crossing those lines isn't always easy. I've done it, and I'll be honest—it can be uncomfortable. Everything in you wants to pull back. Your mind will come up with a hundred reasons not to. But I want to challenge you to remember this truth from Galatians 5:22–23: “*Against love there is no law*.”

When we have the heart of Jesus, we begin to see past the world's boundaries. We start to see people—hurting, lost, searching—who need to experience God's love through us. And maybe, just maybe, we're the ones He wants to use to bring them hope.

Jesus Is Lord of the Sabbath

1 One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and his disciples began to pick some heads of grain, rub them in their hands and eat the kernels. 2 Some of the Pharisees asked, “Why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?” *[taking the wheat from the field was not wrong. It was allowed in their law, but rubbing it between their hands was considered “work” and this is the sticking point with the religious. They did not*

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see hungry people eating; they got stuck on the legalistically defined “works.” Their eyes and hearts were set on judgment, not mercy.]

3 Jesus answered them, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? 4 He entered the house of God, and taking the consecrated bread, he ate what is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions." 5 Then Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

6 On another Sabbath he went into the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was shriveled. 7 The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath. 8 But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Get up and stand in front of everyone." So he got up and stood there.

9 Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?" *[Jesus' point: There is never a wrong day to do good!]* 10 He looked around at them all, and then said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He did so, and his hand was completely restored. 11 But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus. *[Jesus wasn't trying to reform the Sabbath. He tried to show that in their understanding of the Sabbath, with the rules they added, they missed the whole point of the Sabbath. The point was not which rules were the correct rules, but what was the basic way to approach and rest in God, and His grace and mercy given to us.]*

The Twelve Apostles

12 One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. *[Jesus had a big decision, and look how he chose to handle it. This is an example for us all. God does want us to use our grey matter (brains) but first and foremost wants us to yield to His direction and Will.]* 13 When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: 14 Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, 15 Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, 16 Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

Blessings and Woes

17 He went down with them and stood on a level place. *[The next sermon will look and sound very much like the Sermon on the Mount; however, this was on a “level place” which implies this is a similar sermon, but at a different location. It is okay to repeat God’s Good Message over and over. Truth will always be relevant.]* A large crowd

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of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coastal region around Tyre and Sidon, 18 who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by impure spirits were cured, 19 and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all.

20 Looking at his disciples, he said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. 21 Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. 22 Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man.

23 "Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets.

24 "But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. 25 Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. 26 Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets.

Love for Enemies

27 "But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. 29 If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. 30 Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. 31 Do to others as you would have them do to you.

32 "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. 34 And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. 35 But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. 36 Be merciful, [*tender*] just as your Father is merciful.

Judging Others

37 "Do not judge, [*(passive) condemn, call into question, deem, think*] and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, [*(active) pronounce judgement, adjudge*] and you will not be condemned. Forgive, [*pardon, release, dismiss, put away*] and you will be forgiven. 38 Give, [*grant, show, deliver, supply, permit*] and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

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39 He also told them this parable: 'Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into a pit? 40 The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher.

41 'Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 42 How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,' when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. *[Jesus isn't saying that we must be perfect in order to help or direct others. But Godly mercy and counsel is more easily given when we are aware of the tremendous mercy given to us.]*

A Tree and Its Fruit

43 'No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. 44 Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. 45 A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.

The Wise and Foolish Builder

46 'Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? 47 As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like. 48 They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. 49 But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete."

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Chapter 7

I was recently in a fellowship group at church, and we got to talking about tone in communication—especially in emails and text messages. We reflected on how much things have changed since the “old days” of talking on the phone, when you could hear someone’s voice and better understand their intent. Today, the tone of a message is often left up to the reader, not the sender, which can easily lead to misunderstandings.

For example, take the simple sentence: “You’re going the wrong way.” Depending on how it’s read, one person might feel criticized or judged, while another might appreciate it as helpful guidance. The words alone don’t carry tone—the reader fills that in. And if someone is already feeling upset or defensive, they might read that sentence very differently than it was intended.

But things shift when we know the person sending the message. Take my wife, for instance. If she sent me that same message, I wouldn’t take offense. Why? Because I know her heart. I know she loves me and wants what’s best for me. Even if I’m having a rough day and at first read her words with a bit of my own frustration, I can pause and remind myself of her true tone. I trust her. I have faith in her intentions. That kind of trust—built on love, consistency, and shared life—is something I can lean on.

As I reflected on that, I noticed a similar thread of trust running through this chapter of Scripture. There are multiple examples of people placing their trust in Jesus, and we see the powerful, transformative results that come from that faith. There’s even a moment where Jesus addresses how our trust can be shaken by difficult circumstances. But He gently reminds us to keep holding on, even when the world tries to tell us otherwise. His grace and His plan will carry us through, no matter what.

The Faith of the Centurion

1 When Jesus had finished saying all this to the people who were listening, he entered Capernaum. 2 There a centurion’s servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. 3 The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. 4 When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, “This man deserves to have you do this, 5 because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue.” 6 So Jesus went with them.

He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: “Lord, don’t trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. 7 That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, [*speak, affirm, command, call out*] and my servant will be healed. [*made whole*] 8 For I myself am a man

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under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

9 When Jesus heard this, he was amazed [*marveled, wondered, admired*] at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great [*so much, as large*] faith [*assurance, belief*] even in Israel." 10 Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.

Jesus Raises a Widow's Son

11 Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. 12 As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out--the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. 13 When the Lord saw her, his heart went out [*to be moved in the depth of one's body, moved with compassion*] to her and he said, "Don't cry." [*literal: bewail, mourn deeply*]

14 Then he went up and touched the bier [*coffin*] they were carrying him on, and the bearers stood still. He said, "Young man, I say to you, [*speak, affirm, command, call out*] get up!" 15 The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.

16 They were all filled with awe and praised God. "A great prophet has appeared among us," they said. "God has come to help his people." 17 This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country.

Jesus and John the Baptist

18 John's disciples told him about all these things. Calling two of them, 19 he sent them to the Lord to ask, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?"

20 When the men came to Jesus, they said, "John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?' " [*How many times do we expect God to do things on our time schedule, or the way we want him to do things, only to have our faith come into doubt when it does not occur.*]

21 At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. 22 So he replied to the messengers, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. 23 Blessed is anyone who does not stumble [*mistrust, offended, displeased, fall away*] on account of me."

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24 After John's messengers left, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind? 25 If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear expensive clothes and indulge in luxury are in palaces. 26 But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 27 This is the one about whom it is written: " 'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'

28 I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." 29 (All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus' words, acknowledged that God's way was right, because they had been baptized by John. 30 But the Pharisees and the experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.)

31 Jesus went on to say, "To what, then, can I compare the people of this generation? What are they like? 32 They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling out to each other: " 'We played the pipe for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not cry.'

33 For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.' 34 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.' 35 But wisdom is proved right by all her children."

Jesus Anointed by a Sinful Woman

36 When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. 37 A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. 38 As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

39 When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is--that she is a sinner."

Parable of the Two Debtors

40 Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you." "Tell me, teacher," he said. 41 "Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?" 43 Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said.

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44 Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45 You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. 46 You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. 47 Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little."

48 Then Jesus said [*speak, affirm, command, call out*] to her, "Your sins [*missing the mark, be in error, to be mistaken, to wander away from God's way, an offense*] are forgiven." [*sent away, depart, divorced from, expired, disregarded, let go*] 49 The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" 50 Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith [*assurance, belief*] has saved you; go in peace."

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Chapter 8

Lately, I've noticed I'm forgetting things more often. Maybe it's just part of getting older. But the more I think about it, the more I realize—I've *always* been forgetful. Even when I was younger, I struggled to hold on to things I had just learned or heard. And I doubt I'm the only one.

I bet some of you can relate.

Let's be honest: how many of us can still recall the Sunday sermon by the time Monday rolls around? Or even by Sunday night? How many of us hear a message about loving our neighbors and then find ourselves frustrated with a server at lunch an hour later?

It's funny—and a little convicting—how quickly the Word can slip away from us.

That's probably why the parable of the sower hit me so hard when I read it recently. Jesus talks about God's Word being like seed that falls on different types of ground. And as I read it, I saw myself in every one of them.

I've been on the path—hearing the Word but completely closed off to it. I've sat in church or watched a sermon on TV, and judged the messenger or the structure of the church instead of receiving what God was trying to say. Thank God He didn't leave me there. By His grace, He softened my heart and brought me out of that hard place.

But even now, His Word sometimes lands in rocky or thorny places in my heart. I can get excited about a message, feel genuinely encouraged—and then lose it the moment I get stuck in traffic. Or sometimes I carry that joy for a few days... until the bills show up, or the AC breaks, or my job starts talking about cutbacks. That joy can get buried fast when life presses in.

And then I read about the disciples, right there in the same chapter. After Jesus teaches the parable of the sower, He tells them, "*Let's cross over to the other side.*" That was the destination. But when the storm hits, they panic. They forget what He said. Meanwhile, Jesus is asleep in the boat, completely at peace—because He trusts the plan.

The disciples had just heard the Word, but it hadn't taken deep enough root yet. Jesus even asks them, "*Where is your faith?*" They, too, were wrestling with rocky and thorny ground.

Here's the hope, though: we don't have to *stay* there.

Yes, we'll all have moments when God's Word doesn't go as deep as it should. But the good news is—we can recognize it, take it seriously, and start to clear the soil of our hearts. When we're aware of them, we can begin the work of removing them.

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Our mission isn't perfection—it's progress. We're called, collectively, to keep replacing the rocks and thorns with good soil so that God's Word can grow. We do this by staying in His Word and by fellowshiping with others in His Word. For, they, too will help us find the rocks and thorns.

The Parable of the Sower

1 After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, 2 and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; 3 Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

4 While a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from town after town, he told this parable: 5 "A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds ate it up. 6 Some fell on rocky ground, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. 8 Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown." When he said this, he called out, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."

9 His disciples asked him what this parable meant. 10 He said, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that, " 'though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand.'

11 "This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. 12 Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. 13 Those on the rocky ground are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. 14 The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. 15 But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.

A lamp on a Stand

16 "No one lights a lamp and hides it in a clay jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, they put it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light. 17 For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open. 18 Therefore consider [discern, see, observe, "minds eye"] carefully how /by

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what means or manner] you listen. [*perceive, comprehend, give ear to*] Whoever has [*possessions of the mind*] will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they think they have will be taken from them."

Jesus' Mother and Brothers

19 Now Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him, but they were not able to get near him because of the crowd. 20 Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you." 21 He replied, "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice."

