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A glowing lightbulb is the central focus, with the Earth of our planet as the filament inside. The lightbulb is illuminated from within, creating a bright glow. The background is a dark, starry night sky with a yellowish-green aura around the lightbulb. The text "A Light In the World" is written in a white, serif font, curving around the top and right side of the lightbulb.

A Light In the World

31-Day Missions Devotional
VOLUME 2

by Vision Baptist Missions

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Solomon's conclusion is still true today. Temporal accomplishments, no matter how great they seem at the end of the day, will just be vanity. Quite simply, if you live your life for these things you will live your life in vain.

Don't live a vain life. If you want to do something great with your life, don't focus on doing something that the world would consider great; instead, focus on laboring for the Lord. Living a life totally committed to the Lord and His mission of reaching the world for the Gospel will never be in vain.

1 Corinthians 15:58 says, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

Let's live for God and His mission. Let's live a radical life. Let's take the Gospel around the world. Let's do something great for God. Let's not live a vain life.

Simply Trust Him

Mark 8:10-21

Dallas Brown — Burkina Faso, West Africa

¹⁰ And straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha.¹¹ And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him.¹² And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.¹³ And he left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side.¹⁴ Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf.¹⁵ And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod.¹⁶ And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread.¹⁷ And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened?¹⁸ Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?¹⁹ When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve.²⁰ And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven.²¹ And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?

Mark 8:10-21

How many times does God have to prove himself to us before we will simply trust Him?

God came through for the disciples over and over again showing them miracle after miracle, yet, when the time came and their faith was tested, they were fearful and afraid. Jesus looked at them and said, “Remember how I did the impossible and fed the multitudes twice. I can do it again.”

If you were to look at your own life, I am confident you could think of times that God has come through for you. If Christ can be trusted with your salvation, He can certainly be trusted to guide, keep, and protect you throughout your life.

If you are going to step out on faith and serve God in missions you must have faith that He will lead you and use you.

How many times does God have to prove Himself to before you will simply trust Him?

Do You Know God’s Purpose for People?

Ephesians 3:4-6

Ben Johnson — China

⁴Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) ⁵Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; ⁶That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

Ephesians 3:4-6

Christians are the only ones today with this great and unique message of hope that can change people’s lives for eternity. I hope that every day we are doing something to get the Gospel to this world that so desperately needs it. This is what God wants for all of us to be involved in; this is our purpose here on this earth.

Don’t Live a Vain Life!

Ecclesiastes 2:11

Kanon Bloom — China

“Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.

Ecclesiastes 2:11

What are you going to do with your life? Most people want to do something great with their lives. However, what most people mean by doing something great with their life is to do something that only has temporal value. They want to invent something new, build the tallest building, find a cure to a disease, be the greatest sports player, or do some other temporal thing.

Solomon, who the Bible describes as the wisest man ever, definitely had an opportunity to do something great with his life. He built some amazing things. He answered hard questions. He had great wisdom. By most people’s standards he did something great with his life, but, in the book of Ecclesiastes, when he looked back at all the works he had accomplished he realized that it was all vanity. Why? He realized that there was no true purpose in all the “great” things he had done Those things were just temporal accomplishments and would one day pass away. He realized that it was all vanity.

God has commanded us to be thankful in everything. It doesn't matter what we are going through or what emotions we are struggling with at that particular moment. The one constant is that we are to be thankful for it because "this is will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." It is not an easy task, but we must be thankful in all.

Our Purpose

John 17:20-21

Miguel Sanabria — Colombia

²⁰ Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

²¹ That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

John 17:20-21

In Chapter 17 of the book of John, we find Jesus praying before He will be betrayed, mocked, and before He will give His life on the cross for all of us. He prays for His disciples in that moment, that they would be kept from evil as they take the Gospel throughout the whole world. Then we find that Jesus starts praying for another group of people in verse 20—us! He prays that the world, through us, would know about Jesus, who He is and what He has done.

I hope that every day that we wake up we realize that we are here with a great and amazing God-given purpose in this world: that through us others will know about Jesus Christ and how He came to this world to die on the cross and pay for our sins. We

In the early church, the Jewish believers had a big problem: they believed that the Gospel of Jesus Christ was only for them. So, it was big news to them when God started saving Gentiles. You can even see this in Acts 11 when the church leaders condemned Peter for going to the Gentiles! But here, the apostle Paul says there was a mystery that was once hidden but now is revealed. What was that mystery? "That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ."

Jesus did not just die for a select group of people; He died for all men. God does not want to just save Americans; He wants to save people from all around the world! He wants to save Japanese, Chinese, Indian, and all people from all around the world. There is not one single person on this planet who has lived or who ever will live that God did not love and for whom He did not die.

It is God's purpose through the Gospel to save all men. But if they do not hear that Gospel they cannot be saved. We know that it is only by the preaching of the Gospel that men can be saved. You may have never been to China, do not speak a word of Chinese, or know a single Chinese person, but you know more about what a Chinese person should be than they do. Why is that? You know why they were made and what their purpose is. But the truth is they do not know this because no one has told them. Will you go and take the Gospel so that they can live out who they were made to be?

