

BIBLE STUDY

2023 THEME

KINGDOM CITIZENS PREPARING MIND, BODY
AND SPIRIT FOR POST PANDEMIC LIVING

OCTOBER

KINGDOM CITIZENS
CULTIVATING DYNAMIC
GROWTH BY PRACTICING
SOUND PRINCIPLES OF
STEWARDSHIP



WORDS / PHRASES:

Stewardship, Trust, Caretaker,
Responsibility

October 1 – God’s Stewardship
Command to Adam (Genesis 2:15)

October 8 - The Good and Faithful
Steward (Matthew 25:14-29)

October 15 – Becoming a Trusted
Steward (Luke 16:10-13)

October 22 – A Clean Hand and a
Pure Heart (Psalm 24:1-6)

October 29 – Avoid Idleness (2
Thessalonians 3:6-10)

Hymn - Keep Me Every Day

NOVEMBER

KINGDOM CITIZENS
STRENGTHENING MIND,
BODY AND SPIRIT BY
CULTIVATING AN
ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE



WORDS/PHRASES: Grateful
Attitude, Blessings, Thanksgiving

November 5 – Giving Thanks in
the Midst of the Storm (Acts 27:33
-38)

November 12 – Giving Thanks
When the World Is Against You
(Daniel 6:10-13)

November 19 – Gratitude for
Healing: Where Are the Nine?
(Luke 17:11-17)

November 26 - Giving Thanks for
All my Blessings (I Chronicles
29:11-14)

Hymn - We Gather Together

DECEMBER

KINGDOM CITIZENS PREPARING
BODY, MIND AND SPIRIT –
HONORING GOD BY CELEBRATING
THE BLESSINGS OF
ANOTHER YEAR



WORDS/PHRASES: Faith,
Testimony, Honor God,
Behavior

December 3 – Faith to Live By
(Hebrews 11:1-6)

December 10 – Shunning Evil and
Seeking Peace (I Peter
3:8-12)

December 17 – Wise Men Still
Seek Him (Matthew 2:1-6)

December 24 – (CHRISTMAS)
When I see the Star – Joy!!
(Matthew 2:7-10)

Hymn - Jesus the Light of the
World / The First Noel

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be
ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

II Timothy 2:15

KINGDOM CITIZENS PREPARING MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT FOR POST PANDEMIC LIVING

OCTOBER EMPHASIS: KINGDOM CITIZENS CULTIVATING DYNAMIC GROWTH BY PRACTICING SOUND PRINCIPLES OF STEWARDSHIP

THOUGHT: As Kingdom Citizens, we are tasked with the responsibility of being caretakers of God's world. We must learn to apply sound biblical principles to develop mind, body and spirit for post-pandemic living.

WORDS/PHRASES: Stewardship, Trust, Caretaker, Responsibility

LESSON FORTY: GOD'S STEWARDSHIP COMMAND TO ADAM

Questions to Consider:

1. Genesis chapters 1 and 2 tell us that God created the heavens, the earth and everything in it, as well as the human race. What are some of the explanations or theories that you have heard about the creation and evolution of the heavens, earth, and mankind?
2. What areas of your life do you need to "till" more often in order to be fruitful?
3. What evidence can you present to show what God has given to you? Have you taken care of it, made it better or multiplied it?

GENESIS 2:15

HEART OF THE LESSON: STEWARDSHIP IS NOT OWNERSHIP BECAUSE EVERYTHING BELONGS TO GOD.

INTRODUCTION: Genesis chapters 1:1-25, 29-31 and 2:4-6, 8-14 give the account of how the heavens and the earth came into existence. In creation, God spoke everything into existence except man – His "Crowning Glory". God created man in His own image, His breathed into him, and gave him dominion over the earth and all of its inhabitance. (Gen.1:26-30, 2:7, 19) In Genesis 2:15, after all of creation was completed, God **put** the man whom He had created in the Garden of Eden. He commissioned him with a command similar to the one which He would later give to Noah after the flood. (Gen. 9:1, 9) Both Adam and Noah were given "dominion" but never "ownership" over God's creation.

1. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT WE ARE STEWARDS, NOT OWNERS, OF GOD'S CREATIONS.

Scriptures tell us that "**The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, and all who dwell within it.**" (Ps. 24) Everything belongs to God. Adam did not create nor did he bring anything into the Garden, not even himself; he was **placed**.

Everything that Adam needed was provided for him, even that which he didn't know that he needed or wanted – a wife (Eve) for his enjoyment and to share in the enjoyments. Adam was given dominion, work, and a limit, "**Don't eat from**". (Gen. 2:17)

Knowing that the earth belongs to God and not to us should bring joy and great relief to each of us. When something belongs to you, you are in charge of it; you do with it as you please, and it will also be your responsibility to fix it when something goes wrong with it. We do not possess the wisdom, knowledge, time, or strength to fix the mountains, push back the seas, know the name of every star and re-hang them if they fall, or fix and bring back to life that which has died. But God can, and He does.

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS UNDERSTAND THAT GOD HAS A PURPOSE FOR ALL OF HIS CREATIONS AND A GREAT WORK FOR EVERY PERSON

We were created for a purpose. God did not put Adam in the Garden just to rest and enjoy creation but also to work. **“The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.” (Gen. 2:15)** This was a purposeful and gracious act of God. Adam was to “keep” not “have” the Garden. Adam was to “work” at keeping it in submission to himself and himself in submission to God. As he was given “dominion” over everything in the Garden, he was to remember that God was in “dominion” over him. As earth was to be obedient to Adam, Adam was to be obedient to God.

Adam’s work in the Garden of Eden was to till it and keep it. Both of these words indicate work. “Till” means to “cultivate”. One cultivates or tills the soil in order to produce a greater yield. *“Keep” means to “guard,” “preserve,” “be faithful to,” and “maintain.”*

God could have created the Garden so that it would never need additional work, but Gen. 2:15 shows us that God had a plan for Adam to work, even before the “curse”. The command to work and increase applies not only to our physical entrustments, but also to our spiritual resources, influences and environments. Three examples of this are: (1) We are saved by God’s grace; however, we are commanded not only to remain saved, but also to add “growth” and “knowledge” to the grace which has been given to us. **“Grow in grace and knowledge” (2 Peter 3:18)**; (2) It is not enough for us to become disciples of Jesus. We have been commanded to make other disciples. **“Go into the world and make disciples...” (Matt. 28:20)**; (3) It was not enough for Peter to be protected and saved. Jesus said to Peter, **“Peter when you have been converted, go save your brothers...” (Luke 22:31–32)** God expects us to work, increase and make better the things that He gives us, as indicated in **(Genesis 9:1, 9)**. **“Then God blessed Noah..., saying, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth...multiply on the earth and increase upon it.’”**

3. KINGDOM CITIZENS UNDERSTAND THEY ARE THE “CROWNING GLORY” OF GOD’S CREATION. (Psalm 8:3-6)

We can’t comprehend God’s love for us. We don’t know why God created us and esteemed us above all of His creations. We can only know and be grateful that we were created in the image of God and were Crowned with Glory above all of His other creations. **(Psalm 8:3-6)** The lyrics of a song say, **“I don’t know why Jesus loves me, I don’t know why He even cares, I don’t know why Jesus sacrificed His life, but I am so glad, so glad that He did.”** Even the psalmist was perplexed and amazed at how God loved and esteemed mankind. **“When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor. You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet...” (Psalm 8:3-6)** Another songwriter, concluded: **“We will understand it better by and by.”**

KINGDOM CITIZENS PREPARING MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT FOR POST PANDEMIC LIVING

OCTOBER EMPHASIS: KINGDOM CITIZENS CULTIVATING DYNAMIC GROWTH BY PRACTICING SOUND PRINCIPLES OF STEWARDSHIP

THOUGHT: As Kingdom Citizens, we are tasked with the responsibility of being caretakers of God's world. We must learn to apply sound biblical principles to develop mind, body and spirit for post-pandemic living.

WORDS/PHRASES: Stewardship, Trust, Caretaker, Responsibility

LESSON FORTY-ONE: THE GOOD AND FAITHFUL STEWARD

Questions to Consider:

1. Name some valuables that you have trusted others with only to later realize that your valuables were not valuable to them as evident by them not cherishing, preserving or taking care of them but rather making them worse.
2. What are some of the excuses that people use for not being productive or not using all that God has entrusted them with?
3. What do you think might have been the results if the third servant in this parable would have confessed, repented and asked the master for forgiveness?