Jesus calms the Storm

22 One day Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake." So they got into a boat and set out. 23 As they sailed, he fell asleep. A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger.

24 The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!" He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm. 25 "Where is your faith?" he asked his disciples. In fear and amazement, they asked one another, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him."

Jesus Restores the Demon-Possessed Man

26 They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee. 27 When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. 28 When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me!" 29 For Jesus had commanded the impure spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places.

30 Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" "Legion," he replied, because many demons had gone into him. 31 And they begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss.

32 A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into the pigs, and he gave them permission. 33 When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

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34 When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, 35 and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. 36 Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured. 37 Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left.

38 The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, 39 "Return home and tell how much God has done for you." So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.

Jesus Raises a Dead Girl and Heals a Sick Woman

40 Now when Jesus returned, a crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him. 41 Then a man named Jairus, a synagogue leader, came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with him to come to his house 42 because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying. As Jesus was on his way, the crowds almost crushed him. 43 And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her. 44 She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped.

45 "Who touched me?" Jesus asked. When they all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you." 46 But Jesus said, "Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me."

47 Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed. 48 Then he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace."

49 While Jesus was still speaking, someone came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. "Your daughter is dead," he said. "Don't bother the teacher anymore." 50 Hearing this, Jesus said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed."

51 When he arrived at the house of Jairus, he did not let anyone go in with him except Peter, John and James, and the child's father and mother. 52 Meanwhile, all the people were wailing and mourning for her. "Stop wailing," Jesus said. "She is not dead but asleep."

53 They laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. 54 But he took her by the hand and said, "My child, get up!" 55 Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up. Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat. 56 Her parents were astonished, but he ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened. *[Notice how Jesus told the Gentiles to share the story*

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of the man's healing from demon possession, but when performing similar miracles among the Jews, He often instructed them not to tell anyone. Jesus knew that, for the Gentiles, the news would bring hope and openness to God's power. But for the Jews, it could have stirred the wrong response. Many of them expected the Messiah to be a military leader and might have tried to force their own agenda onto Jesus. That wasn't God's timing or purpose. God entrusts us with truth when our hearts are aligned with His will, not driven by our own. Ref. verse 18]

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Chapter 9

If you've ever watched *Everybody Loves Raymond* and thought Raymond was a little slow, let me share a bit of my story.

Myrt and I have been married for many years now. I love her deeply—no question—but a few years ago, I realized that life had gotten... comfortable. I worked long hours, came home tired, and most evenings we'd eat dinner quietly while scrolling through our tablets and watching TV. There weren't any real arguments, *per se*, but there wasn't much depth either. Things were... fine.

Then one evening, as we were cleaning up after dinner, Myrt quietly said, "I don't feel seen anymore. I feel like I'm just here, doing life next to you—not with you." She wasn't angry, just honest. "I miss you, Tim. I miss us."

Her words caught me off guard—not because they were dramatic, but because they were true. I hadn't known how deeply she felt. But now I did. I saw it in her eyes, heard it in her voice. And in that moment, something shifted.

I couldn't go back to "normal." I couldn't pretend everything was fine or keep hiding at work. Now that I knew, I was accountable.

Over the following weeks, I made a point of coming home earlier. I asked how she was *really* doing and made space for deeper conversations. We started taking evening walks, re-learning each other in ways we hadn't since dating.

It wasn't dramatic or perfect—and I'll admit, I still stumble sometimes—but it became real again. And it all started the moment I responded to a truth I could no longer ignore.

In Luke 9, Jesus reveals more of Himself to the disciples: His identity as the Messiah, His coming suffering, and what it truly means to follow Him. Once they know who He really is, they can't follow the same way. He tells them in verse 23, "*If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me.*"

That shift—from seeing Jesus as just a miracle worker to understanding Him as the sacrificial Savior—calls for a deeper, more costly kind of discipleship. Just like I couldn't treat my marriage casually after Myrt shared her heart, the disciples couldn't treat Jesus casually after understanding His mission.

I know many people who genuinely want to know God more and grow closer to Him. But we have to recognize that kind of insight brings responsibility. When we are shown something true about God, about another person, or about ourselves, it demands a response.

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

Jesus Sends Out the Twelve

1 When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, 2 and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. 3 He told them: "Take nothing for the journey--no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra shirt. 4 Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. 5 If people do not welcome you, leave their town and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them." 6 So they set out and went from village to village, proclaiming the good news and healing people everywhere.

7 Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was going on. And he was perplexed because some were saying that John had been raised from the dead, 8 others that Elijah had appeared, and still others that one of the prophets of long ago had come back to life. 9 But Herod said, "I beheaded John. Who, then, is this I hear such things about?" And he tried to see him.

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

10 When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then he took them with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida, 11 but the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing.

12 Late in the afternoon the Twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside and find food and lodging, because we are in a remote place here." 13 He replied, "You give them something to eat." They answered, "We have only five loaves of bread and two fish--unless we go and buy food for all this crowd." 14 (About five thousand men were there.) But he said to his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each."

15 The disciples did so, and everyone sat down. 16 Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to distribute to the people. 17 They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

Peter Declares That Jesus is the Messiah

18 Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?" 19 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life." 20 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "God's Messiah."

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Jesus Predicts His Death

21 Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone. 22 And he said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."

23 Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me." 24 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. 25 What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self? 26 Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

27 "Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God."

The Transfiguration

28 About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. 29 As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. 30 Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. 31 They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. 32 Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. 33 As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what he was saying.)

34 While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and covered them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. 35 A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." 36 When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves and did not tell anyone at that time what they had seen.

Jesus Heals a Demon-Possessed Boy

37 The next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met him. 38 A man in the crowd called out, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. 39 A spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams; it throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It scarcely ever leaves him and is destroying him. 40 I begged your disciples to drive it out, but they could not."

41 "You unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you and put up with you?" Bring your son here." 42 Even while the boy was coming, the

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demon threw him to the ground in a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the impure spirit, healed the boy and gave him back to his father. 43 And they were all amazed at the greatness of God.

Jesus Predicts His Death a Second Time

While everyone was marveling at all that Jesus did, he said to his disciples, 44 "Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men." 45 But they did not understand what this meant. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it, and they were afraid to ask him about it.

46 An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest. 47 Jesus, knowing their thoughts, took a little child and had him stand beside him. 48 Then he said to them, "Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For it is the one who is least among you all who is the greatest."

49 "Master," said John, "we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we tried to stop him, because he is not one of us." 50 "Do not stop him," Jesus said, "for whoever is not against you is for you."

Samaritan Opposition

51 As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. 52 And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; 53 but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. 54 When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?" 55 But Jesus turned and rebuked them. 56 Then he and his disciples went to another village.

The Cost of Following Jesus

57 As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." 58 Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

59 He said to another man, "Follow me." But he replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." 60 Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

61 Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family." 62 Jesus replied, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

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Chapter 10

In the previous chapter, we saw how Jesus was gradually revealing more of himself to the disciples—helping them better understand the ministry they were part of. In this chapter, we see how that new understanding plays out in action. One verse that really stood out to me was verse 17, where it says, *"they returned with joy."*

Something powerful happens when we step into our purpose; it brings joy. Every one of us was created to serve others. It doesn't matter what our skills are, how educated we are, where we come from, or how much money we have. Serving is part of how God designed us.

But *how* we serve—and *why* we serve—can make all the difference. It can either bring lasting joy or lead to burnout.

Let's take a moment to think about the word JOY as a simple guide for our motives:

- J = Jesus
- O = Others
- Y = Yourself

This order helps us keep our hearts aligned. Start with Jesus, his grace, his mercy, his love. Let that be the fuel behind your service. Then, focus on serving others. The result? A deep joy within yourself.

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus teaches us to use our gifts and abilities to help others, not to serve ourselves. When we follow that order, Jesus, others, then yourself, true joy follows.

But the world flips this around. It tells us to focus on ourselves first, maybe help others if we have time, and think about God last. What does that lead to? YOJ—which isn't even a real word. It's empty. Many of us have felt that emptiness when we chased self-centered dreams.

Have you ever gone shopping to feel better? It might feel great in the moment, but when you get home, the excitement fades and regret sets in. That's YOJ—a quick high that doesn't last.

If you're feeling lost or empty, try JOY instead. Use your gifts not as a religious duty, but as a response to all the grace Jesus has given you. As he has loved you, love others. When your heart is aligned with that purpose and you act on it, you'll experience the same joy the 72 disciples felt in verse 17.

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Jesus Sends out the Seventy-Two

1 After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. 2 He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. 3 Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. 4 Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.

5 "When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' 6 If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you. 7 Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.

8 "When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you. 9 Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' 10 But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, 11 'Even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning to you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God has come near.' 12 I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.

13 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. 14 But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. 15 And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No, you will go down to Hades.

16 "Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me; but whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me."

The Seventy-Two Return with Joy

17 The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." 18 He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. 20 However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

21 At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do. 22 "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."

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23 Then he turned to his disciples and said privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. 24 For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it."

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

25 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" 27 He answered, " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" 28 "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

30 In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. 31 A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. 32 So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

36 "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" 37 The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

At the Home of Martha and Mary

38 As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. 39 She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. 40 But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

41 "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, 42 but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

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Chapter 11

After I experienced the freedom of releasing my sinful burdens by giving my heart to Jesus many years ago, and after doing my own personal “testing” to make sure this Christian walk was real, I became absolutely convinced that our Heavenly Father is true and real. So, I went all in and gave my whole life to Him.

As a result, I began participating more and more in church life. I volunteered for anything that came up. I couldn’t do enough to support the family of God—my brothers and sisters in Christ. I also dove deeper into the Word, studying and learning as much as I could. That lifestyle naturally became my rhythm. It shaped a new pattern for my daily life.

But after several years, I found myself in a kind of “groove.” I was doing so much that I didn’t realize something had shifted. My focus had subtly moved to *doing*. My Christian education started leaning more on the letter of the Word than the spirit of it. Quietly, without even noticing, I had begun to turn into a “religious” person.

This chapter in Luke really continues the journey that began in the two chapters before. First, we gained an understanding of who Jesus truly is and the responsibility that comes with that knowledge. Then in Chapter 10, we looked at how to apply that understanding, putting others before ourselves and serving. We reflected on the acronym **JOY**: *Jesus, Others, Yourself*.

Luke 11, you could say, shows both the danger of forgetting the “J” in JOY and the encouragement to remember it. It illustrates what can happen when we’re only left with “OY.” Ironically, that sounds like the Yiddish word “oy,” which means “Oh my” or “Oh no”—a little humorous reminder in itself.