Do You Know God's Purpose for You?

Ephesians 3:7-9

Ben Johnson — China

⁷Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. ⁸Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; ⁹And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

Ephesians 3:7-9

God had a purpose in saving the apostle Paul. When God told Ananias to receive the then known as Saul, He told Ananias that Saul was “a chosen vessel to bear my name before the Gentiles.” This job was given, as it says here, “according to the gift of the grace of God.” It is only by God’s grace that Paul had a job to do, and it is only by God’s grace that He has given us a job to do.

The fact is that we did not deserve to be saved from our sin. We deserve hell. But not only do we not deserve to be saved, we do not deserve to serve Him; yet, He allows us to. Paul’s job was really not too much different from the job God has given to us: preach the unsearchable riches of Christ and make men see what is the fellowship of the mystery.

God did not save you just so you could sit in a church, sing songs, and hear a sermon. He saved you to go and reach those who have never heard of Him. All around this world there are people in poverty, not physical poverty but spiritual poverty, and we

Gospel to Bosnia and to the whole world. Please pray with us that God will get us there quickly to share the good news of salvation.

Thankful

1 Thessalonians 5:18

Jason King — South Africa

¹⁸ In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

1 Thessalonians 5:18

Recently we were driving through Virginia when my wife noticed a man having car trouble. He was standing outside his car at an intersection, and no one was stopping to help. I wanted to just drive by like everyone else had been doing, but my wife insisted that we do something to help. So, I made a U-turn and pulled over to see what I could do to assist.

The man was by himself. He was heavy-set and, honestly, rather rude. His car was out of gas. I offered to help him push his car off the road and take him to get some gas, but he assured me that he just needed help pushing the car off the busy street. I assumed that “help me” meant we would both push his car, but he had a different idea. It took me by surprise when he got back into his car and said, “Ok, you push.” I struggled to push him and his car the forty to fifty feet it took to get him off the road. Once he was settled, I walked back to the front of the car and was quickly dismissed by the man. He never said, “thank you,” and he didn’t seem grateful at all. I got back into my van and as I drove away, something hit me.

for an eternity in Hell. What a terrible tragedy for so many people to be doomed forever! The greater tragedy is that they don't even know they are dying!

Now look at the people again. See them for exactly what they are: living souls that will one day die and go to Hell for all eternity. Do you see them? Do you fear for them? Do you weep for them? Then you should know that there is hope for them. They don't have to go to Hell! They're only doomed if we don't share the Light with them. This Light is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, was crucified at Calvary, and resurrected for the justification of all the billions dying all over the world! What they need now is for the people of God to take that light to them. You are the avenue God is looking for to share the Gospel with them. Will you be the one to take the light of Gospel to them?

The Time is Now

John 4:35

Micah Rastelli — Bosnia

³⁵ *Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.*

John 4:35

Here Jesus is teaching the disciples a great lesson that is still true today. The time to reach the world with the Gospel is now. Every day people are dying and going into eternity, and many of them do not know the truth of the Gospel.

In Bosnia today, 103 people died and went into eternity. I wonder how many of them never even heard a clear presentation of the Gospel in their lifetime. Truly now is the time to take the

have all the riches in the world that can alleviate their spiritual poverty. So, what are you doing with your riches in Christ? Do you selfishly keep them to yourself or do you want to spread them all around the world?

Do You Know God's Purpose for God?

Ephesians 3:10-12

Ben Johnson — China

¹⁰ *To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,* ¹¹ *According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:* ¹² *In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.*

Ephesians 3:10-12

Have you ever seen one of those football games where one team makes an impossible comeback to win the game? If it is your team that does that, then it is really exciting! If it is not your team, it is hugely disappointing. Sometimes we look at this life and we feel like we are losing. We feel like Satan is winning, and there is no hope. We can often wonder, "God, what are you doing? What's your end-game?"

Here in Ephesians 3:10 we are told God's end-game: to show that He is wise—not just a little bit wise, but incredibly wise, wise beyond understanding. Since the beginning, it seems God is a fool. All through history, you see God's highest creation, man, failing over and over. Everything God is doing seems to crumble.

But Satan is fighting as hard as He can to stop God's plan. We

come to the cross, which appears to be God's biggest defeat. His Son, His only Son, was killed. Satan seemed victorious, but what appeared to be Satan's greatest victory was actually his greatest defeat. God wants Satan to fight as hard as he can so that when Satan does lose, it will show how wise God is. But how does God show that? He does it through the church.

Verse 10 tells us it is by the church that we see this wisdom. Everywhere in this world, people are at war with God and at war with each other. However, in the church people are at peace with God and at peace with each other. It is God's promise to the church that it would prevail against the gates of Hell. So, if God shows how important the church is, then why would you not want to be a part of showing God's wisdom all around the world by seeing churches started?

Why Are You Here?