TEXT: MATTHEW 25: 14-29

HEART OF THE LESSON: JESUS IS COMING BACK, AND HIS REWARD IS WITH HIM (Rev. 22:12)

INTRODUCTION: During His ministry, Jesus used parables to teach people lessons or introduce them to the kingdom of God. They are basically stories about real-life scenarios that contain a hidden spiritual message. One such story is the parable of the bags of gold. The importance of the parable of the bags of gold is emphasized by Jesus telling it twice. The first time publicly in Luke 19:11-27 and the second time, privately to his disciples in Matt. 25:14-40. Although there are several differences and similarities between the parables as told in Luke and Matthew, they both do three things: give a description as to what should be our attitudes and behaviors as we await Jesus' second coming; inform us that each of us will have to give an account of our stewardship; and provide us with a record of Jesus' responses to the stewardship of three of His servants.

1. EVERY KINGDOM CITIZEN MUST BE ABLE TO COMPREHEND THE MEANING AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PARABLE OF THE BAGS OF GOLD IN ORDER TO NOT BECOME AS THE THIRD SERVANT.

In the Matt. 25:14-29, the master represents Jesus, and the servants represent us. The man going on a journey is an allusion to Jesus' impending return to His Father in heaven. "... it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted His wealth to them." (V 14) His return refers to His second coming. "After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them."

(V 19) The master asking His servants about what became of the wealth that He left and entrusted each of them with is Jesus telling us that when He returns, we will all have to give an account for our stewardship – money, skills, relationships, time, families, friends, and opportunities.

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS UNDERSTAND THAT GOD IS A GOD OF DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY.

A man entrusted and distributed His wealth among His servants and then went away on a journey. **“To one He gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag”.** **(V 15)** We were all created equal in the sight of God as far as salvation and His love for us **(John 3:16)**, but when it comes to the distribution of talents, gifts, abilities and responsibilities, we are not all equal. We are not all entrusted with the same things nor equal amounts of them. While the number of bags of gold the master gave to each servant might seem unfair, it was not; each servant was given **“according to his ability”.** **(V15)** God measures and rewards success by the degree of effort we put forth. Each servant had the same opportunity and had to put forth the same amount of effort to double what he was given.

After a very long time, the master returned and checked on the stewardship of His servants. Each of the servants came forth and gave an account as to what he had done with the master’s wealth. The first two servants invested and doubled their master’s wealth, but the third servant did not. It’s revealed that he had not even attempted to do anything with what was entrusted, except dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s gold. **(VV 18-22)** When questioned, instead of accepting responsibility, he blamed the master for being a hard man and fear as his excuse for lack of action and productivity. **“Master, I knew that you are a hard man...,so I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground...”** **“His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant... if you were so afraid...then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.’”** The master said, **“So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags.”** **(VV 24-28)** Without an in-depth focus, some people may read the parable of the bags of gold and think that the master was being too harsh on the servant who didn’t produce returns. The real problem, as identified by Jesus, was the servant’s character: lazy and wicked. Most people rarely view laziness as a real sin, but it is and must be repented of before the Lord.

3. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT GOD IS CONCERNED WITH BOTH OUR CHARACTER AND PERFORMANCE.

Whether you use your talents well or not is not a salvation issue. It’s a stewardship issue. The lazy servant’s problem was not that he buried the bags of gold. Burying the bags of gold was just a byproduct of his work ethics and character: **“lazy” and “wicked”**. The rewards of such are **rebuke** (**“You wicked, lazy servant”**) and **loss** (**“take the bag of gold from him”**). Both the first and second servant received the rewards of praises for their work (**“Well done”**); and character (**“good and faithful servant”**); promoted and elevated (**“put in charge of more things”**); and received an esteemed invitation (**“Come and share your master’s happiness”**). **(VV 21-24)** It should be noted that included in the rewards for good and faithful service is not rest, but *more service. To know that we have pleased and found favor with God makes getting more work to do entirely pleasing to servants of God. “Well done, good and faithful servant” shows that the master looks for goodness and faithfulness in each of us as His servants.*

KINGDOM CITIZENS PREPARING MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT FOR POST PANDEMIC LIVING

OCTOBER EMPHASIS: KINGDOM CITIZENS CULTIVATING DYNAMIC GROWTH BY PRACTICING SOUND PRINCIPLES OF STEWARDSHIP

THOUGHT: As Kingdom Citizens, we are tasked with the responsibility of being caretakers of God's world. We must learn to apply sound biblical principles to develop mind, body and spirit for post-pandemic living.

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LESSON FORTY-TWO: BECOMING A TRUSTED STEWARD

Questions to Consider:

1. Give examples of how your money and your actions demonstrate an eternal perspective.
2. What gospel ministries, missionary efforts, charitable organizations, or people are you investing in financially to help win people to Christ?.
3. How might you creatively use your skills, money, or time to honor God and bless others?

TEXT: LUKE 16: 10-16

HEART OF THE LESSON: HAVING ONE MASTER AND WORTHY TO BE TRUSTED WITH RICHES

INTRODUCTION: Luke 16:10-13 is the continuation and conclusion of Jesus' conversation and response to the parable of the Unjust Steward. **(Luke 16:1-9)** The unjust steward was unfaithful and had wasted his master's wealth. He was called into account by the master. He realized that after he had given an account to the master, he would then lose his position and the job. Therefore, he devised a plan to protect himself from having to live without the extravagant lifestyle that he had become so accustomed to. Jesus commended the unjust servant for being shrewd, but then explained that though he had been dishonest and shrewd, he still lost; he had given up the eternal for the temporal. **"What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose his own soul?" (Luke 9:25)**

This parable is given for the benefit of the disciples, but is also directed toward the Pharisees who, **"...justify themselves before men..."** and while listening, **"...were disturbed by it..."**, as is evident in Luke 16: 14.

1. KINGDOM CITIZENS SEEK TO LEARN AND UNDERSTAND WHAT GOD'S WORD SAYS ABOUT EVERY SUBJECT AND IN EVERY AREA OF THEIR LIVES. The Holy Scriptures address and give answers and guidance to every possible situation that may occur in our lives or may concern us. One subject that people avoid because they do not view it as a spiritual matter is money. Kingdom Citizens, however, do not shy away from the discussion of money, but they seek to know what the Scriptures say to them about it. Most of the parables told by Jesus deal with money, wealth, or stewardship in some way.

It should not be surprising that money has a dominant role in the teaching of Jesus, since it has such a dominant role in our lives.

We spend more of our waking time thinking about money than not thinking about money, how to acquire it, how to spend it, how to save it, or how to borrow it. Possession of wealth is a gift from God given to us as a stewardship **“...remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth...” (Deut.8:18)** Though money is a necessity for us, we know that there are greater treasures more precious than money. Therefore, we do not put our faith and trust in earthly wealth, but **“Seek first the Kingdom of God...” (Matt. 6:33)** Wealth is not inherently evil, but the riches of this world are deceitful and uncertain, and the love of money corrupts and often lead people to commit unrighteous acts. **(1Tim. 6:10)** True riches are spiritual and eternal blessings.

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT CIRCUMSTANCES DO NOT DETERMINE FAITHFULNESS.

" He who is unrighteous in a ...little... is unrighteous in much." (V 10) This statement debunks the idea that “If I had more time, money, influence or was richer, I would do more”. In essence, you wouldn’t. Money is a test and a testament –a test of your attitude toward others, and a testament of your faithfulness in using what is rightfully God's for His glory and honor. It doesn't matter how much you have, your character and what you value; no circumstances determine and affect your faithfulness, integrity and perspective. The widow who had only two mites gave everything. There are many people who have everything but will only give very little or nothing. **(Mark 12:41-44)** "If you haven't been faithful in the use of that which isn't even yours, **then you can't** be trusted with much”. **(V 12)** Who then "will trust you with the truth of the Gospel, called a treasure in earthen vessels?" **(2 Cor. 4:7)** This principle can be applied in many ways beyond money, for instance with bosses and employees, or even in relationships. If someone you are dating treats you poorly or lies to you, you can be sure that they will do so once you are married. If you can't be trusted as a follower or a subordinate, who should trust you to be a leader, or a boss, or owners?

3. KINGDOM CITIZENS LOVE, SERVE, AND ARE DEVOTED TO ONE MASTER. (V 13)

“No servant can serve two masters.” This statement is almost an exact duplicate of Matthew 6:24, **“No slave can serve two masters.”** The key words in both gospel verses are **“serve”** and **“master”** which infer **“bond-slavery.”** Servitude consumes the total life of a person. It is not an occasional act of obedience; a part-time job; or a “Sundays-at-church” type of behavior. Full-time service is the role and essence of a servant or slave. A bond-slave or servant is the property of a master who has singular and absolute control over that slave, and that slave could never have that relationship with somebody else. The slave is like a tool for his master's use. He has no time that is his own; he has no possession that is not his master’s; and he has no movement in life that is not subject to his master. This singularity of purpose and duty is what is required of us once we commit ourselves and accept God as our master. **“You can't serve God and money. ...you will hate the one and love the other or... hold to one and despise the other.” (V 13)** We should love God, hold on to Him, and hate and despise anything that is another master competing with God. It has been said, that **“Where riches hold the dominion of the heart, God has lost His authority.”** Choosing to honor God with our money is to say earthly wealth is not our master. If God is our Master, then our wealth will be at His disposal.