This chapter begins with one of the greatest reminders: in verse 2, Jesus teaches us to pray with, “*Father...*” That word implies a relationship. Starting our prayers with that deeply personal title should keep us focused on **why** we do what we do. It’s a word that can only truly be spoken by those in a relationship, and it invites us to examine our hearts right from the start.

The Lord’s Prayer outlines the steps of a relationship:

- “*Father*” is personal.
- “*Hallowed be your name*” acknowledges who we’re speaking to.
- “*Give us each day our daily bread*” reminds us our Father wants daily connection, keeping the “J” in focus.

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- “*Forgive us*” reminds us that we fall daily, yet He lifts us up, and we are called to extend that same grace to others.

After this introduction, the chapter gives examples of people who had forgotten the “J” and were focused only on the “OY.” Then Jesus reveals that even the “O” was often just the “Y” in disguise, self-centeredness pretending to be service.

So, dear brothers and sisters, remember to start your day with “J.” Keep Jesus at the center so you don’t fall into the same trap. And if you realize you’re already there, it’s not too late, just add the “J” back into your daily life. Then you’ll begin to experience real JOY again.

Jesus Teaches How to Pray

1 One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”

2 He said to them, “When you pray, say: “ Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. 3 Give us each day our daily bread. 4 Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.”

5 Then Jesus said to them, “Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; 6 a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.’ 7 And suppose the one inside answers, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can’t get up and give you anything.’ 8 I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need.

9 “So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

11 “Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? 12 Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 13 If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

Jesus and Beelzebul

14 Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute. When the demon left, the man who had been mute spoke, and the crowd was amazed. 15 But some of them said, “By Beelzebul, [*Satan*] the prince of demons, he is driving out demons.” 16 Others tested him by asking for a sign from heaven. [*The wrong heart seeks the “show” instead of acknowledging the*

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wonder already shown. A greedy heart always wants more, not to be convinced, but to feed its own eyes' desire. God's work is even today all around us, but we can easily excuse it and want more "wonderful" signs. That comes from our flesh, not our faith.]

17 Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them: "Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall. 18 If Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand? I say this because you claim that I drive out demons by Beelzebul. 19 Now if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your followers drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. 20 But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

21 "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. 22 But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up his plunder.

23 "Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

24 "When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' 25 When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. 26 Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first." *[Many people today are searching for inner peace. There are countless methods being tried, and some even seem to find peace through ways that don't honor God. They often promote these new paths as the answer. But Jesus warns us that unless we invite Him, the Prince of Peace, the true source of peace. Into our lives, any peace we find on our own will only be temporary. Sooner or later, that so-called peace will fade and leave us feeling worse than before. The kind of peace the world offers doesn't last. But the enemy will try to convince us that it does. That's one of Satan's biggest lies: offering a counterfeit peace to keep us from the real one that only comes from God.]*

27 As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you." 28 He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."

The Sign of Jonah

29 As the crowds increased, Jesus said, "This is a wicked generation. It asks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah. *[“For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three*

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nights in the heart of the earth." – *Matthew 12:40*] 30 For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation. 31 The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the people of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom; and now something greater than Solomon is here. 32 The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and now something greater than Jonah is here.

The Lamp of the Body

33 "No one lights a lamp and puts it in a place where it will be hidden, or under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, so that those who come in may see the light. 34 Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are healthy, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are unhealthy, your body also is full of darkness. 35 See to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness. 36 Therefore, if your whole body is full of light, and no part of it dark, it will be just as full of light as when a lamp shines its light on you."

Woes on the Pharisees and the Experts in the Law

37 When Jesus had finished speaking, a Pharisee invited him to eat with him; so he went in and reclined at the table. 38 But the Pharisee was surprised when he noticed that Jesus did not first wash before the meal.

39 Then the Lord said to him, "Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. 40 You foolish people! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also? 41 But now as for what is inside you--be generous to the poor, and everything will be clean for you.

42 "Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone.

43 "Woe to you Pharisees, because you love the most important seats in the synagogues and respectful greetings in the marketplaces.

44 "Woe to you, because you are like unmarked graves, which people walk over without knowing it."

45 One of the experts in the law [*what was called lawyers back then, those who interpreted the law of Moses, many times expanding harsh and excessive interpretations to the basic laws.*] answered him, "Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us also." 46 Jesus replied, "And you experts in the law, woe to you, because you load

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people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them.

47 "Woe to you, because you build tombs for the prophets, and it was your ancestors who killed them. 48 So you testify that you approve of what your ancestors did; they killed the prophets, and you build their tombs. 49 Because of this, God in his wisdom said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and others they will persecute.' 50 Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, 51 from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, this generation will be held responsible for it all.

52 "Woe to you experts in the law, because you have taken away the key to knowledge. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering."

53 When Jesus went outside, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law began to oppose him fiercely and to besiege him with questions, 54 waiting to catch him in something he might say.

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Chapter 12

I have a confession to make: I might be what some would call a “Trekkie.” I’ve always liked *Star Trek*. I grew up watching the Original Series. When *The Next Generation* came out, I resisted it for a long time. Privately, I even boycotted it. But eventually, I gave in, and I found that I actually loved it. I loved it so much that I could sit and watch episode after episode for hours. Honestly, even now—much to my wife’s frustration, I could still do that today.

But I’m a bit of an odd Trekkie. I enjoy the stories and characters, but I don’t really know the actors’ real names. And, to be honest, I don’t care to. For example, even if I met Sir Patrick Stewart (yes, I had to Google that), I’d probably still call him Captain Picard. To me, that’s who he is. That’s the only version of him I really know or want to know. I like keeping him in that *Star Trek* world. And I think he, and the rest of the cast, did a great job.

Of course, I’m sure Patrick Stewart isn’t really like Captain Picard in real life. He’s an actor. The people we see on the show are characters, not real personalities. That’s what actors do—they take on roles so we, the audience, can be drawn into a story. It’s their job to make us believe and feel connected to that world. I imagine that’s both a challenging and rewarding job.

In the next chapter we’ll read, Jesus also talks about actors, but in a very different context. He warns about pretending, especially when it comes to our relationship with God. He’s not talking about the acting profession, of course. He’s talking about pretending in our faith.

He challenges us to be honest with ourselves and ask the tough questions:

1. Am I just pretending with God, or do I truly have a heart for Him?
2. If I’ve given my heart to Jesus, are there areas of my life where I’m still pretending instead of trusting Him fully?

As you read the chapter, take your time. Reflect on each part. You might find, like I did, that there are places in your life where you’re more like Captain Picard (a character) than Patrick Stewart (a real person). If that hits home, take a moment to talk to the Father about it. Let Him guide you toward living more genuinely with Him.

Warning and Encouragements

1 Meanwhile, when a crowd of many thousands had gathered, so that they were trampling [*imagine a large crowd all pushing, this speaks towards the rudeness of the crowd.*] on one another, Jesus began to speak first to his disciples, saying: “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy [*the word used here describes an*

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actor in a play, a pretender, hypocrisy is knowingly pretending to be something you are not. 2 There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. 3 What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs.

4 "I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. 5 But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after your body has been killed, has authority to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him. 6 Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. 7 Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

8 "I tell you, whoever publicly acknowledges me before others, the Son of Man will also acknowledge before the angels of God. *[without the hypocrisy mentioned above]* 9 But whoever disowns me before others will be disowned before the angels of God. 10 And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. *[Still today, there is much confusion and poor teaching on this statement. It is NOT that this sin is too big to be forgiven. But because it is an attitude of the heart, the user will never want forgiveness. It is more than a formula of words; it is a settled heart and life that rejects the testimony and mission of the Holy Spirit – namely, to testify of Jesus. Even if someone intentionally says such things, as we probably all have prior to our conversion to Christ, they can still repent. The ultimate blasphemy comes when a soul rejects the Holy Spirit's work, with no regard or desire to repent, and then they die. There is, therefore, now, nothing to save them from that final blasphemy.]*

11 "When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, 12 for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say."

The Parable of the Rich Fool

13 Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." 14 Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?" 15 Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions."

16 And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. 17 He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' 18 "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there

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I will store my surplus grain. 19 And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry." "

20 "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' 21 "This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God."

Do Not Worry

22 Then Jesus said to his disciples: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. 23 For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. 24 Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! 25 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life? 26 Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?

27 "Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 28 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you--you of little faith! 29 And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. 30 For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. 31 But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

32 "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. 33 Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. 34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Watchfulness

35 "Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, 36 like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. 37 It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. Truly I tell you, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. 38 It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the middle of the night or toward daybreak. 39 But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. 40 You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."

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41 Peter asked, "Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?" 42 The Lord answered, "Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? 43 It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. 44 Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. 45 But suppose the servant says to himself, 'My master is taking a long time in coming,' and he then begins to beat the other servants, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk. 46 The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers.

47 "The servant who knows the master's will and does not get ready or does not do what the master wants will be beaten with many blows. 48 But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.

Not Peace but Division

49 "I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! 50 But I have a baptism to undergo, and what constraint I am under until it is completed! 51 Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. 52 From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. 53 They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law." *[This seems so contrary to what we know of Jesus. Yet history has confirmed this exact statement. Though individually we gain a peace that surpasses understanding, many families have been fractured and divided when one chooses to step away from family tradition, or family religion, and follow Jesus. Many have fallen by the sword by their own family members to follow Jesus. It happens even in today's "enlightened" world.]*

Interpreting the Times

54 He said to the crowd: "When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, 'It's going to rain,' and it does. 55 And when the south wind blows, you say, 'It's going to be hot,' and it is. 56 Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky. How is it that you don't know how to interpret this present time?

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57 "Why don't you judge for yourselves what is right? 58 As you are going with your adversary to the magistrate, try hard to be reconciled on the way, or your adversary may drag you off to the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. 59 I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny."

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

Chapter 13

When I was a young boy growing up in Los Angeles, my family and I would often take trips to Orange County to visit my uncle and grandmother. Living in the San Fernando Valley, we had to get on Interstate 5 and drive for a little over an hour. But as a kid, that drive felt like it lasted all day. I can still hear myself asking, “Are we there yet?” over and over again.

One thing that always stood out to me about living in L.A. was how endless the freeways seemed. They just went on forever. I used to wonder what would happen if someone stayed on the freeway and drove it to the end. Where would they end up? Could they even go around the whole world? (I was very young at the time.)

Today, of course, we have GPS and maps right on our phones. We can zoom in and see exactly where the roads go. But what’s interesting is that, no matter how long a road is, it always comes to an end. It might change names or connect to another road, but eventually, every road stops. Some roads are short, and some stretch across the country. That same Interstate 5 I rode on as a boy goes from the border of Canada to the border of Mexico. But even that road has an end.