2 Corinthians 5:18-19

Kevin White — Bolivia

¹⁸ And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

¹⁹ To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

2 Corinthians 5:18-19

What is the purpose of life? Why do I exist? These are questions that many young people ask today and, most of the time, find no answer. I can remember when I was in my second year of

when she came to my house. She only has the authority to promote the agenda of the ones for whom she works. Whose agenda are we promoting today? Who do we work for?

Will You Light the Darkness?

Isaiah 9:2

Sam Quinn — India

² The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

Isaiah 9:2

Watch the people around you! Look up right now and really watch them for a second. Day by day they go about their business absolutely indifferent to the danger in their lives. They dwell in darkness with the shadow of death over them.

What is the darkness they walk in? The darkness is their ignorance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Like Bartimaeus, the beggar, they know something is missing and cannot see to comprehend it. Like Jairus's daughter, they're sleeping and dead and do not know they can have life. Like the Pharisee's son, they cannot hear the truth of God's Word because their ears are closed to the gospel. They walk in darkness dying, blind, deaf, and going to Hell.

The shadow of one death is over us all the time. One of these days, if the Lord tarries, we will all die. But there is a death far worse than the most gruesome you can imagine. The death that hangs over the lost is not a physical death but an eternal death,

Late evening one day I pulled up to my house, and there was a police officer waiting in the drive way. That's not very normal for me, and, as you can imagine, it's a little unnerving, especially when you live in a foreign country. Your mind begins to race about what happened or maybe about what you're in trouble for.

Thankfully, when I got out of my car, the representative from our local municipality in Port Elizabeth quickly let me know she was only there to give me notice of a \$15 traffic violation that I had mistakenly not paid. She was there to deliver the last notice in person to let me know the cutoff date for paying before I got in trouble.

When this officer arrived at my house, she was not there to represent herself. She was there to represent a higher power. She was simply a messenger for those who had more authority over me concerning the law in our area.

A question we need to ask ourselves is, "Who do we represent?" We are all servants, but the question is who do we serve. We might do what we do to please our parents, our boss, or our spouse, but unfortunately most of us just serve ourselves.

We must understand as believers that we also are here to represent a Higher Authority, much higher than the municipality of a city in South Africa. Just as Paul and Timothy were servants of Jesus Christ, we too are His ambassadors. As we go out in this world we must keep in mind that we aren't representing ourselves; we're representing Christ.

Everything we do should reflect the will of the One we serve. It would be a crime for the police officer to push her own agenda

college, studying mechanical engineering, that I started asking similar questions. I enjoyed what I was doing but realized that my life had had very little purpose. It was at that time that I looked to the Lord to find the purpose that I was missing.

To understand what the purpose of our life is we must first realize that God created everything for His glory as you can see in verse eighteen. Our lives must be lived in a way that glorifies Him, which means that we must ask what He wants of us. That question can be easily answered by looking at verse nineteen which tells us that our principle reason for living on this earth is to reconcile others to God through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. So, if the focus of your life is on anything else, then it will not have the purpose that it should.

If you are struggling to find purpose and meaning in your life, I would like to encourage you to meditate on these two verses while you ask the following questions:

1. Have you been reconciled to God through Jesus Christ and have the assurance of your salvation?
2. Does every aspect of your life bring honor and glory to God?
3. How would being involved in the ministry of reconciliation give purpose to your life?

Here Am I, Send Me

Isaiah 6:8

Raleigh Hill — Argentina

⁸ *Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.*

Isaiah 6:8

NFL #1 Player of the year:

2012 Tom Brady - NFL Draft: 2000 / Round: 6 / Pick: 199

2013 Aaron Rodgers - NFL Draft: 2005 / Round: 1 / Pick: 24

2014 Adrian Peterson - NFL Draft: 2007 / Round: 1 / Pick: 7

2015 Peyton Manning - NFL Draft: 1998 / Round: 1 / Pick: 1

2016 J.J. Watt - NFL Draft: 2011 / Round: 1 / Pick: 11

Do you know what all five of these players have in common? It's not their position or their team. It's not which side of the ball they play on or even where they went in the draft . The one thing each of these elite #1 athletes have in common is that they were all in the draft. Peyton Manning went #1, Tom Brady went #199, and people still argue who is the better quarterback.

The point is you may or may not be the most talented person; that doesn't matter to God anyway. However, if you are not in

Any Scaredy-Cat Will Do

Judges 6:12

Dr. Jim Roberts — India

¹² *And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.*

Judges 6:12

In a time of severe trouble in Israel, the enemy would come and steal what the Israelites had worked so hard for. They were old-en-day bullies! God looked for a man of valor and found Gideon hiding out from the enemy.

Gideon was hiding! He was a “scaredy-cat”. Why would God want a “scaredy cat”? God knew what Gideon was capable of. What about us? God knows what we are capable of and He knows when and where we are hiding. God called Gideon a “mighty man of valour.” Certainly God sees a man or woman of valor in us. What is possible today with us “scaredy cats”? Any “scaredy cat” will do.