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LESSON FORTY-THREE: A CLEAN HAND AND A PURE HEART

Questions to Consider:

1. If you found out that on tomorrow you were going to die and had to stand before God, what are some of the things that you know that you would need to do in order to make sure that you had "clean hands" and a "pure heart"?
2. What are your favorite songs of praises to God? Why?
3. If you were composing a song of praise to God, what would some of the lyrics be? Why?

TEXT: PSALM 24: 1-6

HEART OF THE LESSON: MAKING PREPARATIONS TO STAND BEFORE GOD

INTRODUCTION: Psalm 24 has traditionally been associated with David's relocation of the Ark of the Covenant, from the House of Obed-Edom to Mount Zion (**2 Sam. 6**). A procession would have accompanied the Ark with singing and music (**1 Chron. 15:2-28**). Psalms were composed for a choir whereby a leader would ask questions and then the people at worship would sing the chorus as noted in Psalm 24. In this Psalm, David declares the sovereignty and supremacy of God and His role as Creator, owner and sustainer of everything. He points out the need for worshippers of God to be sincere, truthful, and righteous.

1. KINGDOM CITIZENS FIND GREAT COMFORT AND JOY IN KNOWING THAT EVERYTHING BELONGS TO AND IS SUSTAINED BY GOD.

The declarations that David made in Psalm 24 should bring great joy, comfort and assurance to every living person on earth. **"The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it..." (V 1)** The peace and assurance which comes from this verse alone bring great revelations and hope to us for several reasons which are: (1) There are no peoples upon the earth who do not belong to God and who are not accountable to Him for their deeds; God is the God of all mankind. (2) Since everyone who lives on earth belongs to God, then God is not only God of the Jews (as many Jews believed during David's time), but He is also God of the Gentiles, as well as those who don't know Him, have a personal relationship with him, or claim allegiance to Him. Yet, God still loves and provides for them as He patiently waits for them to accept His Son (Jesus) and be saved.

“For He makes His sun to shine on bad and good people alike, and gives rain to those who do good and to those who do evil...” (Matt. 5:45); (3) Since all parts and regions of the earth belongs to the Lord, wherever a child of God goes, he may comfort himself with this, that he does not go off his Father's ground. **“If I go up to heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there...” (Ps 139:8); (4)** Because everything and everyone belongs to God, we can be assured that what God has given to others, He still will always have enough for us. His resources are unlimited; and **(5)** Verse 2 says, **“... for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters.”** This should remind us how slippery and uncertain all earthly things are; their foundation is not only sand, but water; therefore, we should never put our faith and trust in anything that is on or in the earth except the solid Rock which is Jesus. The songwriter says, “All other ground is sinking sand.”

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT, BY OURSELVES, WE ARE NOT WORTHY TO COME INTO THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

After considering God’s sovereign ownership of the earth, His majesty, power, strength, and holiness, David asked the questions: **(1) “Who may ascend to the mountain of the LORD?” (2) “Who may stand in His holy place?” (V 3)** This is a question that used to concern people much more than it does today. Scriptures tell us that we need to examine ourselves and our worthiness to stand in the presence of a Holy God. Everyone can’t. The Scriptures tell us that there have been many who pondered this same question. **(Micah 6:6)** When the prophet Isaiah acknowledged his unworthiness to come before God in His holy temple, he said, **“Woe is me...I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.” (Isa. 6:5)** We must remember that God does not accept everything brought into His temple or everyone every time. **(Amos 5:21-23, Isa. 1:11-15)** Only the righteous **“who have clean hands and a pure heart, who do not trust in an idol or swear by a false god”** can properly worship the Lord in His house. **(V 4) “Clean hands”** refer to our actions, and **“pure heart”** refers to our intentions. It is very easy to make promises with a little bit of hidden deceit. Trying to meet the qualifications of being able to stand in God’s presence and His holy temple may cause us to despair because our hands are not always clean, and our heart is not always pure. Therefore, we may feel that we are doomed, unfit and will never be able to stand before God. However, God in His mercy and perfect love for us has made it possible for us to do so through the person and work of Jesus. Jesus has clean hands and a pure heart, and He has never lifted up his soul to an idol or sworn deceitfully. Because His righteousness has been given to all who believe **(Rom. 3:22)**, we can stand before God in His holy temple.

3. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT IF WE LIVE ACCORDING TO GOD’S WORD, HE WILL BLESS AND DELIVER US.

Psalm 24:5–6 tell us if we live righteous lives, we **“...will receive blessings from the LORD and vindication from God...”**. Vindicate means to “clear of suspicion, accusation, or doubt.” **“...God will vindicate you. If you will take a stand for what is right, and obey His voice, your day of vindication will come”**. **“Such is the generation of those who seek Him...” (V 6)**

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LESSON FORTY-FOUR: AVOID IDLENESS

Questions to Consider:

1. How is 2 Thess. 3:10 not a contradiction of Matt. 25:42-46, or Romans 12:20-21? "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; thirsty, give him something to drink..."
2. Are Kingdom Citizens obligated to give to all those who ask? Consider the Ten Virgins with their lamps of oil waiting for the Bridegroom.
3. What should be our criterion for determining what, when, how much and to whom should you give?
4. Discuss a time when you felt it was necessary for you to separate yourself from a situation or a person. What were the results? Was restoration ever made?

TEXT: 2 THESSALONIANS 3: 6-10

HEART OF THE LESSON: USING "TOUGH LOVE" TO PROMOTE GOOD WORK ETHICS AND RIGHTEOUS STEWARDSHIP

INTRODUCTION: In 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 and 5:14, Apostle Paul had instructed the church of Thessalonica to warn those who were becoming a burden on other believers – not keeping up their obligations and responsibilities. When the problem persisted, the Apostle Paul, in 2 Thess. 3:6-13 addressed the problem again. This time, he commanded the church to use "tough love" and a more direct and personal approach of discipline to solve the problems of disorderly and unruly people. The apostle offered and recommended his own behavior to be used as a model for the members of the church to follow. **(2 Thess. 3:6-15)**

1. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT IDLENESS AND DISORDER MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO THRIVE AMONG BELIEVERS.

It should be noted that in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-10, Apostle Paul was not addressing non-believers, but with power and authority, he was addressing those who were in the church and part of the believers. **"We command you "brothers..."**. The strength and authority of this statement are in the fact that the command made is **"...in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ"**. **(V 6)** **"We hear that some among you are idle (refusing to work) and disruptive. They are not busy (*working*); they are busybodies."**

(V 11) *It was not only because of the work that the idle and disruptive believers of the church **didn't** do, but also because of the harm they did do with their idle time. They constantly meddled in other people's business causing trouble and discord among other believers who worked. Their disorder and idleness became a source of sin because they intruded into the lives of other believers and took advantage of their Christian generosity, depending on others in the church for their support. Therefore, when the Apostle Paul heard that some among the brethren were busybodies, disorderly and not working at all to advance the church or to provide for their own needs and the needs of the their families, he addressed and identified the problem as being one of idleness; therefore, he commanded the church to use more direct and personal approaches of discipline to solve such problems rather than just give them a warning as he had recommended them to do earlier in 1 Thess. 4:11-12.*

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS LIVE A LIFE WORTHY TO BE IMITATED.

Our lives should be one which reflects integrity, purpose, purity, and a willingness to take responsibility for providing for ourselves and our own families. When addressing the problem of idleness among some of the Thessalonian believers, the Apostle instructed the church to use him and his testimony as an example and a model for how believers should live and behave. **"We were not idle... we worked night and day, so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this... in order to offer ourselves as a model for you to imitate."** **(VV 7-9)** Apostle Paul's selfless work ethics insured that he nor his companions could **"truthfully"** be accused of preaching the Gospel for personal gain.

3. KINGDOM CHURCHES SHOULD HAVE PLANS AND POLICIES FOR DEALING WITH IDLENESS AND DISORDER IN THE CHURCH.

It is crucial that every church has plans and policies so that whenever it becomes (and it will become) necessary for the church to discipline the disorderly and the unruly among the believers, it can be done fairly, and without chaos and confusion. When the problems of disorder became a persistent and recurring problem in the Thessalonian Churches, Apostle Paul gave them a plan with strategies on how to handle and discipline disorder among believers and the purpose for doing so. Among the strategies and purposes for correcting the disorderly and bringing about repentance given by the Apostle Paul are: **(1) Warn the idle and disorderly. "...do not regard them as an enemy, but warn him as a brother". (V 15)** Then, if the problem still persists, then use **"tough love"** and take a more direct and personal approach. **(2) "... keep away...Do not associate with them..." (V 6) Put them out of the church. (1 Corin. 5:13)** Withdraw fellowship, but not love from them. The purpose of withdrawing from the disobedient was not so much as punishment or to condemn them, but so **"that they may feel ashamed". (V 14)** For those who do not repent or conform, but continue to be disorderly and will not work, an even more direct and personal approach is commanded by Apostle Paul: **"The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat."** **(V 10)** This is not a condemnation against everyone who is not working. **"No work, no eat"** does not mean **"no mercy and no restoration"**. The key word in this command is **"unwilling"** to work. We must always have compassion on and provide for those who are sick, aged, handicapped, and those who can't find work, but are **willing** to work, and will not be busybodies while they are not working. As with strategy number 2, this strategy, **"No work, no eat"** is not intended as punishment, but as an encouragement to the believers who are productive. They are to continue to be disciplined and to **"...never get tired of doing what is good."** **(2 Thess. 3:13)** To the disorderly and idle ones, it was to serve as an encouragement and an incentive to become fruitful, fair, and disciplined.