That’s a lot like what Jesus talks about in this next chapter. He reminds us that we shouldn’t get too caught up in the scenery or the bumps in the road. What matters most is knowing that the road we’re on will eventually come to an end. Jesus wants us to be ready when that time comes.

Most of us can’t see the end of our road. We assume we have a long way to go, like looking at a map from way up high. But from that view, we also miss the potholes, or sudden turns, or breaks in the road that could stop our journey sooner than we expect.

At the beginning of this chapter, people asked Jesus about some who had died unexpectedly. “Did they die because they were worse sinners?” they wondered. But Jesus didn’t focus on why they died. Instead, He turned the question around: “What does this mean for you?” He reminded them—and us—that life can end at any time. That’s why He calls us to repentance, so we’ll be ready when our road ends.

As the chapter goes on, Jesus keeps calling us to shift our focus. Rather than getting distracted by what’s around us, He wants us to see that *He* is the true Way. No matter which road we’ve been on or how long it is, He is the one path that leads to life. He is the road that leads us through the narrow door mentioned in verse 24.

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Repent or Perish

1 Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. 2 Jesus answered, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? 3 I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. 4 Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them--do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? 5 I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish."

6 Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree growing in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it but did not find any. 7 So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?'

8 " 'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. 9 If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.'"

Jesus Heals a Cripple Woman on the Sabbath

10 On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, 11 and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. 12 When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, "Woman, you are set free from your infirmity." 13 Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God.

14 Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, the synagogue leader said to the people, "There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath." 15 The Lord answered him, "You hypocrites [*pretenders*!] Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie your ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? [*The Jewish lawyers made allowances in the law to tend to the basic needs of their animals. Yet they could not see, and worse complained when Jesus used the same compassion that God has for his children in tending to their basic needs as well.*]" 16 Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?"

17 When he said this, all his opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing.

The Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Yeast

18 Then Jesus asked, "What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it to? 19 It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds perched in its branches."

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

20 Again he asked, 'What shall I compare the kingdom of God to? 21 It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough.'

The Narrow Door

22 Then Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem. 23 Someone asked him, 'Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?' He said to them, 24 'Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. 25 Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.' 'But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.'

26 'Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.' 27 'But he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!'

28 'There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. 29 People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. 30 Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last.'

Jesus' Sorrow for Jerusalem

31 At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, 'Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you.'

32 He replied, 'Go tell that fox, 'I will keep on driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.' 33 In any case, I must press on today and tomorrow and the next day--for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!

34 'Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. 35 Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

GOSPEL OF LUKE

Chapter 14

I've heard it many times from many people: "*The Bible is hard to understand.*" Some say it can be interpreted in so many ways that it's impossible to know what it's really saying. I get it, I've felt the same way over the years. But for some reason, I was just too stubborn to give up. And I'm glad I didn't. That persistence led me to one important truth when it comes to understanding the Bible: *You have to know the Author.*

Once you begin to understand who Jesus is, His heart, His nature, His purpose—the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments, begins to make sense in ways you may have never experienced before.

Let's take prayer as an example. In several passages, Jesus tells us to pray for whatever we need, and it will be given to us by our Father in Heaven. Some people, including pastors and entire churches, build entire teachings around these verses. You may have heard of the "name it and claim it" doctrine. I've been part of churches that taught this approach. Honestly, I prayed for a lot over the years—jobs, cars, houses, financial blessings. It felt like a heavenly buffet: if I wanted it, I could just ask for it.

But I won't sugarcoat it—my "success rate" with those prayers wasn't impressive.

So, was the Bible wrong? Was Jesus making empty promises? Not at all. When something in the Bible seems confusing or contradictory, the problem isn't with the Bible—it's with our understanding.

Back to prayer—consider this next chapter and take a closer look at the overall subject of Jesus' teaching. The real message becomes clear: **It's about the posture of our hearts.** Look closely at verses 24-34; Jesus is inviting us to trust completely in Him, to seek His Kingdom above all else. When we truly follow Him, our desires begin to change. We start to want what He wants.

If you want worldly things, you don't have to pray to God for them. Look around—they're all out there for the taking. But if you want things that will last for eternity, then begin to learn from the Author of eternity. Learn to become eternity-focused, instead of focused on this temporary dwelling—the testing ground in which we all currently live.

If you want to understand the Bible, read it with your "Jesus glasses" on, and it will come alive to you. **Then** you will begin to understand the life that truly awaits you. **Then** you will pray with a full heart: "*Your Kingdom come, and Your will be done, on earth now, as it is in Heaven always.*"

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

Jesus at a Pharisee's House

1 One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched. 2 There in front of him was a man suffering from abnormal swelling of his body. 3 Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in the law, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?" 4 But they remained silent. So taking hold of the man, he healed him and sent him on his way.

5 Then he asked them, "If one of you has a child or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull it out?" 6 And they had nothing to say.

7 When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: 8 "When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. 9 If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this person your seat.' Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. 10 But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all the other guests. 11 For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

12 Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. 13 But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, 14 and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

The Parable of the Great Banquet

15 When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, "Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God."

16 Jesus replied: "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. 17 At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' 18 'But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.' 19 'Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.' 20 'Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.'

21 "The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.' 22 " 'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.'

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23 "Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full. 24 I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.' "

The Cost of Being a Disciple

25 Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: 26 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters--yes, even their own life--such a person cannot be my disciple. 27 And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

28 "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? 29 For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, 30 saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.'

31 "Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? 32 If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. 33 In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.

34 "Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? 35 It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out. "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

Chapter 15

This chapter is truly one of the most profound in the Bible. It has far-reaching consequences. I want to encourage you all to share this particular chapter through any media you can, so that as many people as possible have the chance to understand what Jesus is saying to everyone.

Jesus tells a parable here, not three parables, but one single story, like a song with three stanzas. I don't think it's a coincidence that there are three parts. The first involves a shepherd, the second a woman, and the third a father. Even that alone holds deep meaning when you think about the roles of the Son, the Holy Spirit, and Father God. It lays a strong foundation for understanding the whole story.

The first part is about a lost sheep. I can really relate to that. Before I came to Jesus, I was so lost, not just spiritually, but emotionally and even physically. I remember times when I would just drive around the city, not knowing where I was going, just searching for something to give my life meaning. I was that lost sheep. I knew I was lost, but I had no idea how to be found—until Jesus found me and brought me home.

Even after becoming a Christian, I've sometimes felt like the lost coin. I knew the Father loved me. I knew I was valuable to Him. But I didn't realize I wasn't really serving a purpose. That's the strange thing about a lost coin: it doesn't know it's lost. It's content with where it is. It can lie under a couch for years and never care. Only the owner knows its true value. Many times, the Holy Spirit found me and moved me to where I could fulfill my purpose, where I could do the most good. The Holy Spirit always knows what I'm capable of, even when I don't.

Sadly, I can also relate to the son. There have been times in my life when I knowingly chose the wrong path. I walked away from my Father's house and wanted to "do life" on my own. I knew the family I belonged to, but I wanted to experience the world with all its glitz and charm. I wanted to be free—only to find out that the freedom I chased became a worse kind of bondage. I had experienced God's unconditional love, and then I turned my back on it.

I felt the shame when the world let me down. I was embarrassed at the thought of coming back. I didn't believe I would be taken seriously as a believer in Christ. I felt the sting of losing the best thing I ever had, a relationship with Jesus and with my brothers and sisters in Christ. But like the prodigal son, and by God's mercy, I took a step back toward Him with a humble heart—and there was the Father, standing and waiting for me to come home.

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I believe many of us have similar stories. This parable shows us that we are always on the Father's mind, from the time we are lost sheep, to our daily walk, and even when we go astray. The message is clear: it's never too late. God is always with us. You are never too far for God to reach you.

If you are the sheep, searching but unsure where to go—this is your call. The Good Shepherd, Jesus, is calling for you. He will carry you home if you trust in Him.

If you are the coin, trust that the Holy Spirit will lead and guide you to the place He has prepared for you. Rest in the knowledge that you are in His hands and that you are valuable, no matter where life takes you.

If you are the lost son—take heart. You are not alone. The Father and His family are waiting for you to come home. You will not be rejected by God. You have not sinned too much for God. The cross that saved you is the same cross that can restore you. God has never stopped loving you.

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

1 Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. 2 But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

3 Then Jesus told them this parable: [*singular*] 4 "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? [*He leaves and goes to find it; he doesn't just sit around waiting for it to show up again. He knows the sheep is lost. He knows the more time he waits to go find it, the greater the risk of it being lost forever.*] 5 And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders 6 and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' 7 I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

The Parable of the Lost Coin

8 "Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Doesn't she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? [*Notice it was not just a hope the coin would turn up, she was actively looking for it.*] 9 And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.' 10 In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

The Parable of the Lost Son

11 Jesus continued: 'There was a man who had two sons. 12 The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

13 'Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. 14 After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. *[Something that would be completely unheard of as a Jew, as pigs were unclean. This emphasizes how bad the situation was for the young man.]* 16 He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

17 'When he came to his senses, *[this implies the son was raised right, he knew the right way, but allowed himself to become overcome by the desires of the world. Now that he experienced the real fruits of the world, he finally came back to his senses; this right path.]* he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! 18 I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; *[a postured heart of humility]* make me like one of your hired servants.' *[His focus wasn't to get back "home" but to his "father"]* 20 So he got up and went to his father. *[How many times do we have the thought of repentance, but fail to "get up and go." This shows us there is more to repentance than just thinking and praying about it. It shows there is an application of repentance.]* But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

21 'The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 'But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger *[a sign of reconnection with the family/father]* and sandals on his feet. 23 Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. 24 For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

25 'Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 27 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

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28 "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. 29 But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

31 " 'My son,' *[Literal: Dear Child]* the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. *[The father reminds the oldest son that he is dear to him, and that everything the father has still belongs to the son. Nothing had changed his inheritance. The younger son will still have consequences of his choices; however, the father reminds him in the following verse what was more important than just things.]* 32 But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' "

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

Chapter 16

I think most of us, at one time or another, have imagined what it would be like to win the lottery or be so wealthy that we could have anything we wanted. No need to work just to pay the bills. The freedom to travel whenever and wherever we like. With social media, TV, movies, and ads constantly showing us the “good life,” it’s easy to get caught up in the idea, and why not? We’re always being told, “You deserve it.”

I’ve had those daydreams too. Sometimes, I’d let my imagination run wild — until the phone rang at work and snapped me back to reality. I think those thoughts were stronger when I was younger and just starting out. But one experience really changed how I thought about wealth and what truly matters.