Servant

Philippians 1:1

Mark Coffey — South Africa

¹ *Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:*

Philippians 1:1

We're No Longer Enemies

Romans 5:1

Jason Holt — Chile

¹ Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

Romans 5:1

Soccer is a very big deal in South America. Just imagine rolling all the fans from college football, the NFL, baseball, basketball, and everything else you can imagine into ONE huge obsession. Well, that's soccer in Chile. In some of the matches the fans are so fanatical that it's literally dangerous to attend the games. Fans are known to attack the opposing team's fans and even, in some cases, kill them! They see each other as "the enemy".

The Bible says that we were enemies of God before we put our faith in Christ in Colossians 1:19-22 and Romans 8:7. Because of our sin, we were under condemnation and wrath. Our way of living and thinking was completely against God. Understanding that, it's easy to appreciate the wonder of Romans 5:1! We now have peace with God through what Christ did for us on the cross! We are no longer His enemies. What an encouraging truth. Praise the Lord!

As we rejoice in His goodness, let's not forget that millions around the world have **never** heard of Jesus' work on the cross. They must hear. What will you do to take the good news to others?

the draft, you don't get picked. The Lord is always looking for people He can use but He will only call you if you are willing. Isaiah volunteered for the work of God because he heard the voice of God. It's when you are close to God that His voice can be heard, His breath (the Holy Spirit) can be felt, and His heart can be known. Don't settle for being an average Christian; be an extraordinary Servant of an Almighty God. Get close. Have you heard Him call? Are you willing to serve? Can you say, "Here am I, send me" like Isaiah could?

And Hereby We Do Know Him

1 John 2:3-6

John Walz — Taiwan

³ And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. ⁴ He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵ But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. ⁶ He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

1 John 2:3-6

I can't say I've ever met someone who really knew Jesus that could walk away from Him and say, "Well, you know, that relationship didn't really work out. Jesus isn't my kind of Savior." Of course our sin can distance ourselves from Him, but I could not fathom a situation where someone could walk away because they got to know Who Jesus truly is. Knowing God through Jesus Christ is the source of joy, contentment, and meaning in our lives. It should be obvious that above all else we would want others to know God. Knowing God is not the same as knowing the commandments. Knowing God is more than an intellectual exercise, though it is not less than that.

Just as He did in the Old Testament, God revealed a great deal of Himself through His laws until Jesus demonstrated what it means to really know God, saying, “I do always those things that please him” (John 8:29). This statement suggests that not only doing what pleases God proves we know Him, but doing what pleases the Father is also a means to know Him. None of us start out knowing God, but those who are born again grow closer to Him as they learn obedience. Paul prayed for the Ephesians to know the love of Christ and the fullness of God. John teaches that, by keeping the commands of Christ, the same fullness of God, His love, is perfected in us (vs. 5). Our incentive then for command-ment-keeping is that we may experience fully the joy and love of God.

Servants with a Purpose

Philippians 1:1-6

Patrick Henry — Argentina

¹ Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

² Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. ³ I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, ⁴ Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, ⁵ For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; ⁶ Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

Philippians 1:1-6

How we begin to greet others is important. I have three daughters and, if I were to pick them up from an activity with other friends in the community, how I introduce myself says every-

do not want to be an old man or woman, filled with the regret of having not lived your life for Jesus.

Do everything you can NOW to sell out for Jesus, and reach the world for Christ.

Sacrificial Living

Romans 12:1

Daniel Sparks — Chile

¹ I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Romans 12:1

Paul is urging his fellow Christians to give their bodies in living service to Christ. He tells them to live holy and God-pleasing lives. For a Christian to live their life this way shows true service and worship to God. Our bodies belong to Jesus, and He wants us to serve Him with them.

Christ purchased our sin debt on the cross with his perfect, sinless blood. Jesus, who never sinned, became sin for us by giving his life as payment for our sin. Christ died for us, and His desire is that we live for Him.

Few Christians will ever present their bodies a living sacrifice to God. If and when a Christian finally does, he should continue to do so on a daily basis. We must live for God's will, not our own selfish desires. We must die to ourselves to live for Jesus.

It turns out my friend's sister and her friend were driving home from school and tried to catch the red light, but were a little late. As a result, a dump truck hit them from the side, drove them into the telephone pole, and killed my friend's sister. She was only seventeen years old.

I don't think she woke up that morning knowing it would be her last few hours on earth. But it is extremely true that our lives are vapors and, in an instant, can be taken from us.

Young person, you do not know what your future holds for you. In 2008, I graduated with a high school class of about 190 people. Of that 190, more than 10 have passed away. That's more than one person I know personally who have passed away while still in their early to mid-twenties.

You are not guaranteed tomorrow. A crazy driver, sickness, a natural disaster, who knows? You need to take advantage of the life and youth you have while you have it. I hope that everyone reading this devotion lives a long, full, prosperous life. But the reality is that some of you will probably not.