KINGDOM CITIZENS PREPARING MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT FOR POST PANDEMIC LIVING

NOVEMBER EMPHASIS: KINGDOM CITIZENS STRENGTHENING MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT BY CULTIVATING AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

THOUGHT: Kingdom Citizens must understand that God is pleased by our appreciation of the blessings He bestows every day. We must never take our blessings for granted and must constantly cultivate a mindset of Thanksgiving.

KEY WORDS/PHRASES: Grateful, Attitude, Blessings, Thanksgiving

LESSON FORTY-FIVE: ACKNOWLEDGING GOD'S PROTECTION IN THE STORM

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. Share a special time when God's protection was evident in your life?
2. What are the characteristics of a thankful person?
3. What are some things an ungrateful heart reveals?

TEXT: Acts 27:33-38

THE HEART OF THE LESSON: GOD IS GREATER THAN THE STORM

INTRODUCTION: Life is filled with challenges, and in the western hemisphere, we have seen a plethora of storms. You may have had the experience of being on a cruise ship when a hurricane was headed in your direction, or on a fishing boat when a storm came up all of a sudden. Storms take on many different shapes and forms. Webster defines a storm as **a violent disturbance of the atmosphere with strong winds and usually rain, thunder, lightning, or snow**. For some, you may be experiencing a financial storm currently, while others are in a relational one. Regardless of the storm or its magnitude, **GOD IS GREATER THAN YOUR STORM**. **What are some things that are important to remember in a storm?**

1. KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST TRUST GOD WITH THE UNKNOWN. (VV 33-34)

Paul and his companion were on the ship with a group of 276 individuals. They are on their way to Rome; however, they run into a horrible storm. Let's look at some of his instructions to the men on the ship: **Just before dawn Paul urged them all to eat. "For the last fourteen days," he said, "you have been in constant suspense and have gone without food—you haven't eaten anything. Now I urge you to take some food. You need it to survive. Not one of you will lose a single hair from his head."** (VV33-34). Paul had walked with God through many ups and downs; he understood God's determined purpose for his life; therefore, he was confident of what the angel of the Lord had said to him (V 23). Having trusted Christ since the day of his salvation, Paul could speak boldly and confidently of God's faithfulness. The faith that helps us trust God during the unknown seasons of life is developed through a day by day walk in His presence .

Are you walking through an unknown season? What challenges have you encountered? What blessings have you experienced? Proverbs 3:5-6 reminds us, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.”

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS THANK GOD FOR COMFORT IN THE MIDST OF THEIR STORMS. (VV 35-36)

Paul’s blessing of the bread and eating reminds me of the Last Supper Jesus shared with his disciples. Listen to the text: **After he said this, he took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all. Then he broke it and began to eat. They were all encouraged and ate some food themselves.** Thanksgiving should be a natural part of the life of every Christian. **What are the occasions when you offer thanks?** We need to have the faith and grateful heart Ruthie and Bubba had. This sister and brother were members of our church. Throughout life they had some challenges and often needed the assistance of family and friends, but what they did not need help with was a spirit of thanksgiving. Though not wealthy and never worked as professionals in our world, they both possessed a heart of thanksgiving. They both experienced storms in their lives, but as the Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir sang, “I never lost my praise.” Ruthie and Bubba were grateful for the smallest kindnesses. The great Apostle Paul was in a battle for his life and the life of his traveling companion, yet he paused and thanked God for the meal. **What small blessing are you experiencing at this moment that you need to pause and thank God for? What storm has God brought you through for which you need to give a testimony? Psalm 118:1** says, **Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.**

3. IN ORDER TO MAKE IT THROUGH THE STORM, KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST OBEY TO THE WORD OF GOD. (VV 37-38)

The word the angel gave to Paul was **“not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed.”** Paul believed the word of the Lord and acted on it. **“Altogether there were 276 of us on board. When they had eaten as much as they wanted, they lightened the ship by throwing the grain into the sea.”** So we see God at work in the midst of a great storm. As believers, we need to embrace the doctrine of Providence. Gotquestions.com helps us understand this: Divine providence is the governance of God by which He, with wisdom and love, cares for and directs all things in the universe. The doctrine asserts that God is in complete control of all things. He is sovereign over the universe as a whole (Psalm 103:19), the physical world (Matthew 5:45), the affairs of nations (Psalm 66:7), human destiny (Galatians 1:15), human successes and failures (Luke 1:52), and the protection of His people (Psalm 4:8). This doctrine stands in direct opposition to the idea that the universe is governed by chance or fate. **As you move through the storms of life, are you willing to obey the Word of God? What might obeying the Word of God look like in your current storm?** Just a note: EVERYTHING IS HARDER IN A STORM.

KINGDOM CITIZENS PREPARING MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT FOR POST PANDEMIC LIVING

NOVEMBER EMPHASIS: KINGDOM CITIZENS STRENGTHENING MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT BY CULTIVATING AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

THOUGHT: Kingdom Citizens must understand that God is pleased by our appreciation of the blessings He bestows every day. We must never take our blessings for granted and must constantly cultivate a mindset of Thanksgiving.

KEY WORDS/PHRASES: Grateful, Attitude, Blessings, Thanksgiving

LESSON FORTY-SIX: GIVING THANKS WHEN THE WORLD IS AGAINST YOU

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. Share about a time you were ridiculed on your job, in your family and/or in your community because of your faith?
2. What is the toughest spiritual decision you have ever made?
3. What are some of the challenges of standing alone for your faith?

TEXT: Daniel 6:10-13

THE HEART OF THE LESSON: DARE TO BE DIFFERENT: A LESSON IN COURAGE.

INTRODUCTION: As it has been well said, “Sometimes life throws us a curveball.” Others say the same thing, but just a little differently, “When life gives you lemons, learn to make lemonade.” This week our lives intersect the life of the prophet Daniel. He was one of the young exiles taken from Judah by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel was forced to be a resident of Babylon, but he was a citizen of Jerusalem, and more important a child of God. With all the retraining Daniel endured (Daniel 1:3-5), he never forsook his faith nor his God. Because of his dual citizenship, Daniel encountered conflicts in Babylon. Today’s lesson was one such conflict, and yet, Daniel chose to be different.

1. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT CONSISTENCY IS THE KEY TO A FRUITFUL CHRISTIAN LIFE. (VV 10-11)

If we declare that Jesus is Lord, our faith will be put on display. At some point, we will have to give a reason for the hope we have. Listen to the testimony of the men that Daniel worked with, **Finally these men said, “We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God.” (V 5)** Although Daniel was not perfect, he was consistent. The text says, **Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help.** On the day the decree was published, Daniel did what he had always done; he fell on his knees before God.

It takes courage to stand against wickedness and unjust laws. **What is God calling you to stand for or against? Will you obey man or will you obey God?** Whenever we choose to obey God, we must be willing to pay the price. The cost required will not be the same for all of us; nevertheless, it will cost. Consider the apostle Paul in **2 Cor. 11:21-28**.