I went on a mission trip to Rio Bravo, Mexico, with my church. Our goal was to build a small *casita*, a tiny house for a young family. When we arrived, I saw the land: a small, square patch of dry, cracked soil with weeds growing through it. In the back corner was a plywood shack. One side of it was propped up with old wooden pallets.

As we began unloading cinder blocks, I glanced inside the shed. It was maybe 15 feet by 15 feet, but not even square. The floor was dirty. A few 5-gallon buckets were scattered around. Bedding was laid out on the ground. Then it hit me — a family was living in there. A husband, wife, and children called that place home.

I knew we were coming to build a new shelter, but seeing what they lived in before really shook me. For the next few days, I couldn’t stop thinking about how much God has given me in comparison to these kind, joyful Christians. We finished building the little house that week and met the couple who would move in. They were full of smiles and gratitude. But honestly, I think I walked away more blessed than they did.

God gives each of us different resources, some financial, some practical, some intellectual. This chapter is really about recognizing those resources and how we use them. Where we choose to invest our time, energy, and money shows what we value most. It starts with a parable and ends with a true story. This chapter gives us a reminder and a question.

Reminder: Earthly status is not a measure of eternal destiny.

Question: What do you consider a wise investment?

The Parable of the Shrewd Manager

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1 Jesus told his disciples: "There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. 2 So he called him in and asked him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer.'

3 "The manager said to himself, 'What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed to beg-- 4 I know what I'll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.'

5 "So he called in each one of his master's debtors. He asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' 6 " 'Nine hundred gallons of olive oil,' he replied. "The manager told him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred and fifty.' 7 "Then he asked the second, 'And how much do you owe?' " 'A thousand bushels of wheat,' he replied. "He told him, 'Take your bill and make it eight hundred.'

8 "The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. *[The manager is commended for his shrewd behavior. He saw a crisis coming, he made a quick strategic move to secure future support, and he acted with foresight. But he was still labeled dishonest. His model of thinking was right, his motive was wrong. He should have used the shrewdness for the Master, but he held it back and only used it for himself.]* For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. 9 I tell you, use worldly wealth *[treasure, resources, influences, tools]* to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into *[their]* eternal dwellings. *[As odd as this sounds, it is basically saying to use the natural worldly gifts, talents, and wealth God gives you to gain influence in the world. So they may learn about God from you. So they may come to Jesus through your influence, and then they will welcome you in heaven as being part of the instrument that brought them to repentance.]*

10 "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. 11 So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? 12 And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?

13 "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. *[the world]*"

14 The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. 15 He said to them, "You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others, but God knows your hearts. What people value highly is detestable in God's sight."

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

Additional Teachings

16 "The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing their way into it. 17 It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law.

18 "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery. *[These verses are not a random insertion. They carry the same theme of being good stewards. Remember, the Pharisees are here listening. It illustrates how the religious leaders manipulated God's Word – just as they misused money. They claimed righteousness, but compromised the truth – both in money and moral matters like marriage, twisting God's Word for their own purpose and gain.]*

The Rich Man and Lazarus

[It is important to note, this is NOT a parable. It is a true story.] 19 "There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. 20 At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores 21 and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.

22 "The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. 23 In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. 24 So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.' *[Hades was not the Lake of Fire, or what we know as Hell. Hades was a holding place for the dead. This story gives a glimpse of that place prior to Jesus on the cross. It had two regions, one of comfort and one of torment, with a chasm in between, yet each side was visible to the other. After the crucifixion, Jesus descended into Hades and released those waiting for him.]*

25 "But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. 26 And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'

27 "He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, 28 for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' 29 "Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' 30 " 'No,

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father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' 31
'He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced
even if someone rises from the dead.' "

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

Chapter 17

Anyone who knows me knows how much I love to cruise. Besides the beautiful blue waters and the open sea, one of the biggest reasons I enjoy cruising is that it forces me to truly disconnect. (Let's be real—I'm way too cheap to buy the internet package at sea! Ha!) But honestly, there's something really refreshing about being able to unplug from everything and just enjoy where you are. There's a real freedom that comes from disconnecting.

Interestingly, there's another place in the U.S. that also promotes this idea of "disconnecting"—Las Vegas. You've probably heard the saying, "What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas." Once you visit the Las Vegas Strip, it's clear they're selling a similar message, but with a darker twist.

The kind of "freedom" Vegas promotes isn't just about letting go of stress; it's marketed as a freedom from accountability. A freedom to do whatever you want, without anyone judging you or holding you responsible for your actions. The idea is that you can do as you please while you're there, and then go back to your "regular" life as if it never happened. Unsurprisingly, the city has earned the nickname "Sin City." (I'm sure the Las Vegas Police Department might not fully agree with that branding!)

In Luke 17, Jesus speaks to a very different idea of freedom. The main message of this chapter is this: Faithful living right now is the preparation for the coming Kingdom of God.

Jesus compares the coming of God's Kingdom to the days of Noah. Back then, people were just living their everyday lives, eating, drinking, getting married—without any thought about what was coming. Then the flood came, and it was too late.

Jesus' point is that if you're always living for the moment, eventually the moment will run out. And when God shows up, those who waited too long to turn to Him will find that their window to respond has closed. None of us knows when that moment will come. So we should live every moment in preparation.

We do this by being faithful, by living as a servant who puts God's purpose first. Not chasing your own self-focused, disconnected version of freedom, but staying connected to what God has called you to do.

True freedom isn't about escaping accountability, it's about living with purpose, under the grace and guidance of God.

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Sin, Faith, Duty

1 Jesus said to his disciples: *[It is important to remember who Jesus is speaking to and not speaking to here.]* "Things that cause people to stumble *[literal offenses. The Greek word is skandalon. It means a "bent stick" as in the kinds of sticks used to spring a trap. It is also used as a stumbling block, in order to trip people.]* are bound to come, but woe to anyone through whom they come. 2 It would be better for them to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around their neck than to cause one of these little ones to stumble. *[Whether in the church or out, this skandalon may be false counsel, or guiding someone to false "liberty," or divisive and false doctrines or teaching. Anything that draws people away from the cross.]* 3 So watch yourselves. 'If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke *[directly correct]* them; and if they repent, forgive them. 4 Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying 'I repent,' you must forgive them."

5 The apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith!' *[Their response to "forgive often". Even today, we have trouble with the idea of forgiveness. We can find all kinds of justifications to hold on to our bitterness and resentment. These apostles felt the same and their response was "help us".]* 6 He replied, 'If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, *[not about "how much," but "in who."* Even a small amount faith in God can bring transformation.] you can say to this mulberry tree, *[a tree with extremely deep and strong roots. Something that would be very difficult to "uproot" like a deep, long lasting offense maybe?]* 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you.

7 'Suppose one of you has a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Will he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and sit down to eat'? 8 Won't he rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink'? 9 Will he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? *[It is our duty to work in forgiveness.]* 10 So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.' " *[The attitude of the servant is the point: Jesus has done and is doing much more for us than we may ever do for him. We are created to serve Him by serving others. Do we really think Jesus must then thank us for living in the purpose he created us for? Should Jesus thank us for forgiving others after all he has forgiven us?]*

Jesus Heals Ten Men With Leprosy

11 Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. 12 As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance 13 and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!"

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14 When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed. 15 One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. 16 He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan.

17 Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? 18 Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?" 19 Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well." [*Literally; made whole and complete. Not just a temporary physical healing, but a complete spiritual wholeness – salvation.*]

The Coming of the Kingdom of God

20 Once, on being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, 21 nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is in your midst."

22 Then he said to his disciples, "The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. 23 People will tell you, 'There he is!' or 'Here he is!' Do not go running off after them. 24 For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other. 25 But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.

26 "Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. 27 People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all.

28 "It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. 29 But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all.

30 "It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed. 31 On that day no one who is on the housetop, with possessions inside, should go down to get them. Likewise, no one in the field should go back for anything. 32 Remember Lot's wife! 33 Whoever tries to keep their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life will preserve it. 34 I tell you, on that night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. 35 Two women will be grinding grain together; one will be taken and the other left." 36 [NKJV] "Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left."

37 [NIV] "Where, Lord?" they asked. He replied, "Where there is a dead body, there the vultures will gather."

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Chapter 18

I had just finished college with a new degree and a head full of dreams. Not long after that, the company I worked for shut down, and I found myself out of a job. I thought I'd land something great within a couple of months, but six months passed, then nine, and still nothing came through. One interview after another ended with rejection letters, or worse, silence.

At first, I stayed hopeful. But over time, all the rejections started to wear me down. I began to wonder, "*Maybe I'm not good enough. Maybe I should just take whatever I can get and give up on the dream.*"

But something deep inside kept saying, "Keep going. Not because you're owed anything, but because you believe you were made for more."

So every day, I got up early. I prayed. I updated my resume. I applied for new jobs. When I got passed over, I asked for feedback. I reached out to mentors and people in my network. I stayed open to advice, even when it was hard to hear. And every night, no matter how discouraged I felt, I thanked God, not for a job I didn't yet have, but for the strength to keep going and growing.

Almost a year after graduating, I finally got a job offer. It wasn't from a huge company, and it wasn't the flashiest role, but it was the right fit for my skills, my values, and my long-term growth. My boss later told me, "*We were impressed not just with your resume, but with your attitude. You stayed teachable, and you didn't give up.*"

As strange as it might sound, this chapter of Luke is about humility and persistence. They might seem like opposites at first—but Jesus shows us how they work together.

Humble persistence isn't about forcing your way forward. It's about trusting the process, and more importantly, trusting the One in charge of it. It means continuing to show up, to ask, to work hard, not with a sense of entitlement, but with faith. You don't keep going because you think you deserve the outcome. You keep going because you trust the One you're asking and know how much you need Him.

The Parable of the Persistent Woman

1 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. 2 He said: 'In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. 3 And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

4 "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care what people think, 5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!' "

6 And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. 7 And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? 8 I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector

9 To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: 10 "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people--robbers, evildoers, adulterers--or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'

13 "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

14 "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

The Little Children and Jesus

15 People were also bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. 16 But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 17 Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."

The Rich and the Kingdom of God

18 A certain ruler asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 19 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good--except God alone. 20 You know the commandments: 'You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.'"

21 "All these I have kept since I was a boy," he said. 22 When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

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23 When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was very wealthy. 24 Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! 25 Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

26 Those who heard this asked, "Who then can be saved?" 27 Jesus replied, "What is impossible with man is possible with God." 28 Peter said to him, "We have left all we had to follow you!" 29 "Truly I tell you," Jesus said to them, "no one who has left home or wife or brothers or sisters or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God 30 will fail to receive many times as much in this age, and in the age to come eternal life."