Your life is a few moments long. Do everything in your power to get the gospel to the world while you're still drawing breath. Take your eyes off the few moments of life we are given and start investing in eternity. Start making disciples. Start sharing the Gospel. Go on missions trips. Hand your life over to the Lord and let Him direct and control your life completely.

In a few short breaths, in a few blinks of your eyes, you will be old and saying your final goodbyes to your loved ones in this life. You

thing. I would not say, "Hi, I'm Patrick. I am a missionary here in Argentina." Nor would I say, "I graduated from a Bible College in the southeastern United States." Both of those introductions would be true, but would not serve a purpose as to the context of why I am there. "Hello, I'm Patrick, I am Lily, Piper, and Ivy's dad," would be an appropriate introduction that would make clear sense in context.

Notice how Paul introduces Timothy and himself. Paul didn't bring up his calling as an apostle or as the missionary who started the church in Philippi. Paul said they were "servants of Jesus Christ". When you think about it, that is all we really are. We, as believers are servants of Jesus. No matter what God is leading you to do, no matter where you are in this world, we are all called to be servants of Jesus!

There is more, though. After Paul greets the church, reminding them that he is praying for them and thankful for them, he then thanks them for their "fellowship in the gospel". Our purpose is to advance the Gospel. Paul was in one location, in jail at this point, and the church was in Philippi. Yet, both labored in advancing the Gospel! Paul tells the church that he is confident God had begun a good work would complete what He has started in the church there in Philippi. Paul believed that God was using the Philippian church and that they were in the midst of God's "completing" work as they labored in the Gospel. God had a place for them and He also has a place for each of us in the ministry. The place of ministry may look differently for each of us, but the outcome is the same. The Gospel is advanced, the work God is doing in us is furthered toward completion, and God is glorified! As servants of Jesus, let us continue on in advancing the Gospel knowing that God will continue to work in us for His glory and our good.

A Love That We Need

Philippians 1:7-11

Patrick Henry — Argentina

⁷ Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace. ⁸ For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ. ⁹ And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; ¹⁰ That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ. ¹¹ Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

Philippians 1:7-11

How would you define the word “love”? How would you define the type of love that we, as Christians, should have? Paul’s prayer for this church in Philippi defines that type of love. Paul started this church, so the connection between the two goes beyond just a friendship. You might think of it as a loving father to his children “in the faith”. Paul tells his “spiritual children” that he prays their “love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment.” This love is grounded in knowledge and in discernment, not in some warm, fuzzy, emotional feeling. But what is the purpose of this type of love? Verses 10-11 tells us the answer. This love, grounded in knowledge and discernment, is meant to guide the Philippian church so that:

1. they may approve things that are excellent.
2. they may be sincere and without offense until the day of Christ.
3. they might be filled with the fruits of righteousness.

Lord, please help me realize how little time I have left to do Your will! Give me wisdom today and help me to be busy doing the work of the Lord—sharing the gospel and discipling others!

What would be the wisest use of my time? What would be the wisest use of my life? How could I get more involved in world evangelism?

What is Your Life?

James 4:14

Kyle Shreve — Peru

¹⁴ Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

James 4:14

I had a really good friend on the lacrosse team in middle and high school. He lived a few houses behind me, and we really hung out in the same group of friends. We hung out a few times a week. He had a younger sister who was also pretty cool, even though she transferred to our rival school to play on their lacrosse team. I wasn’t ever close to his sister, but we were definitely friends.

I grew up in a town that was literally one straight road with a 4-way intersection in the middle of town. At that intersection, there was a little pizza shop with a telephone pole out front of it. Driving home from school my senior year, I came to a massive detour in the road in town. Now, in a town of 1000 people, with one road, this is a really, really big deal. Nothing like this ever happens, and everyone wanted to know what had happened.

The disciples often said and did very foolish things. In this case, they debated about who was the greatest right after Jesus had just told them that He was going to be betrayed! What a terrible time to be arguing such a trivial matter!

Nonetheless, Jesus immediately set the record straight. The greatest is not the boss, the man in charge, or the one who is served. The greatest in God's economy is the one who serves others and lowers himself. The greatest is the servant of all. This fact changes everything! No longer should we look for positions of authority; we should look for opportunities to serve others.

First, what is your attitude about greatness? Is the greatest person the one who has everyone serving them? Is the greatest person the one with the most important title? Or, is the greatest person the one who serves?

Second, why don't you change your attitude towards greatness? Perhaps you should go to God and say, "Lord, make me a servant. Help me to truly love and serve others."

Teach Us to Number our Days

Psalm 90:12

Brendon Wung — North Africa

¹² So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

Psalm 90:12

If I only have 70 years to live or by reason of strength, 80 years...

What am I going to do with the rest of my life? I'm not guaranteed tomorrow or another week or another year.

We should pray for this kind of love for ourselves and for other brothers and sisters in Christ. We need a love that guides us to approve the good things, to make us sincere and without offense, and to help us be filled with the fruits of righteousness.