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST KNOW THAT THE WORLD IS ALWAYS AGAINST THE FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST. (V 12)

The movement to disqualify Daniel grew out of this decision: **It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. The satraps were made accountable to them so that the king might not suffer loss. Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. (6:1-3)** So after catching Daniel in the act of prayer, the conspirators made their move, **“So they went to the king and spoke to him about his royal decree: “Did you not publish a decree that during the next thirty days anyone who prays to any god or human being except to you, Your Majesty, would be thrown into the lions’ den?” The king answered, “The decree stands—in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed.”** In our day, there are laws designed specifically to hinder the progress of God’s Kingdom; therefore, they are designed to hinder each of us who is committed to doing His will. **Where have you seen unjust laws proposed and/or implemented in our society to hinder the work of Kingdom Citizens?**

3. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT SOMETIMES GOD DETERMINES THAT WE GO THROUGH. (VV 13-14)

When we dare to be different, sometimes the Lord delivers us from the consequences, and other times, He walks with us through them. The dye has been cast; the royal officials now stand before the king. **Then they said to the king, “Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, Your Majesty, or to the decree you put in writing. He still prays three times a day.” When the king heard this, he was greatly distressed; he was determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sundown to save him.** The leaders of Babylon have used the law in a very crafty way. The king has been backed into a corner. Now his trusted governor and friend is to receive the punishment he decreed - **“The decree stands—in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed.”** When we step out in faith, God will often position us in such a way that HE is the only one who can deliver us. The text says, **“he (King Darius) was determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sundown to save him.** God had already determined that Daniel would not be delivered by man, but only by GOD Himself. **Have you ever experienced this kind of deliverance? If you have, share your story.**

KINGDOM CITIZENS PREPARING MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT FOR POST PANDEMIC LIVING

NOVEMBER EMPHASIS: KINGDOM CITIZENS STRENGTHENING MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT BY CULTIVATING AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

THOUGHT: Kingdom Citizens must understand that God is pleased by our appreciation of the blessings He bestows every day. We must never take our blessings for granted and must constantly cultivate a mindset of Thanksgiving.

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LESSON FORTY-SEVEN: GRATITUDE FOR HEALING: WHERE ARE THE NINE?

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. Why do we often forget to give thanks to God and to others?
2. Share a time when God healed you.
3. What does a grateful heart do for a person? Complete this statement, Grateful people . . .

TEXT: [Luke 17:11- 17](#)

THE HEART OF THE LESSON: DESPERATE AND ISOLATED

INTRODUCTION: [Luke 17:11–19](#) records an account of ten men who had infectious skin diseases, commonly translated as “leprosy.” In the Israelite community, when a person discovered a rash or skin disorder, he or she had to go to the priest for examination. The priest then determined whether this was a contagious disease and whether the person was to be declared ceremonially unclean (Leviticus 13:1). Jewish law prohibited anyone with such a disease from associating with the general community. They had to be isolated and many times lived as outcasts until they died (Leviticus 13:45–46). This was necessary in order to keep infectious diseases from becoming an epidemic. But, for those afflicted, it could be a life sentence. Gotquestions.com.

1. KINGDOM CITIZENS UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF CALLING ON THE NAME OF JESUS IN TIME OF NEED. (VV 11-13)

As individuals and as families, we all encounter needs from time to time. I have learned that a need in the life of another is different from a need in your own life. I suppose it is natural, but we pray differently for our needs, and the greater the need, the more fervent we pray. For example, if my daughter was in ICU in the local hospital, I might stay up all night praying, but if it is someone else’s child, I might pray multiple times for the child, but probably would not stay up all night. Our Bible lesson today takes us on another one of Jesus’ journeys to Jerusalem, and we encounter ten men who are in desperate need, and each only has a prayer.

The text says, **Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!”** When a person feels hopeless, oftentimes they are willing to try anything. Interestingly, they don't say, “heal us” but “have pity on us.” NIV. NKJV says, “Have mercy on us.” Desperate times do call for desperate measures. Maybe these men heard that Jesus had given sight to the blind or caused a lame man to walk, or about some other miracle He had performed. The text said, **“They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!”** **Has there been a time in your life when you were desperate for a move of God in your life?** If so, please share. Can you think of another Bible story where an individual or family was desperate for God? What did he or she do?

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS UNDERSTAND OUR HEALING IS IN OUR OBEDIENCE. (V 14)

When did you realize God had done a great work on your behalf? I wonder if sometimes we are still praying when God has already answered our prayer. The Scripture says, **“When he saw them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were cleansed.”** These lepers were not healed when they got to the priest; they were healed on the way. I believe we miss many opportunities for thanksgiving and praise each day when we miss what God has already done. When the Lord speaks to us specifically about our condition, we need to obey. God told Abimelech the following: **Now therefore, restore the man's wife; for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you shall live.** God used Abraham who had lied to be a blessing to a heathen ruler. Abraham prayed simply because God said so. **Where is God calling you to obey Him?**

3. KINGDOM CITIZENS UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF TAKING TIME TO SAY “THANK YOU.” (VV 15-17)

Clay Evans said, “As I look back over my life; And I think things over I can truly say that I've been blessed; I've got a testimony.” The Scriptures tell us, **“One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?”** We often say, there is one in every group. May I tell you that this is a good one. **What an example. What can we learn from the one who came back?** When we read a biblical story, we often see ourselves as the hero, the one who did the RIGHT thing. However, take a moment and think over the events of the past week. **How many prayers did the Lord answer for you? How many times did you forget to say “thank you” or had to go back to say “thank you?”** It has been said that “we pray real hard when we have a problem, and praise very little when we receive a blessing.” Does your thanksgiving match your prayer? **Pray hard! Praise hard!**



KINGDOM CITIZENS PREPARING MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT FOR POST PANDEMIC LIVING

NOVEMBER EMPHASIS: KINGDOM CITIZENS STRENGTHENING MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT BY CULTIVATING AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

THOUGHT: Kingdom Citizens must understand that God is pleased by our appreciation of the blessings He bestows every day. We must never take our blessings for granted and must constantly cultivate a mindset of Thanksgiving.

KEY WORDS/PHRASES: Grateful, Attitude, Blessings, Thanksgiving

LESSON FORTY-EIGHT: GIVING THANKS FOR ALL MY BLESSINGS

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. Who taught you to be grateful? What method was used?
2. Enumerate benefits of being thankful.
3. Why do you think the Psalmist wants us to serve with gladness?

TEXT: Psalm 100

THE HEART OF THE LESSON: SONGS OF PRAISE FLOW FROM A GRATEFUL HEART.

INTRODUCTION: What do you count as a blessing? Is money a blessing? Is a new car a blessing? Is being sick a blessing? Is an unruly child a blessing? Our responses are not always the same. Some only see blessings in the good things, while others see blessings in everything. Was it a blessing on September 11, 2001 when Mrs. Smith missed her train to work in one of the twin towers? Our God is a great God, and he has so many ways of blessing us. Andre Crouch said, “Through it all, I’ve learned to trust in Jesus. Through it all, I’ve learned to trust in God.” Our testimony should be, “God is good all the time and all the time, God is good.” We must learn that true praise does not come from the right circumstances but from a righteous heart. Lord, give us a thankful heart. When you think of songs of praise, which one comes to mind? Maybe, *Count Your Many Blessings? He keeps blessing me over and over again*, or your favorite _____.

1. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT PRAISE USHERS US INTO THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD. (VV 1-2)

Have you learned to enter the presence of God alone? Many Christians will say: “I have come to get my praise on.” Do you need a special place to praise the Lord? Do you need a special environment? In verses. 1-2 of this Psalm, the writer exhorts us to do three things: **1. Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. 2. Worship the Lord with gladness; 3. Come before him with joyful songs.**

Each of these is part and parcel of the other. Praise is not an isolated event; It's what we do as followers of Christ. The first admonition is to be loud, **SHOUT for joy to the Lord! Does your worship ever get loud, very demonstrative? If you are a more reserved person, has there ever been a time when you just let loose a LOUD praise?** The second admonition is, **Worship the Lord with gladness.** How would you define this call? I think there is excitement here and joy. This kind of worship flows out of a heart of deep, overwhelming gratitude. The third admonition is **Come before him with joyful songs.** No funeral song, no broken-hearted song, but a JOYFUL one. Music is not necessarily worship alone, but it adds to our worship both private and public.

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THE IMPORTANCE OF AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD. (VV 3-4)

Knowledge of a person helps improve communications with that person. As our knowledge of the Lord grows, then our relationship with Him should improve. The Psalmist continues by saying, **“Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.”** There is so much intimacy in these two verses. God wants us to know Him, not just about him, but know Him. You may say, “I know Steph Curry.” But do you really? Or do you just know his name, his stats and the team he plays for? God speaks to us with terms of endearment. God has a personal interest in each of us and our situations or circumstances. Therefore, we have much to give thanks for and much to praise God for. **As you enter His gates and His courts, what do you have to thank and praise God for today? When you look back over this past year, what is one major thing that stands out - an accident, a new job, a healed relative, cancer free, paid off your house, bought a house, etc??**

3. KINGDOM CITIZENS TESTIFY BY LIFE AND LIVING THAT OUR GOD IS GOOD, LOVING AND FAITHFUL. (V 5)

In life we face many challenges and changes; however, the constant is God - unchanging, omnibenevolent, and all-wise. The Psalmist proclaims, **“For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.”** We sometimes say, “She is a good girl or he is a good boy.” However, Jesus said, “Only God is good.” **How would you explain the goodness of God to a friend or a neighbor?** The Psalmist continues with, **‘his love endures forever.’** The word love evokes so many emotions from the love of a child by a parent, the love of a man for a woman to the love that brothers and sisters share in Christ. Then we say we love Morris College Hornets or the South Carolina State Bulldogs. **When it comes to God's love, what images, thoughts or ideas come to mind?** God's love is truly amazing. We love Him because He first loved us. The last clause of this verse is such a blessing. Every time I read it, my heart leaps for joy - **‘his faithfulness continues through all generations.’** When I look at the world we are living in, it troubles me at times, not so much for me, but for grandchildren. What will it look like when they become adults? Then I read the words, **‘his faithfulness continues through all generations.’** Then I have peace because the same God who kept my grandparents, my parents and me, is the same God who will protect, provide and keep them - HIS FAITHFULNESS continues . .