Jesus Predicts His Death a Third Time

31 Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. 32 He will be delivered over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him and spit on him; 33 they will flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again."

34 The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about.

A Blind Beggar Receives His Sight

35 As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. 36 When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. 37 They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." 38 He called out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

39 Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" 40 Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. When he came near, Jesus asked him, 41 "What do you want me to do for you?" "Lord, I want to see," he replied.

42 Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has healed you." 43 Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God.

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

Chapter 19

I've been to a lot of churches over the years. Some were very formal and traditional, others casual and laid back. And it's always interesting to watch how people respond when they enter the building. In the foyer, people tend to chat, laugh, and move about freely. But as soon as they step through the sanctuary doors, there's often a noticeable shift—people become quieter, more reserved. Even in contemporary churches, kids often settle down a bit once they're in the sanctuary.

I think that has a lot to do with respect for what the sanctuary represents.

But here's the thing—it's just a room. Yes, it's set apart for worship. Yes, it deserves our respect. But in truth, it's no more or less holy than the foyer, or even the sidewalk outside. I know that may feel uncomfortable or even a little sacrilegious to say. But stay with me.

The sanctuary is a man-made space—ideally one that's been dedicated to God's glory. But so are we—and according to Scripture, we are actually where God's Spirit lives.

Paul puts it plainly in 1 Corinthians 6:19: "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?"

That brings us to Luke 19, and something unusual Jesus does at the end of that chapter. He walks into the temple, drives out the merchants, and says: "*My house shall be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of robbers.*"

For a long time, I thought this passage was all about whether churches should sell books or T-shirts in the lobby. What's fair pricing? What crosses the line? But now, I think that misses the point entirely.

Look at the whole chapter:

- Zacchaeus, a notorious sinner, is sought out and redeemed.
- Jesus tells a parable that teaches how His followers should live faithfully while waiting for His return.
- He enters Jerusalem as the prophesied King, but weeps over the city because it failed to recognize what was right in front of it.
- And then He clears the temple.

When you take it all together, the message becomes clear—it's not about church buildings.

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It's about our hearts. Jesus seeks and redeems the lost, teaches the redeemed how to live, promises to return, and warns us all to stay spiritually awake—guarding our hearts against complacency and the pull of the world.

Zacchaeus the Tax Collector

1 Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. 2 A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. *[ironically, this despised man's name meant: "Pure one." It was a role he did not live up to, but perhaps one he would grow into with this meeting. Our Father has the ability to make us into something the world could never think possible.]* 3 He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. *[his desire to see and connect with Truth outweighed his desire to appear "proper" and "distinguished."]*

5 When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.' *[Jesus still today connects with those who have the right posture of heart that spurs themselves to act in faith, without considering the "world's" opinion.]* 6 So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. 7 All the people *[literally: everyone, the whole, collectively. Not just the religious leaders, but everyone, including those who supported Jesus. How quickly we can fall into this group when we see something that looks contrary to us. How quickly can we find the stones in our pocket.]* saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner."

8 But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, 'Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.' *[This was not Zacchaeus claiming to be right in his past ways; this is him repenting for the wrong he had done.]* 9 Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Parable of the Stewards

11 While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. 12 He said: "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. *[This is Jesus telling them that he would depart and return. He is the "man of noble birth"]* 13 So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. *[one mina each]* 'Put this money to work,' *[literally: occupy]* he said, 'until I come back.'

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

14 "But his subjects *[these are not the servants he just spoke about, rather the citizens that lived in the area the servants worked in – namely the “world”]* hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king.' 15 "He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it. 16 "The first one came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned ten more.' 17 " 'Well done, my good servant!' his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.' 18 "The second came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned five more.' 19 "His master answered, 'You take charge of five cities.'

20 "Then another servant came and said, 'Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. 21 I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow.' 22 "His master replied, 'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in, and reaping what I did not sow? 23 Why then didn't you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?'

24 "Then he said to those standing by, 'Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.' 25 " 'Sir,' they said, 'he already has ten!' *[This helps us to understand the plan of Our Heavenly Father. It is to build character in us. God does not need us to make Him rich. But He does want us to develop the good character of using the gifts and talents He gives us to be productive. This servant was merely lazy and selfish.]*

26 "He replied, 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what they have will be taken away. *[The servant who had everything taken from him was still his servant. This is not about losing your salvation. It is about not having any fruits or rewards outside of salvation. If we fail to put forth any effort, then we cannot expect God to give us much to manage. God doesn't call us to be self-consumers only.]* 27 "But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them--bring them here and kill them in front of me.' " *[The sad ultimate consequence of those who fight against God.]*

Jesus Comes to Jerusalem as King

28 After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. 29 As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, 30 'Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here.' 31 If anyone asks

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you, 'Why are you untying it?' say, 'The Lord needs it.' " *[fulfilling Genesis 49:10-11, and Zechariah 9:9, both written 1500 years, and 550 years prior to this event.]*

32 Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. 33 As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" 34 They replied, "The Lord needs it." 35 They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. 36 As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.

37 When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: 38 "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

39 Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" *[Nothing can reveal one's heart quicker than praises lifted to God. It will show you where your heart truly lies. If you can joyfully join in, or if you want to bind up your ears. True praise draws the line in the sand of one's heart.]* 40 "I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."

41 As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it *[literally: of those who mourn and cry for the dead, bewail, a deep hurt of loss.]* 42 and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. 43 The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. 44 They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. *[Even when God's judgment is perfectly just, it brings Him no joy. His heart weeps at the loss of this judgment. Therefore, we too, should not celebrate the destruction of the wicked, but rejoice that we are saved by His grace and mercy.]* They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you." *[This was fulfilled in AD 70 (about 40 years later) when the temple was set on fire and the gold melted between the cracks. Rome literally removed every stone in place to scrape off the melted gold.]*

Jesus at the Temple

45 When Jesus entered the temple courts, he began to drive out those who were selling. 46 "It is written," he said to them, " 'My house will be a house of prayer'; but you have made it 'a den of robbers.'"

47 Every day he was teaching at the temple. But the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the leaders among the people were trying to kill him. 48 Yet they could not find any way to do it, because all the people hung on his words.

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

Chapter 20

There once was a man named Richard who became one of the most powerful people in the world—President of the United States. He was smart and experienced. He often talked about law, safety, and doing what was right for the country. Many people respected him. Some didn't agree with everything he said, but most believed he was a serious leader who meant well.

Then one day, there was a break-in at a hotel. At first, it seemed like just another crime—nothing to do with the President. But as reporters and investigators looked closer, they started to find signs that people close to Richard were involved.

Richard told the country not to worry. He said he didn't know anything about the break-in and would never allow such a thing. Many wanted to believe him. But then came the tapes.

You see, Richard had been recording conversations in the White House. He wanted to remember what was said. He never thought those tapes would be used against him. But when the truth started to come out, the court demanded the tapes. And when people finally heard them—they were shocked.

The tapes caught Richard lying. He was trying to cover up what had happened. He even tried to use parts of the government to help him hide it. On the tapes, people also heard him say things that were hurtful and disrespectful toward different groups, like African Americans, Jews, and others. The man who once stood for law and honesty was now caught planning lies to protect himself.

The country was stunned. Richard had seemed so trustworthy. But the truth wasn't found in rumors or news reports—it was found in his own voice, on his own tapes. People were confused and hurt. But they also learned something important: sometimes people aren't who they seem to be, and their true self comes out when they think no one is listening.

Today, it's sad to say that we're not so surprised when this happens with a politician. But this kind of letdown can happen with other public figures, too. People who talk a good talk, but later we find out they were not what they appeared. I remember being shocked and deeply saddened to learn about the star of the *Cosby* Show, one of my favorite actors in the 1980s, and the terrible things he later admitted to.

There's a lesson here that ties to what we read in the Bible, especially in this chapter. Our modern world isn't the first to be fooled by powerful or charming people. Even when Jesus was on earth, people tried to trick Him with flattering words and fake kindness.

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But here's the good news: we have the same Spirit of God that helped Jesus see through it. If we take the time to listen, reflect, and follow Jesus' teaching, especially at the end of this chapter, we'll be better prepared to see what's real—and who is truly worth trusting.

Ironically, in their zeal to trap Jesus, during this questioning by the religious leaders, yet another prophecy was fulfilled: The inspection of the lamb to ensure no spot or blemish. (Exodus 12:5, Leviticus 1:3, Leviticus 22:21)

The Authority of Jesus Questioned

1 One day as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple courts and proclaiming the good news, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, together with the elders, came up to him. 2 "Tell us by what authority you are doing these things," they said. "Who gave you this authority?" *[Questions are not wrong, but they are colored by our motives.]*

3 He replied, "I will also ask you a question. Tell me: 4 John's baptism—was it from heaven, or of human origin?" 5 They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will ask, 'Why didn't you believe him?'" 6 But if we say, 'Of human origin,' all the people will stone us, because they are persuaded that John was a prophet."

7 So they answered, "We don't know where it was from." *[Their motive for asking was revealed in their answer.]* 8 Jesus said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things."

The Parable of the Tenants

9 He went on to tell the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard, rented it to some farmers and went away for a long time. 10 At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants so they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. 11 He sent another servant, but that one also they beat and treated shamefully and sent away empty-handed. 12 He sent still a third, and they wounded him and threw him out."

13 "Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my son, whom I love; perhaps they will respect him.' 14 "But when the tenants saw him, they talked the matter over. 'This is the heir,' they said. 'Let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' 15 So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. "What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? 16 He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others." When the people heard this, they said, "God forbid!"

17 Jesus looked directly at them and asked, "Then what is the meaning of that which is written: " 'The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone'? 18 Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed."

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

19 The teachers of the law and the chief priests looked for a way to arrest him immediately, because they knew he had spoken this parable against them. But they were afraid of the people.