Keeping the Right Perspective

Philippians 1:12-14

Patrick Henry — Argentina

¹² But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; ¹³ So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; ¹⁴ And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

Philippians 1:12-14

One problem I think we may have at times is that we focus on how things are progressing from our perspective. We see the things that slow us down as setbacks. We see our problems as obstacles keeping us from moving forward. I speak of our obligation to advance the Gospel. God has called His children to further the Gospel. We see this happening with every missionary that arrives on a foreign mission field, every soul won to Jesus, every church started, and in every church service where someone hears the Gospel for the first time. The victories are sweet, but the "failures" and setbacks can be very discouraging. I ask you to look at Paul. Paul wrote the letter to the church at Philippi from jail. He quickly reminds the church in Philippi that "the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel". Paul had started churches in many different cities, but all of that was put on pause with his imprisonment.

Or was it? Paul did not look at circumstances from an earthly perspective. He chose to look at them with the perspective that God would use both victories and setbacks. Paul tells the church that Jesus is made known in his own imprisonment, even in the palace! Furthermore, because of Paul's imprisonment, others were becoming bolder and proclaiming the Gospel without fear.

Our job is to labor to further the Gospel. We should understand that we serve a God who will take both the victories and the setbacks to manifest Jesus in this world. We should stop looking at setbacks as setbacks and start looking at them as alternative ways in which God is manifesting Jesus. They may not be part of our plan, but God is at work and can use our feeble attempts to further the message of salvation!

What If?

Isaiah 37:4 | Jeremiah 36:3 | Amos 5:15

James Miyashita — Japan

⁴ *It may be the LORD thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God, and will reprove the words which the LORD thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that is left.*

Isaiah 37:4

³ *It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.*

Jeremiah 36:3

refused to allow her to marry, leading to the drama that would create the Mossi nation.

The words of Christ to His disciples in Matthew 9:36-38 were, *“But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.”*

In Burkina Faso, and all around the world, there is a ripe harvest of souls. Hurting, broken men and women are going through life desperate for hope and looking for a Savior. A harvest of souls is ready for the Gospel. But, like Yennenga's field, if that harvest is never picked, if the work is never done, it is a harvest that is wasted, a harvest that will be burned and destroyed because the laborers were few.

Thankfully we serve a great and powerful God who is able to save! We have a Gospel that is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes. We are on the winning side of the harvest for souls for Heaven! May we then follow Christ's command to *“Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.”*

True Greatness

Luke 22:24-25

Beau Carpenter — Church Planter USA

²⁴ *And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.* ²⁵ *And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.*

Luke 22:24-25

A Wasted Harvest

Matthew 9:36-38

Jason Rishel — Burkina Faso

³⁶ But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. ³⁷ Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; ³⁸ Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

Matthew 9:36-38

The predominate tribal group in Burkina Faso is the Mossi people. The Mossi are a proud people with a very rich and interesting history! The Mossi trace their history back to the 12th century and to a young girl named Yennenga. She was the daughter of a powerful, influential chieftain. As a teen, she became a skilled warrior, often leading her father's armies to great victories over his enemies. But as she grew into a woman, she decided that she wanted to marry. However, her father, unhappy about losing his strongest warrior, refused to allow his daughter to marry.

Yennenga, heartbroken by his decision, came up with a plan she hoped would change her father's mind! She went out and planted a large field of wheat. Her father looked on with pride as she tended the field and saw it grow strong and fruitful. But when the crop was ready to harvest, instead of collecting the reward of her labor, she went out and burned the entire field of wheat!

Her father came rushing out to the field in shock. He demanded to know why she had burned the harvest instead of picking it. She explained to him that the harvest represented her life. She was young and full of potential, but he was wasting her life by holding her back. Her father, unmoved by her gesture, still

¹⁵ Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the LORD God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.

Amos 5:15

What if? That's a question that can lead to endless possibilities. What if the paragraph had not started with that question? What if you had not picked up and started reading these words? What if? We may never know.

While the Bible doesn't say "what if," the Bible does make a similar hypothetical statement. Time and again, the Bible says "it may be." People throughout the Bible were called or led to repent saying "it may be" that God would show mercy. Maybe, just maybe, God will be merciful. What if people repent? It may be that God would be merciful.

Now, we know that God is not slack concerning His promise and is not willing that anybody should perish. He wants everyone to come to repentance. People, however, can't come to repentance if they have never heard the Gospel. Anyone who turns to Christ will be saved. The only "what-if" is whether people hear and believe or not.

So, what if you could make a difference? Have you ever asked yourself, "What if God wants to use me to tell people about Jesus?" It may be (and it is) that God wants everyone to be saved. What if you can make a difference for eternity?

What if someone hadn't told you how to get saved? What if you don't go tell the world how to be saved?