KINGDOM CITIZENS PREPARING MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT FOR POST PANDEMIC LIVING

DECEMBER EMPHASIS: KINGDOM CITIZENS PREPARING MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT– HONORING GOD BY CELEBRATING THE BLESSINGS OF ANOTHER YEAR

THOUGHT: Kingdom Citizens must be ever diligent in their behavior. We must never depart from a lifestyle that shows appreciation for who God is, constantly exalting the Savior for what He has done and thanking Him for the victories of another year.

KEY WORDS/PHRASES: Faith, Testimony, Honor God, Behavior

LESSON FORTY-NINE: FAITH TO LIVE BY

Questions to Consider:

1. Is your faith stronger today than it was at the beginning of this year?
2. In what ways has your faith impacted decision making in 2023?
3. What are things you can do to strengthen your faith today?

TEXT: HEBREWS 11:1-6

HEART OF THE LESSON: KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST KNOW THAT WE ARE ON A JOURNEY OF FAITH.

INTRODUCTION: As we begin the last month of 2023, it is time to pause and reflect on how God has brought us throughout the year. We have been blessed in so many ways. Perhaps our journey can best be described as a journey of faith. What is faith? According to Hebrews 11, faith is believing that God exists, that He rewards those who seek Him and that we can hope in Him because His promises will always be true. Our task has been to understand how to live an authentic life of faith. Faith is defined by the Dictionary of Bible Themes as a constant outlook of trust towards God, whereby human beings abandon all reliance on their own efforts and put their full confidence in Him, His word and His promises. **Do you have a faith testimony on how the Lord has blessed you in 2023?** As Kingdom Citizens, we know that faith is foundational to our relationship with God.

1. OUR FAITH UNLOCKS THE DOOR TO OUR UNDERSTANDING OF WHO GOD IS AND HOW GOD WORKS. (VV 1-3)

Hebrews chapter 11 is probably the first place to turn for those who are fearful and apprehensive about their future. This chapter has often been called the “**hall of faith**”, and rightly so. Here we are reminded of faithful men and women whose trust in God prompted them to walk by faith, rather than to collapse under the external pressures of their day. After providing a brief definition of faith, “*Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see,*” (V 1) the writer, whom many believe is the **Apostle Paul**, makes a bold statement, “*This is what the ancients were commended for.*” (V 2)

) Faith strengthens our belief and knowledge of the work of God in creation, ***“By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.”*** (V 3) How has your faith unlocked your understanding of who God is and how God worked in your life in 2023?

2. THE TESTIMONY OF OUR FAITH PROVIDES INSPIRATION AND EXAMPLES FOR OTHERS TO FOLLOW. (VV 4-5)

The writer goes further by giving examples of how faith worked in the lives of the ancients of the Old Testament. This is why Hebrews 11 is often referred to as an “honor roll” of faith. He tells us that ***“by faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain and by faith Abel still speaks.”*** (V 4) By faith Enoch was taken away ***“and commended as one who pleased God.”*** (V 5) These great men and women of faith (mentioned in the subsequent verses of this chapter) continue to speak to us today, long after their deaths. **Guess what? This faith honor roll is not complete. It wasn’t meant to be.** There is room to add worthy characters from your history, even yourself, to this list. Every Kingdom Citizen should have a **“faith testimony”**. Testifying how faith has worked in your life provides inspiration to others to follow.

3. OUR FAITH IS EMPOWERED AND CERTIFIED WHEN WE BELIEVE AND EARNESTLY SEEK HIM. (V 6)

As we reflect on our faith journey in 2023, one thing is certain, ***“without faith it is impossible to please God,”*** (V 6) ***“because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”*** The certification of our faith comes by how we have lived and how we have sought God in all our life’s decisions. Get personal with it. Having studied God’s Word throughout the year, surely you are positioned to tell how your faith has strengthened. This is one way we honor God by celebrating the blessings of another year. Do you think that God is pleased with you? We must **“believe”** and **“earnestly seek Him.”** Have you done so in 2023? If not, there is still time for you to do so.

A POINT TO PONDER

In his letter to the church in Rome, Paul quotes an astonishing statement from the Psalms: **“There is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God”** ([Romans 3:11](#)). How can Paul, and David before him, make such a sweeping declaration? Of all who have ever lived, not even one person has really sought after God? There’s no question that billions of people have sought after a god, but they have not always sought after the true God. This fact ties directly to [Adam and Eve’s](#) sin prompted by Satan’s deception. Throughout the history of mankind, the treachery promulgated by Satan has been so thorough that the natural man can perceive only bits and pieces of the real truth about God. As a result, our conceptions about God are blurred. It’s only when God chooses to reveal Himself to us that the pieces begin to fall together as our eyes are opened to truth. Then, truly seeking God becomes possible.

KINGDOM CITIZENS PREPARING MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT FOR POST PANDEMIC LIVING

DECEMBER EMPHASIS: KINGDOM CITIZENS PREPARING MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT – HONORING GOD BY CELEBRATING THE BLESSINGS OF ANOTHER YEAR

THOUGHT: Kingdom Citizens must be ever diligent in their behavior. We must never depart from a lifestyle that shows appreciation for who God is, constantly exalting the savior for what He has done and thanking Him for the victories of another year.

KEY WORDS/PHRASES: Faith, Testimony, Honor God, Behavior

LESSON FIFTY: SHUNNING EVIL AND SEEKING PEACE

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. Is your behavior different today than it was at the beginning of this year?
2. How important is it for you to get revenge on those who mistreat you?
3. How important is it to you to seek a peaceful solution to conflict?

Text: I PETER 3:8-12

HEART OF THE LESSON: KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW MUST LEARN HOW TO BRING OUR BEHAVIOR IN LINE WITH GODLY PRINCIPLES.

INTRODUCTION: This is the second of our self-reflection lessons encouraging us to look back to where we were at the beginning of this year and reflect on if and how we have grown in 2023. Last week we reflected on how our faith developed this year. In this lesson we reflect on how our behavior has been impacted. Our lesson comes from the book of I Peter, verses 8-12. In our last lesson, we learned that our life journey during 2023, and even before, has been a journey of faith, that we have been made better in spite of our high points, our happy times, and also our trials and tribulations. More important, we have engaged in many Small Group Bible Study sessions. Now as we celebrate the blessings of this year, we must consider the question, “**How has our behavior changed for the better?**” Or has it?

1. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT OUR GUIDE FOR ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR SHOULD BE GROUNDED IN GOD’S WORD. (V. 8)

Peter tells us in verse 8 that spiritually enhanced behavior is guided by spiritual principles. He lists five of them, “**unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.**” These are qualities that presume a high commitment to the stability and well-being of the community. **Have you submitted your behavior to God’s authority and encouraged unity and brotherly love in 2023?** We must be genuine about it. These principles specify a call to freely submit to one another in love. Everything begins with the right attitude.

These five spiritual virtues constitute behavior from a God-honoring perspective. **How do these principles fit into your personal code of behavior?**

Kingdom Citizens are to have unity of mind, to be harmonious, **must be peace makers, not peace breakers!!** This does not mean that we must all think the exact same way about everything. It does mean that in spiritual behavior, our differences should work together in a common unity of purpose, with sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart and a humble mind. Believers are to live in harmony together, maintaining a common commitment to the truth that produces an inward unity of heart with one another.

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS SHOULD NEVER ACTIVELY SEEK REVENGE WHEN WRONGED BY OTHERS. (V. 9)

A godly approach to life incorporates not only the right action motivated by the right attitude, but the proper reaction when mistreated. Peter tells us, ***“Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.”*** (V. 9) When mistreated by someone with a wicked disposition, believers must not retaliate. For Christians, revenge is never the right option. Peter echoes the teaching of Jesus, as well as that of Paul, in making it perfectly clear that those in Christ—those set apart to a new purpose—are not allowed to **“get even.”** The way of the world and our normal human impulse is to strike back with the same hurtful treatment we receive. Peter commands us to completely refuse that instinct. Instead, we are called to bless, ***“that we may obtain a blessing.”*** How hard has it been for you to follow this principle in 2023? **Do you still struggle with not getting revenge?**

3. KINGDOM CITIZENS ARE TASKED TO SHUN ALL EVIL BEHAVIOR. (VV. 10-12)

Kingdom Citizens must refrain from speaking anything that comes from an evil or an immoral disposition. It is an attitude of faith that sees the best in every situation, ***“Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; 11 let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it.”*** (VV. 11-12) Peter commanded his readers to do good, what is excellent in quality, what expresses deep-down virtue. ***“For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. (V.12)*** The command for believers is to turn away from evil, seek peace and pursue it. Kingdom Citizens are to be known in the world as peacemakers, those who strive for harmony with others as much as possible without compromising the truth.