Paying Taxes to Caesar

20 Keeping a close watch on him, they sent spies, who pretended to be sincere. They hoped to catch Jesus in something he said, so that they might hand him over to the power and authority of the governor. 21 So the spies questioned him: "Teacher, we know that you speak and teach what is right, and that you do not show partiality but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. 22 Is it right for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" *[It is interesting to read this account in Luke. For this is the only Gospel that does not openly identify these spies as Pharisees and Herodians, like Mark and Matthew do. This gives us a deeper glimpse into how they gained access to Jesus with their question. "Spies" imply not only traitors but disguised traitors. Looking like the common man, not in their religious garb.]*

23 He saw through their duplicity *[It was not their clothing that gave them away. What appeared like a good question from struggling, suffering taxpayers was really a question trying to trap Jesus. The Holy Spirit gives us the same discernment when our hearts are postured toward the Kingdom of God.]* and said to them, 24 "Show me a denarius. Whose image and inscription are on it?" "Caesar's," they replied. 25 He said to them, "Then give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." *[A recent message I heard made a great point to this statement: Whose image are you created in? So, to whom do you belong and owe your life to? I love that Jesus, here, devalues the coin – give the coin back to its maker; and redirects us, the creation, back to our Maker – God.]*

26 They were unable to trap him in what he had said there in public. And astonished by his answer, they became silent.

The Resurrection and Marriage

27 Some of the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus with a question. 28 "Teacher," they said, "Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. 29 Now there were seven brothers. The first one married a woman and died childless. 30 The second 31 and then the third married her, and in the same way the seven died, leaving no children. 32 Finally, the woman died too. 33 Now then, at the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?"

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34 Jesus replied, "The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. 35 But those who are considered worthy of taking part in the age to come and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage, 36 and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection. 37 But in the account of the burning bush, even Moses showed that the dead rise, for he calls the Lord 'the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' 38 He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive."

39 Some of the teachers of the law responded, [*The Pharisees*] "Well said, teacher!" 40 And no one dared to ask him any more questions.

Whose Son is the Messiah

41 Then Jesus said to them, "Why is it said that the Messiah is the son of David?

42 David himself declares in the Book of Psalms: " 'The Lord said to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand 43 until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.' " ' 44 David calls him 'Lord.' How then can he be his son?"

Warning Against the Teachers of the Law

45 While all the people were listening, Jesus said to his disciples, 46 "Beware of the teachers of the law. [*Literally: Scribes, also meaning the interpreters of the Law, lawyers, teachers, instructors of what path to take.*] They like to walk around in flowing robes and love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. 47 They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. These men will be punished most severely."

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

Chapter 21

Looking back on my life, I must say—there have been many happy moments. Joyful times in childhood, laughter in my youth, exciting seasons as a young adult, and sweet memories even as I grow older. Especially after I gave my life to Christ, it became easy to see God's hand in my blessings. It felt natural to thank Him and give Him glory.

But life hasn't always been easy. There have been dark seasons, too.

Even now, as I write this, I'm walking through one of those difficult times. My older brother, for whom I am the guardian, is in the hospital. He's suffering from psychosis and is nearly in a catatonic state. My stepson is bedridden at home from an infected spider bite. He's already had five skin grafts, with more ahead, and a long road to recovery still in front of him.

My wife and I are doing our best to hold our family together. But it's hard when bad news seems to come with every phone call. On top of that, we're supporting three households—right after I changed jobs and took a 30% pay cut.

Have you ever had times like that? When it feels like everything that could go wrong... does? It's so tempting in those moments to throw up your hands and say, "I give up." Praising God feels distant. Cheerfulness seems impossible. You're just trying to make it through another day.

Luke 21 speaks into these moments. At first glance, it's hard to see how the story of the widow's offering connects with the talk of end times in the same chapter. But if you look closer, there's a powerful message there.

Jesus is describing days like ours—days of struggle, uncertainty, and hardship. He reminds us that tough times will come from all sides. What matters is how we respond and where we place our faith when things fall apart. This chapter isn't just about giving God lip service. It invites us to decide—*now*—what we're going to trust in *when* the storms of life hit.

In verse 1, we see the rich giving out of their abundance. That's easy to do when life is good. But what about when things aren't? Can we still give—our hearts, our trust, our devotion—to God with the same joy?

That's the deeper challenge. This isn't about money. It's about offering our full hearts to God, even when we're stretched thin. If we can learn to press through in the hard times now, we'll be better prepared when even greater trials come. In those moments, instead of falling away, we'll know how to press *in* to our Father and find joy again.

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So maybe the smaller struggles in life are like training grounds—helping to shape our faith for the harder days ahead. We're not promised an easy life or the "American Dream" every day. But we *are* promised that our Father will never leave us. Through every season, He is the one constant we can count on. This chapter teaches us not to focus on the moment, but to focus on the Promise.

The Widow's Offering

1 As Jesus looked up, he saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. 2 He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. 3 "Truly I tell you," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. 4 All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."

The Destruction of the Temple and Signs of the End Times

5 Some of his disciples were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God. But Jesus said, 6 "As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down." *[Another mention of the doom to come on the temple 40 years later.]*

7 "Teacher," they asked, "when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place?" *[Remember who asked the question: a Jewish disciple. And to whom Jesus answered.]* 8 He replied: "Watch out that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not follow them. 9 When you hear of wars and uprisings, do not be frightened. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away."

10 Then he said to them: "Nation *[Greek: ethnos, where we get the word ethnic, meaning people groups, cultures, races.]* will rise against nation, and kingdom *[Greek: Basileia, meaning authority, or rulers, geographically or spiritually]* against kingdom. 11 There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven.

12 "But before all this, they will seize you and persecute you. They will hand you over to synagogues and put you in prison, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. 13 And so you will bear testimony to me. 14 But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. 15 For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. 16 You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. 17 Everyone will hate you because of me. 18 But not a hair of your head will perish. 19 Stand firm, and you will win life.

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20 "When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. 21 Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. 22 For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. 23 How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. 24 They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. *[Jesus is still talking about and to the Jewish followers. Yes, some would experience this treatment then, but prophetically, he was also speaking of the 144,000 that would be redeemed during the Tribulation. The Church is not here during this future time, having been raptured, or "taken up".]*

25 "There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. 26 People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. 27 At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

The Parable of the Fig Tree

29 He told them this parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees. 30 When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. 31 Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near.

32 "Truly I tell you, this generation *[The Jewish generation, or people. Though many have tried to wipe them out over thousands of years, still the promise is they will remain until the promise is fulfilled – the second coming of Jesus.]* will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. 33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

34 "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap. 35 For it will come on all those who live on the face of the whole earth. 36 Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man."

37 Each day Jesus was teaching at the temple, and each evening he went out to spend the night on the hill called the Mount of Olives, 38 and all the people came early in the morning to hear him at the temple.

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Chapter 22

There's something kind of funny that happens when you put a bunch of people with driver's licenses in a room. Just ask, "Who thinks you're a good, safe driver?" and watch the hands go up.

But facts are facts. On average, every driver makes between 5 and 20 mistakes per hour behind the wheel, depending on their experience. For people with long commutes to and from work, that means every morning and afternoon, those numbers apply to you.

Even more seriously, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration found that 94% of all crashes happen because of driver error. And studies show that every driver will make at least one serious, life-threatening mistake every 1,000 miles—things like a near-miss or a dangerous move. On top of that, distracted driving has become so common that the average driver now spends 30% of their driving time distracted.

So if I said to a group of drivers, "One of you will cause a serious accident that injures someone this year," I imagine each person would take a quick look inward and hopefully ask, "Is it me?" Then the justifications would start. "Surely not me—I haven't had a ticket in 10 years." Another might say, "I haven't had one in 20." Someone else might add, "I've never had a ticket or an accident in 25 years." Each person would try to prove they're the safest, trying to show they aren't the one I was talking about. It must be someone else.

That moment reminds me of the disciples when Jesus told them one of them would betray Him that night. In the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, we see that they actually asked, "Is it I?"

That question reveals something personal. It shows that each of them had, at some point, thought about giving up or had doubts about the mission they were on. But their minds couldn't settle on that thought. They had to defend their faithfulness. And soon, they were arguing about who was the most righteous or the greatest. I don't think they did that out of arrogance. I think it came from a deep fear—a desperate attempt not to admit that each one had struggled in their own heart.

We all go through seasons where we struggle with our faith. Every one of us will question our walk with Christ at times. But think about what Jesus said and did after that moment. He didn't ask them to prove their loyalty. He reminded them how to live for Him, even in weakness—not by trying to justify ourselves, but by staying faithful through it all.

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Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus

1 Now the Festival of Unleavened Bread, called the Passover, was approaching, 2 and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for [*to seek by thinking, meditating, reasoning, enquiring. To crave and strive*] some way to get rid of Jesus, for they were afraid [*Greek: phobeo. Where we get the word phobia - a verb meaning to fear something.*] of the people. 3 Then Satan entered [*as a man enters a room, or as food enters the mouth, implying an open access point.*] Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. 4 And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray [*to deliver, give over, give in, allow access treacherously*] Jesus. 5 They were delighted [*Greek: chairo. The same kind of gladness and rejoicing mentioned in Matthew 2:10, "when they saw the star, they were overjoyed." Yet this rejoicing was from the dark forces, not God.*] and agreed to give him money. 6 He consented, and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present.

The Last Supper

7 Then came the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. 8 Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover."

9 "Where do you want us to prepare for it?" they asked. 10 He replied, "As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. [*This would be a highly unusual sight because men did not carry water; women did.*] Follow him to the house that he enters, 11 and say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' 12 He will show you a large room upstairs, all furnished. Make preparations there."

13 They left and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover. 14 When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. 15 And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. 16 For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God."

17 After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you. 18 For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

19 And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." 20 In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. 21 But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table. 22 The Son of

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Man will go as it has been decreed. But woe to that man who betrays him!" 23 They began to question [*Literally: enquire, reason together, dispute with*] among themselves which of them it might be who would do this.

24 A dispute [*literally: quarrel, strife.*] also arose among them as to which of them was considered [*of the opinion*] to be greatest. 25 Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. 26 But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest. [*recently born, new, youthful, in attitude*] and the one who rules like the one who serves. 27 For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. 28 You are those who have stood by me in my trials. 29 And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, 30 so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

31 "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked [*demand permission*] to sift [*shake you with agitation*] all of you [*Greek hymas: "y'all"*] as wheat. 32 But I have prayed for you [*"you" singular*], Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." 33 But he replied, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death." 34 Jesus answered, "I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me."

35 Then Jesus asked them, "When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?" "Nothing," they answered. 36 He said to them, "But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one. [*As Jesus prepares them for what was coming, he began to speak of them getting spiritually prepared. Having a "sword" to defend against the real enemy of God, Satan. Even if it means giving up our comforts, (cloak) to do so, later in Ephesians we see the Word of God called the Sword of the Spirit. This is likely a preview of that inspiration.*]

37 It is written: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors'; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment." 38 The disciples said, "See, Lord, here are two swords." [*They missed the spiritual point and took his words literally.*] "That's enough!" [*Better translation is; "Enough of this kind of talk!"*] he replied.