Open Your Eyes, God is Bigger

2 Kings 6:8-17

Jeff Bush — Director, Vision Baptist Missions

⁸Then the king of Syria warred against Israel, and took counsel with his servants, saying, In such and such a place shall be my camp. ⁹And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are come down. ¹⁰And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice. ¹¹Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not shew me which of us is for the king of Israel? ¹²And one of his servants said, None, my lord, O king: but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber. ¹³And he said, Go and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him. And it was told him, saying, Behold, he is in Dothan. ¹⁴Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about. ¹⁵And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? ¹⁶And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. ¹⁷And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

2 Kings 6:8-17

thy place: and thou shalt deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand, after the former manner when thou wast his butler. ¹⁴But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house: ¹⁵For indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews: and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon. ¹⁶When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said unto Joseph, I also was in my dream, and, behold, I had three white baskets on my head:

Genesis 40:4-16

When reading about the interpretation of dreams by Joseph, the preparation of Egypt for the seven years of famine, and Joseph's being placed over the land as ruler second to Pharaoh, there is so much richness that you could study all day and still have new nuggets to take away!

The message I needed and took this morning was in two places. Notice first that Joseph was given charge over the baker and the butler. How was his charge described? He served them! The position of leadership, influence, or authority given to us by God is one of servitude! We are to be the servants of Christ and, likewise, the servants of our brethren. This expectation is quite contrary to how the world would describe a leadership role. But we know that our way of thinking is opposite of God's way. His way up is down, and the way we become great is to become the least! We must lead others by serving them!

The next thing to understand is that it is not me, but it is God! Anything and everything that is good in me, successful in me, or rewarding in me is not by me! So many times, if we are not careful, we can claim glory for ourselves that truly belongs to the Lord! Let us remember that we are nothing and God is everything and let us honor Him!

Have you given yourself to the Lord? Why not today, right where you are, give yourself as an offering to the Lord? After fifty-two years of serving the Lord in South Africa, I am positive that Robert Moffat never regretted making the statement, "I have nothing to give God but myself."

He Served Them - It is Not Me

Genesis 40:4-16

Stephen Underwood — South Africa

⁴ And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them: and they continued a season in ward. ⁵ And they dreamed a dream both of them, each man his dream in one night, each man according to the interpretation of his dream, the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, which were bound in the prison. ⁶ And Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and looked upon them, and, behold, they were sad. ⁷ And he asked Pharaoh's officers that were with him in the ward of his lord's house, saying, Wherefore look ye so sadly to day? ⁸ And they said unto him, We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it. And Joseph said unto them, Do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them, I pray you. ⁹ And the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, In my dream, behold, a vine was before me; ¹⁰ And in the vine were three branches: and it was as though it budded, and her blossoms shot forth; and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes: ¹¹ And Pharaoh's cup was in my hand: and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand. ¹² And Joseph said unto him, This is the interpretation of it: The three branches are three days: ¹³ Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head, and restore thee unto

Elisha and his servant are camping out. Elisha's servant wakes up, goes outside, and becomes afraid when he looks around. He sees the Syrians, Israel's enemy surrounding the entire area. He rushes in to tell Elisha, but Elisha responds calmly that he should go back outside and look. He tells him not to fear because there are more on their side than on the enemy's side. He then prays that God would open his servant's eyes so he could see that God is with them.

This exact truth is used later in the New Testament by the apostle John when he wrote 1 John 4:4. This time the intended audience is all believers. John says that we can live, walk, and think confidently because greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world.

It often appears that the problems and obstacles in our life are big, but we must not forget that God is greater. When you feel like you want to serve God with your life, you must realize that you will face obstacles but you must also realize that God is bigger than your obstacles. It may look like everything is against you, but God is for you according to Romans 8:31. It seems many times that God works best when everything seems impossible. God is always more powerful than the devil or any obstacle we face. The problem is that many times we are like the servant of Elisha and have our eyes closed. May God open our eyes so we can see that our God is greater than all else.

Will Return, Don't Burn

2 Peter 3:9

Ed De los Reyes — China

⁹The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

2 Peter 3:9

Jesus has not come back yet in order for more people to get saved.

In this chapter, Peter is talking about scoffers who say that nothing has changed since the beginning of time and that the whole idea of Jesus coming back and destroying the world is false. He says these people are willingly ignorant of the fact that the earth was once destroyed by a flood and that this time it is being reserved for destruction by fire. He says that it hasn't happened yet, not because God isn't keeping His Word about destroying the world, but because He is restraining His wrath for this time so that more people would get saved before the judgment of the world. He is being patient, desiring

all to come to repentance. Let's remember this. Jesus hasn't come back yet, but He hasn't come back yet for a specific purpose. He wants as many people as possible to get saved!

We cannot go through life without this on the forefront of our minds. It is a fact is that Jesus is coming back to judge and destroy the world. However, His coming has not happened yet for the specific purpose—so that more may come to know Him in salvation. What are we doing today to make this happen? Are we

Give Yourself

2 Corinthians 8:5

Eric Elrod — India

⁵And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.