God hates evil (Psalm 5:4–6; Proverbs 6:16–19). David said, “O God, you take no pleasure in wickedness; you cannot tolerate the sins of the wicked” (Psalm 5:4, NLT). Because God is holy, He hates sin and wickedness. Scripture says, “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16), but it also teaches that “God is a righteous judge, a God who displays his wrath every day” (Psalm 7:11). Because God is holy (Psalm 99:9), His wrath against evil is as much a part of His character as His love. The love of God is pure and holy. The Lord loves justice, truth, righteousness, and holiness and therefore must hate wickedness, sin, and evil. If God did not abhor what is evil, He could not be a God of holy love. **How have you sought the Lord more diligently in 2023?**

KINGDOM CITIZENS PREPARING MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT FOR POST PANDEMIC LIVING

DECEMBER EMPHASIS: KINGDOM CITIZENS PREPARING MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT- HONORING GOD BY CELEBRATING THE BLESSINGS OF ANOTHER YEAR

THOUGHT: Kingdom citizens must be ever diligent in their behavior. We must never depart from a lifestyle that shows appreciation for who God is, constantly exalting the Savior for what He has done and thanking Him for the victories of another year.

KEY WORDS/ PHRASES: Faith, Testimony, Honor God, Behavior

LESSON FIFTY-ONE: WISE MEN STILL SEEK HIM

Questions to Consider:

1. What are some of the reasons you worship?
2. What are some things that would cause envy of worship?
3. What is the main reason you choose God as your shepherd?

TEXT: MATTHEW 2: 1-6

HEART OF THE LESSON: SEEKING AND SERVING THE SHEPHERD (VV 1-6)

INTRODUCTION: Our lesson this week comes from the gospel according to Matthew. Most scholars believe and agree that Matthew is the author of this gospel. The key theme of this gospel is “The King and His Kingdom.” Of course, as kingdom citizens we know that Jesus is the true and living King! Therefore, even though our text mentions Herod as king, when Jesus is born in Bethlehem in Judea, we as kingdom citizens know that this season and lesson are really about Jesus. “Matthew’s major purpose is to prove to his Jewish readers that Jesus is their Messiah. He does this primarily by showing how Jesus in his life and ministry fulfilled the OT Scriptures. Although all the gospel writers quote the OT, Matthew includes nine additional proof texts (1. 22-23; 2:15; 2:17-18; 2:23; 4:14-16; 8:17; 12: 17-21; 13: 35; 27: 9-10) to drive home his basic theme: Jesus is the fulfillment of the OT predictions of the Messiah.” (The NIV Study Bible) In our lesson this.

week, this term “wise men” is significant and should be briefly explained. This term is translated “magi” and refers to scholars who studied the stars. Their title connects them with magic, but they were more like astrologers. God gave them a special sign, a miraculous star that led them to the place of the true king’s birth. When we take a scan of this lesson, we will consider a few points of the magi visit, the leading of the star, the outlook of Herod, and the person who is the true shepherd.

1. KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST SEEK OUT THE TRUE KING TO WORSHIP HIM.

The text says: “**After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod “Magi” from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him” (VV 1-2).** These verses point out several things we can look at in this Holy Season to help us see the importance of worship, kingship, and serving. When we take a close look at the text, we see serving as a factor the magi did. They came from where they were, and they asked the right question. We as kingdom citizens must move from where we are in our spiritual growth process and advance to leading others to our Savior by asking the right questions and moving towards the Savior. The phrase “King of the Jews” is also significant in these verses because it indicates the Magi were Gentiles, and Matthew is showing that all people have access to this King, Jesus. This is an act of serving on behalf of the “wise men” and Jesus. Another thing we should notice in these verses is the kingship aspect of Jesus because even though Herod is mentioned as king, nothing happened until Jesus the true King was born. Then the last thing to point out in these verses is the aspect of worship. Once they noticed the star that revealed the place the King was born, they moved to worship. Kingdom citizens must constantly be growing and moving in worship.

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS SHOULD NEVER GET DISTURBED ABOUT WORSHIP.

The text says: “**When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.” (V 3 NIV)** Herod must have had a reputation of being in control and being jealous and envious of anyone who he thought posed a threat to him as the king. The text points out that Herod was disturbed, but not only Herod all of Jerusalem with him. This goes to show the influence a leader can have on those who follow him. Kingdom citizens must know to discern right and wrong attitudes and perspectives. We must not only rely on the relationship and direction of others as we follow God, but we must have a personal and intimate relationship with God for ourselves. When we have this kind of relationship, God will direct us to not get disturbed or be anxious about anything, but to address everything with prayer and supplication.

3. KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST REALIZE THAT GOD HAS CHOSEN TO BE THEIR SHEPHERD.

Kingdom citizens know that God chose them before they chose Him. The Bible says: “**Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes.” (Eph. 1:4 NLT)** In this Holy Season as we celebrate the birth of our Christ, we are truly blessed to know that being in Christ was predestined by God before we were conceived. That’s why we should surrender to God as our Shepherd! We should do this no matter who we are, where we’re from, what types of positions we have, or who is in leadership. Herod thought he was the king and didn’t want anyone to be honored above him. The text today points us to the true Shepherd and King. It says: “**When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. (Matt. 2:4 NIV)** Herod called all these leaders and scholars together, not for the right motive, but he knew that they were even leaders in worship and this king being born was the right one to worship and be their shepherd. We as kingdom citizens must approach worship for all the right reasons and all the right frame of mind.

KINGDOM CITIZENS PREPARING MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT FOR POST PANDEMIC LIVING

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LESSON FIFTY-TWO: WHEN I SEE THE STAR- JOY!

Questions to Consider:

1. What are your top 3 aspects of worship and why?
2. Describe how you know the real meaning of Christmas?
3. Explain what it means to have true joy.

TEXT: MATTHEW 2: 7-10

HEART OF THE LESSON: GENUINE JOY (VV 7-10)

INTRODUCTION: This week's lesson is a continuation of last week's lesson in the book of Matthew. Of course, the writer of this gospel is Matthew. His name has great significance as it relates to this Holy Season. The name Matthew means "gift of the Lord" and his other name is Levi who was a tax collector who left everything to follow Jesus. When we think of the meaning of the name Matthew "gift of the Lord" in this Holy Season, we should think of the gift of Jesus being born and the gift we celebrate during this Holy Season. It truly is a blessing to accept this gift of Jesus anytime in our lives and to become one of the followers as Matthew did. Matthew was one of the twelve apostles (10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13). "In his own list of the twelve, he explicitly calls himself a "tax collector" (10:13). Matthew associated with "tax collector"; the evangelist always used his former name Levi when speaking of his sinful past. Identifying himself in this way is evidence of humility on Matthew's part." (The MacArthur Bible Commentary) Just as Matthew did, when we accept the gift of Jesus, we must make a change in our lives. Our lesson this week should point out some views to consider as we embark upon this Holy Season.

1. KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST HAVE A GENUINE MOTIVE FOR WORSHIP.

In verse 7 of the text today, Herod called for a private meeting with the wise men to find out information about Jesus. When we are attempting to get information about Jesus, it probably shouldn't be a private conversation.

However, this is not the most important thing that Herod attempted to do. In verse 8, the text says: **“He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.” (V 8 NIV)** Herod had the wrong motive in mind. In fact, Herod was not even concerned with worship, but he wanted to get rid of Jesus for his own selfish motives. Herod was so obsessed with being king and in control that he was willing to use worship as a tool in order to kill Jesus. When we consider this thought process, even today some people are not willing to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior of their lives because to make Him Lord requires them to give Jesus control. Also, to worship God would require giving all to Jesus. Herod saw Jesus as a potential threat to his throne and controller of his life. We must be aware of our selfish desires to even control our lives because God is in control of our lives in the person of the Holy Spirit.

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST KNOW THE RIGHT SIGNS AND PEOPLE TO FOLLOW.