Jesus Prays on the Mount of Olives

39 Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. 40 On reaching the place, he said to them, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation." 41 He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, 42 "Father, if you are

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willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." *[Jesus wasn't afraid to die. But he knew that his death would separate him from God's presence. There would be a moment when all the sins of the world would be laid upon him, and the Father turned his eyes away from him. THAT is why Jesus asked if there was any other way for the redemption of man to come, other than this, let this pass from me.]*⁴³ An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. ⁴⁴ And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

⁴⁵ When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow. ⁴⁶ "Why are you sleeping?" he asked them. "Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation."

Jesus Arrested

⁴⁷ While he was still speaking a crowd came up, and the man who was called Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him, ⁴⁸ but Jesus asked him, "Judas, are you betraying *[to deliver, give over, give into, allow access treacherously]* the Son of Man with a kiss?"

⁴⁹ When Jesus' followers saw what was going to happen, they said, "Lord, should we strike with our swords?" ⁵⁰ And one of them struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear. ⁵¹ But Jesus answered, "No more of this!" And he touched the man's ear and healed him.

⁵² Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple guard, and the elders, who had come for him, "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come with swords and clubs? ⁵³ Every day I was with you in the temple courts, and you did not lay a hand on me. But this is your hour--when darkness reigns." *[has authority, jurisdiction, liberty, permission.]*

Peter Disowns Jesus

⁵⁴ Then seizing him, they led him away and took him into the house of the high priest. Peter followed at a distance.

⁵⁵ And when some there had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them. ⁵⁶ A servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight. She looked closely at him and said, "This man was with him." ⁵⁷ But he denied it. "Woman, I don't know him," he said.

⁵⁸ A little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them." "Man, I am not!" Peter replied.

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59 About an hour later another asserted, "Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean." 60 Peter replied, "Man, I don't know what you're talking about!" Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. 61 The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times."

62 And he went outside and wept bitterly.

The Guards Mock Jesus

63 The men who were guarding Jesus began mocking and beating him. 64 They blindfolded him and demanded, "Prophecy! Who hit you?" 65 And they said many other insulting things to him.

Jesus Before the Chief Priest

66 At daybreak the council of the elders of the people, both the chief priests and the teachers of the law, met together, and Jesus was led before them. 67 "If you are the Messiah," they said, "tell us."

Jesus answered, "If I tell you, you will not believe me, 68 and if I asked you, you would not answer. 69 But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God." 70 They all asked, "Are you then the Son of God?" He replied, "You say that I am." 71 Then they said, "Why do we need any more testimony? We have heard it from his own lips."

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Chapter 23

There have been many moments in my life that I'm not proud of. Even after all these years walking with the Father, I still find myself slipping off the "good path." For example, as traffic gets heavier, I notice my patience wearing thin more often.

When I paused to think about these "not-so-bright moments," I began to see a pattern. It usually starts with a small annoyance. If I dwell on it, that annoyance grows into frustration. Frustration turns into irritation. If I stay in that irritated state, it soon becomes anger—and that anger can quickly turn into rage.

Sometimes, this process takes time—like a slow drip filling a bowl until it overflows. But other times, I'm shocked at how fast it happens. In just a few minutes, I can go from "peacemaker" to "wannabe life taker". It surprises me how quickly I can lose control.

I've also realized that anger and rage can be contagious. I believe they are spiritual forces that, once released, can spread to others—especially to those who are unguarded or already struggling.

That's what stood out to me in this chapter of Luke. As Jesus moved toward His destiny—for our sake—the anger and rage around Him weren't isolated. They grew, fed by the crowd, until things spiraled into a frenzy. The lesson is clear: rage brings stupidity. It brings error. And one thing I can honestly confess, rage always brings regret.

But not everyone in the crowd gave in. A few people resisted. They looked beyond the emotion of the moment. They refused to listen to the lies shouted in anger. They didn't join the crowd. They didn't jump on the bandwagon.

Throughout the Bible—especially in Proverbs—we're told to guard our hearts and our words. On that day, it seems the world ignored those warnings. In doing so, it fulfilled prophecy about how humanity would treat the Lord.

It's easy to say I wouldn't have been part of that crowd. But then I remember Jesus' words: "Whatever you did for one of the least of these, you did for me," and "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Maybe I'm not as righteous as I think. It looks like the Lord still has a lot of work to do in this guy.

Jesus Before Pilate

1 Then the whole assembly rose and led him off to Pilate. 2 And they began to accuse him, saying, "We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes

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to Caesar and claims to be Messiah, a king." 3 So Pilate asked Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews?" "You have said so," Jesus replied.

4 Then Pilate announced to the chief priests and the crowd, "I find no basis for a charge against this man." 5 But they insisted, "He stirs up the people all over Judea by his teaching. He started in Galilee and has come all the way here."

6 On hearing this, Pilate asked if the man was a Galilean. 7 When he learned that Jesus was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time. *[Pilate was a harsh man, but not a stupid man. He knew the Jewish leaders were trying to manipulate him. So, instead of taking a true stand of "no fault" he diverted the decision to another – Herod. Hoping to avoid a social uprising.]*

Jesus Before Herod

8 When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform a sign of some sort. 9 He plied him with many questions, but Jesus gave him no answer. 10 The chief priests and the teachers of the law were standing there, vehemently accusing him. 11 Then Herod and his soldiers ridiculed and mocked him. Dressing him in an elegant robe, they sent him back to Pilate. 12 That day Herod and Pilate became friends--before this they had been enemies.

13 Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, 14 and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him. 15 Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death. 16 Therefore, I will punish him and then release him." 17 [NKJV] (for it was necessary for him to release one to them at the feast).

18 But the whole crowd shouted, "Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!" 19 (Barabbas had been thrown into prison for an insurrection in the city, and for murder.) 20 Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again. 21 But they kept shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" 22 For the third time he spoke to them: "Why? What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore I will have him punished *[chastise with blows, harsh discipline, scourge with a whip]* and then release him."

23 But with loud shouts they insistently demanded that he be crucified, and their shouts prevailed. 24 So Pilate decided to grant their demand. 25 He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, the one they asked for, and

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surrendered [to deliver, give over, give into, allow access treacherously. The same word used in Judas' betrayal]] Jesus to their will.

The Crucifixion of Our Lord

26 As the soldiers led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus. 27 A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him.

28 Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. 29 For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' 30 Then 'they will say to the mountains, 'Fall on us!' and to the hills, 'Cover us!' ' 31 For if people do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

32 Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. 33 When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals-- one on his right, the other on his left. 34 Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

35 The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is God's Messiah, the Chosen One." 36 The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar 37 and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself." 38 There was a written notice above him, which read: this is the king of the jews.

39 One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" 40 But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? 41 We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." 42 Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

43 Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

The Death of Our Savior

44 It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, 45 for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. 46 Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last.

47 The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man." 48 When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what

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took place, they beat their breasts and went away. 49 But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

The Burial of Jesus

50 Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man, 51 who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea, and he himself was waiting for the kingdom of God. 52 Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body. 53 Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid. 54 It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin.

55 The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. 56 Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.

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Chapter 24

My wife and I enjoy watching crime dramas—everything from *Law and Order* to those complex “whodunnit” mystery movies. I’ve always been fascinated by the justice system, from the early stages of a police investigation all the way to the courtroom trial. Ideally, the story ends with a satisfying verdict and justice served, though it’s not always the outcome I would personally prefer.

Over the years, I’ve been involved in a few trials—both civil and criminal—as a police officer and as a private citizen. The courtroom process, especially testifying, is unlike anything else.

When someone is called to the witness stand, they’re there to speak about what they personally saw, heard, or experienced. A witness isn’t supposed to argue a case or push an opinion. They’re simply there to share their firsthand experience.

As I read the final chapter of Luke recently, I was struck by how rich it is in spiritual truth. It beautifully tells the story of the victory we have through faith in Jesus. But this time, something specific stood out to me—two powerful moments of witnessing.

First, in verse 27, Jesus reveals the mysteries of the Prophets to His companions. He testifies directly to them, opening up the meaning of the Old Testament. And who better to do that than the Author Himself?

Then, in verse 48, Jesus makes a direct statement to all Believers: “**You are my witnesses.**” This is our calling. No matter who we are or where we are in life, Jesus wants us to share our personal experiences with others. He’s not calling all of us to be theologians or expert debaters. He’s asking us to be honest witnesses—to speak about what He has done in our lives.

God wants to connect with all people from all walks of life. Everything we go through, especially the hard times, is to be used to encourage someone else. Those experiences are not meant to break us down, but rather to build others up. So if you’re in a difficult season, don’t think God has forgotten you. He is using you—to be a strong, authentic witness who can share with someone who needs to hear it. For we know everything here and now is simply temporary. We know all pain will depart, and that eternal joy is ahead. We are to be God’s “bright side” to the world because of what Jesus did for us. So let your witness shine!

Jesus Has Risen

1 On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. [*This is why Sunday became the common day*

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of Christian Worship as opposed to the Sabbath, or Saturday.] 2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. [The stone was not rolled away to let Jesus out, for in the gospel of John we see that he was able to walk through barriers. The stone was rolled away to show others he had risen.] 4 While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. 5 In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? 6 He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 7 'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.' " 8 Then they remembered his words. [How many promises of God do we forget to remember when we are in a state of grief and stress?]

9 When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. 10 It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. 11 But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. [*Greek: leros, meaning utter nonsense, a fairy tale, too incredible to believe.*] 12 Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

On the Road to Emmaus

13 Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. 14 They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. 15 As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; 16 but they were kept from recognizing him.

17 He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast. 18 One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

19 "What things?" he asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. 20 The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; 21 but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. 22 In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning 23 but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. 24 Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus."

Journey through Exodus, Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke

25 He said to them, "How foolish [*unwise, unknowing, ignorant, lacking intelligence*] you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained [literally, unfolded the meaning, expounded, translated for clear understanding] to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

28 As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. 29 But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. 32 They asked each other, "Was not our heart [*singular*] not burning within us [*plural*] while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" [*Implying a singleness of purpose, a unity of spirit*]

33 They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together 34 and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." 35 Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

Jesus Appears to the Disciples

36 While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." 37 They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. 38 He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? 39 Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."

40 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. 41 And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" [*Ghosts do not eat. But only true flesh and blood. Jesus wanted to show them he was real, not spirit.*] 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate it in their presence.

44 He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. [This is the same thing that occurs with us once we believe in him and start reading God's Word. He opens up our understanding. That is why many unbelievers see God's Word as

GOSPEL OF LUKE

something foolish and complicated. They wear dark glasses that cannot see or understand.] 46 He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

The Ascension of Jesus

50 When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. 51 While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. 52 Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. 53 And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.