2 Corinthians 8:5

A young Scottish boy in London, affectionately known as wee-Bobby, was from a poor, Christian family. Shortly after he was saved, their church had a missions meeting where a special offering was taken for missions. As the offering plate got to wee-Bobby, he motioned for the usher to put the plate on the ground. He knew he did not have any money or other goods to give to the Lord and missions, so he slipped off his shoes, stepped into the offering plate and gave the very best thing could give—himself. Wee-Bobby meant it when he said, "I have nothing to give God but myself." Today, we know wee-Bobby as the great missionary, Robert Moffat. Moffat went on from his humble beginnings in London to pioneer a great work for the Lord in South Africa.

In 2 Corinthians 8, Paul gives an example and applauds the church of Macedonia in that how, even in their poverty, they gave generously and with joy. However, more importantly than the financial support they gave, they gave themselves to the Lord first. This group of people, through great affliction, deep poverty and undesirable circumstances, were willing to give everything they had, including their own lives, to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

God is looking for young men and women today who, before giving themselves to a career, will first give themselves to Him.

That All the Earth May Know!

2 Kings 19:19

Brady Van Winkle — Turkey

¹⁹Now therefore, O LORD our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the LORD God, even thou only.

2 Kings 19:19

Hezekiah and the children of Israel were surrounded by the Assyrian army. Hezekiah knew they were outnumbered and outmanned but he also knew he had God on his side. Hezekiah begged God to do something big so that all the earth would know He was the true God. All the other countries' gods had failed, but our God did not! He gave Judah the victory, and all the earth knew about God that day!

Today as a church, we are outnumbered and surrounded by the enemies of God. They do not want the world to be reached with the Gospel, but God wants all the earth to know that He is God! As Christians, we should be seeking to reach the world with the Gospel wherever we are! But we should also ask God to do big things in our lives! As He moves and works we can tell people how great a God we serve! It may seem like reaching the world is an impossible task but God wants all the earth to know that He is God and it is our responsibility as Christians to tell them.

participating with the scoffers, living as if Jesus will never return and that every day is just like the last one? Do not abuse the patience of God. He is only being patient so that as many people as possible will be saved. Get busy! Share the Gospel! Witness! That is the absolute only reason that Jesus has not come back yet. Play a part in the mission of the Kingdom. The mission is missions, and if Jesus isn't here right now, then the mission is now.

Missions is the Mission

Luke 24:46-47

Ed De los Reyes — China

⁴⁶And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: ⁴⁷And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

Luke 24:46-47

Missions was the mission.

In this chapter, Jesus rises from the dead. As He is appearing to His disciples, He gives them the Great Commission. However, how He prefaces the commission is very interesting. In essence, He tells them that the reason the Scriptures have been written and why Jesus came, suffered, died, and arose was so that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations. The whole point of Jesus' coming was so that the whole world would come to know Him. The whole point of the Bible even being written was that the whole world would come to God. Sometimes it's easy to think that the Bible was written just for us—just for you, your family, your friends, and anyone you know personally. It's easy to think it was written to

help us live good lives that God is happy with. It's easy to think that Jesus only died for us. I know we'd never say that, but what about the way we live? We can often live in a way that communicates that we think Jesus only died for the people who are already saved.

If we truly believed the whole reason He came and the Bible was written was so that the whole world would know Him, we'd interact with this world differently. Sometimes we can think that missions is just something extra that was added on later as an afterthought. However, it was always the main goal. Missions is the mission.

The Absurdity of Our Excuses

Exodus 4:10-12

Will Hill — Japan

¹⁰ And Moses said unto the LORD, O my LORD, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. ¹¹ And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD? ¹² Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.

Exodus 4:10-12

In Exodus 3 God reveals to Moses His will to free Israel from slavery in Egypt. What an honor that God Almighty would choose Moses to rescue slaves from their bondage! This is God's answer to the cries of woe from Israel! God is going to rescue them and He is going to use Moses to do it! What a miracle! However, instead of instant obedience, Moses gives God excuse after excuse for why he can't.

Moses' final excuse was "but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue." Do you realize how absurd this statement is? God is telling him to use his mouth, the mouth that He created to do His will, and Moses tells God he can't. Moses was so caught up in what he was capable of that he had forgotten with whom he was speaking!

God responds, "Who hath made man's mouth? Or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD?" Moses' final excuse was dishonoring to God. Moses looked to the Creator of his mouth and told Him that the mouth He created didn't function properly.

God reminded Moses that He was the One Who made his mouth and all things. He knew what Moses could do and, more importantly, He knew what He Himself could do with Moses' mouth.

God then commanded Moses to go and He would be with Moses' mouth. How about you Christian? God has commanded us to tell the nations about His Gospel. What is wrong with your mouth that it cannot go and tell them?

God told Moses to go and speak to Pharaoh. God told us to go as well. In Matthew 28:19-20 and Mark 16:15 our Savior told us to go out into this world and tell them about Jesus. If we don't they remain in their slavery to sin. Hear the call of God; hear the cries of millions in bondage to sin! Hear the call of Jesus bidding you to speak of His Salvation!