The text says: **“After this interview the wise men went their way. And the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was.” (V 9 NIV)** This verse has various implications even as plain as it seems. When we consider the first sentence of this verse, it plainly says, **“After this interview the wise men went their way.”** The first implication we can consider is that these wise men didn’t just walk out on the interview, but listened to Herod even though they probably already knew he had the wrong motive in mind, and they were being asked to get involved in a wicked plot. As kingdom citizens in this Holy Season, we must be careful how we get involved with schemes and plots that do not have true kingdom motives in mind. Not only that but the text goes on to say: **“And the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. (V 9 NIV)** One of the spiritual implications of this portion of the verse is that when the wise men left the interview, they were looking for a sign for direction. The star was the sign and guidance from God to take them to the place where Jesus was. Kingdom citizens ought to always be looking for guidance and direction from God to place them in the presence of the Lord. These wise men looked to the sign ahead of them to lead them to the place where Jesus was. It is to our advantage to seek guidance and direction from The Spirit, sign, people, or whatever God sends to lead us into the presence of the Jesus. This is a perfect time and season to submit to the power and presence of God.

3. KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST KNOW THAT TRUE JOY COMES WHEN WE’RE IN THE SAFETY AND PRESENCE OF JESUS.

The text says: **“When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. (V 10 NIV)** This last verse of our text is short, but very powerful because it brings out the point that even before they got to Jesus, they were overjoyed. These wise men were truly wise because they knew they were being led by the true shepherd. Kingdom citizens must know like David that **“The Lord is my shepherd.”** In this Holy Season when we realize that fact and seek His presence and face, we obtain true Joy.

KINGDOM CITIZENS PREPARING MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT FOR POST PANDEMIC LIVING

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LESSON FIFTY-THREE: A Good Word for the New Year

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. What is the most important spiritual concept you learned in 2023?
2. What are your “**spiritual**” resolutions for the new year?
3. What negative things do you intend to **NOT** carry into 2024?

Text: I THESSALONIANS 5:14-18

THE HEART OF THE LESSON: KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST JOYFULLY CARRY THE SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS OF THIS INTO THE NEW YEAR.

INTRODUCTION: This is the last lesson of our 2023 Bible Study series. How wonderful it is to have experienced the will and power of God in our lives from January to December. Hopefully through our studies we have been equipped and empowered to develop ourselves within the context of our 2023 theme: developing mind, body and spirit for post pandemic living. Now is an important time to celebrate how the Lord has blessed us during this year with an eye on being properly positioned to enter the new year with praises on our lips and thanksgiving in our hearts. Sadly, the old COVID 19 pandemic has been replaced by a new COVID strain that challenges us today. **Are we better spiritually to handle it and everything that comes with it, along with all the other challenges ahead?** Just as we have been encouraged in 2023, our call for 2024 is to remain encouraged. In our lesson Paul writes to the Thessalonians and gives them a good word for daily living.

The main objective is to encourage Kingdom Citizens to practice love in all our relationships. Paul also urges us to live in peace with each other, to warn those who are idle and disruptive, to encourage the disheartened, to help the weak, and to strive to do what is good for each other. We are encouraged to pray and give thanks in all circumstances. As we move from 2023 to 2024, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit we will do well to meditate on these words.

1. KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST BE FULLY ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS IN MINISTRY. (V. 14)

2.

Paul urges us to be at peace with each other. Kingdom Citizens should not leave the work of ministering entirely to our spiritual leaders. In this verse Paul directs us to accept several responsibilities. *“And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone.”* (V. 14) He charges us with the responsibility to warn loafers about their slothful attitudes. Have you been a **“church loafer”** in 2023? In the present since, slothfulness can be applied to persons who attend church, and that’s all they do. They are slothful to becoming active participants in doing the Lord’s work. Ministries of the church are available for all to participate in some way. Paul admonishes us to cheer up the fainthearted, encouraging them to progress in the Christian life with confidence. We are to assist weaker believers to trust the Lord in every situation. It is easy to give up on the idle, the fainthearted, and the weak, so Paul exhorts us to exercise patience with them. **We have learned in 2023 that we should minister to everyone with love and patience. As such, we should not allow ourselves to carry a spirit of slothfulness into the new year.**

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST REMEMBER THAT CONFORMING TO THE WAYS OF THIS WORLD SETS US UP FOR FAILURE IN 2024. (V. 15)

Paul continues with a theme we have discussed on several occasions in 2023, “Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong. We know that being vengeful is not the way God wants us to be. Our emphasis here is on the second part of this scripture, *“but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else.”* (V. 15) The way of the world often calls for us to be selfish and not to be good to or for each other. Such an attitude, if it still exists, should not be carried over into the new year. This way leads to failure. **Leave it in 2023!!** Instead, we should concentrate on being *“transformed by the renewing of our minds.”* (Romans 12:2) How to accomplish this is our theme for 2024. Look for it! **Striving to do good for each other should be on every Kingdom Citizen’s 2024 “spiritual resolutions” list.** Is it yours?

3. KINGDOM CITIZENS SHOULD REJOICE AND PRAY!! (VV. 16-18)

Finally, Paul admonishes us to *“Rejoice always”* (V. 16) and to *“pray continually”* (V. 17) These two small verses are power packed. They guide us in how to maintain spiritual power. Finally, we are to *“give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”* (V. 18) We must be thankful in any circumstance. Spiritual contentment comes in recognizing it is Christ who spiritually strengthens us for whatever we might face. He did for us in 2023 and He will do it for us again in 2024. God has grown us in 2023 and He is ready to take us to the next level in 2024. **Buckle your seatbelts and get ready for a magnificent entry into the new year!**

A Devotion for the End of the Year

Mark D. Roberts

Today is the last day of the year, the end of 2023. On this occasion, I find that Psalm 90 expresses much that is in my heart. Perhaps it will speak to yours as well.

The context of Psalm 90 is not a happy one. It was written in a time when the people of God are “consumed by [God’s] anger” and “overwhelmed” by God’s wrath (90:7) because of their “iniquities” (90:8). Nevertheless, beneath the bad news of God’s judgment lies a bedrock of confidence in God’s everlasting goodness. Rejoicing and prosperity will come again (90:14, 17).

Psalm 90 reframes the way we think about time and its passing. The psalm begins with good news: “Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.” Moreover, God exists outside of time, “before the mountains were brought forth” (90:2). Indeed, the psalmist exults, “from everlasting to everlasting you are God” (90:2). Because God is timeless, God views the expanse of time differently than we see it: “For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past” (90:4).

Framed by God’s eternal existence, our time on earth is short: “The days of our life are seventy years, or perhaps eighty, if we are strong; even then their span is only toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away” (90:10). The shortness of our life, especially if we live in difficult times, could be discouraging. But, in Psalm 90, it can lead to wisdom: “So teach us to count our days that we may gain a wise heart” (90:12). The phrase, “count our days” means “know that our days are numbered.” Knowledge of the shortness of our life can help us become wise.

How? To begin, the brevity of our life contrasts with the eternity of God’s life. When we count our days, we are reminded of our smallness compared with God’s greatness. This recognition leads us, on the one hand, to want to use well the time given to us. On the other hand, it also reminds us of our utter dependence on God. Thus, the final verse of Psalm 90 reads, “Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and prosper for us the work of our hands—O prosper the work of our hands!” (90:17). When God’s favor rests on us, when God prospers us, then our work will be fruitful.

What a fascinating—and relevant—conclusion to this psalm! The psalmist’s reflections on God’s timelessness, the relative shortness of our lives, and our dependence on God’s grace lead to a prayer that God “prosper” our work. In this request, we hear an echo of the creation story in Genesis 1, in which the Lord worked to create us in God’s own image, so that we might work in this world as God’s agents and co-laborers. Though our time on earth is limited, our work still matters. What we do as workers will prosper as God’s grace is active in our lives.

Thus, as the year changes from 2023 to 2024, and as we remember the shortness of our lives, we do not despair. Rather, when we count our days, we renew our trust in our timeless God and we ask for the Lord’s favor so that we might make a difference through our work in the brief time allotted to us.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. How does the passing of the years affect you? How do you feel? What do you think?
2. Has your work made a difference in the last year? If so, in what way?
3. Has God changed your work? Because of a different season, has He called you to a different work?
4. How is your work a result of God's favor in your life?
5. Has the Lord opened any unexpected doors, through promotion, loss of a job, or even a move?
6. How would you like God to prosper your work in 2024?

PRAYER:

Lord, you have been our dwelling place
in all generations.

Before the mountains were brought forth,
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God. . . .

For a thousand years in your sight
are like yesterday when it is past,
or like a watch in the night. . . .

The days of our life are seventy years,
or perhaps eighty, if we are strong;
even then their span is only toil and trouble;
they are soon gone, and we fly away. . . .

So teach us to count our days
that we may gain a wise heart.

Turn, O LORD! How long?

Have compassion on your servants!

Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love,
so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us,
and prosper for us the work of our hands —

O prosper the work of our hands!

Amen.

Psalm 90:1-2, 4, 10, 12-14, 17



*Happy
New Year*

*Do not remember the former things,
Nor consider the things of old.
Behold, I will do a new thing,
Now it shall spring forth;
Shall you not know it?
I will even make a road in the wilderness
And rivers in the desert.
- Isaiah 43:16-19*