TikTok Devotional Series Transcript:

October 2022

October 1, 2022 - I Will Be Gracious

"I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." (Exodus 33:19)

Moses needed hope that God really could have mercy on a stiff-necked people who had just committed idolatry and scorned the God who brought them out of Egypt.

To give Moses the hope and confidence he needed, God said, *"I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious."* In other words*, "My choices do not depend on the degree of evil or good in man but solely upon my free, sovereign will. Therefore no one can say he is too evil to be shown grace." T*hat would imply God is not free, and election is not unconditional.

The doctrine of unconditional election is the great doctrine of hope for the worst of sinners. It means that when it comes to being a candidate for grace, your background has nothing to do with God's choice. That's good news.

If you have not been born again and brought to saving faith in Jesus Christ, do not sink into hopelessness thinking that the excessive rottenness or hardness of your past life is an insurmountable obstacle to God's gracious work in your life. God loves to magnify the freedom of his grace by saving the worst of sinners.

Turn from your sin; call upon the Lord. Even in this daily devotion, he is being gracious to you, and giving you strong encouragement to come to him for mercy.

October 2, 2022 - The Joy Set Before Him

[Look] to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:2)

Love is the way of joy that one should choose, lest one be found in begrudging obedience to the Almighty or chafing under the privilege of being a channel of grace or belittling the promised reward. Jesus did not contradict this principle.

The greatest labour of love that ever happened was possible because Jesus pursued the greatest imaginable joy, namely, the joy of being exalted to God's right hand in the assembly of a redeemed people: "For the joy that was set before him [he] endured the cross!"

In saying this, the writer means to give Jesus as another example, along with the saints of Hebrews 11, of those who are so eager for and confident in the joy God offers that they reject the *"fleeting pleasures of sin" (Hebrews 11:25)* and choose ill-treatment in order to be aligned with God's will.

It is not unbiblical, therefore, to say that at least part of what sustained Christ in the dark hours of Gethsemane was the hope of joy beyond the cross. This does not diminish the reality and greatness of his love for us, because the joy in which he hoped was the joy of leading many sons to glory (Hebrews 2:10).

His joy is in our redemption, which redounds to God's glory. We share the joy with Jesus and God gets the glory.

October 3, 2022 - No Empty Word

He said to them, "Take to heart all the words by which I am warning you today, that you may command them to your children, that they may be careful to do all the words of this law. For it is no empty word for you, but your very life, and by this word you shall live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess." (Deuteronomy 32:46–47)

The word of God is not a trifle; it is a matter of life and death. If you treat the Scriptures as a trifle or as empty words, you forfeit life.

Even our physical life depends on God's word, because by his word we were created (Psalm 33:6; Hebrews 11:3), and "*he upholds the universe by the word of his power" (Hebrews 1:3).*

And our spiritual life begins by the word of God: *"Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth" (James 1:18). "You have been born again . . . through the living and abiding word of God" (1 Peter 1:23).*

Not only do we begin to live by God's word, but we also go on living by God's word: *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4; Deuteronomy 8:3).*

Indeed, the Bible is "no empty word for you" — it is your life! All this is owing to the word of God's power. By that same power, he has spoken in Scripture for the creation and sustenance of our spiritual life. Therefore, the Bible is no empty word, but is your very life.

October 4, 2022 - Greatness of His Power

The immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe . . . (Ephesians 1:19)

The omnipotence of God means eternal, unshakable refuge in the everlasting glory of God no matter what happens on this earth and that confidence is the source and power of radical obedience to the call of God.

Is there anything more freeing, more thrilling, or more strengthening than the truth that God Almighty is your refuge — all day, every day, in all the ordinary and extraordinary experiences of life?

If we believed this, if we really let this truth of God's omnipotence get hold of us, what a difference it would make in our personal lives and in our ministries! How humble and powerful we would become for the saving purposes of God!

The omnipotence of God means refuge for the people of God and when you really believe that your refuge is the omnipotence of God Almighty, there is a joy and a freedom and a power that spills over in a life of radical obedience to Jesus Christ.

The omnipotence of God means reverence, recompense, and refuge for his covenant people. I invite you to accept the terms of his covenant of grace: Turn from sin and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ; and the omnipotence of God Almighty will be the reverence of your soul, the recompense of your enemies, and the refuge of your life — forever.

October 5, 2022 - Walk In Freedom

I shall walk in freedom, for I have sought your precepts. (Psalm 119:45)

An essential element of joy is freedom. None of us would be happy if we were not free from what we hate and free for what we love. Where do we find true freedom?

The picture is one of open spaces. The word frees us from smallness of mind. *"God gave Solomon . . . breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore" (1 Kings 4:29). The word frees us from threatening confinements. "He brought me out into a broad place" (Psalm 18:19).*

Jesus says, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32). The freedom he has in mind is freedom from the slavery of sin (John 8:34). Or, to put it positively, it is freedom for holiness.

The promises of God's grace provide the power that makes the demands of God's holiness an experience of freedom rather than fear and confinement.

When we trust the promises of God, we sever the root of corruption and sinful desire by the power of a superior promise. How crucial is the word that breaks the power of counterfeit pleasures! And how vigilant we should be to light our paths and load our hearts with the word of God! This is how to walk in freedom.

October 6, 2022 - Your Father Will Reward You

"But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you." (Matthew 6:6)

Christians Endeavor to pursue our interest and our happiness with all our might. We have learned from the Bible that God's interest is to magnify the fullness of his glory by spilling over in mercy to us — to us sinners, who desperately need him.

Therefore, the pursuit of our interest and our happiness, even if it costs us our lives, is never above God's interest and God's happiness and God's glory, but always in God's. One of the most precious truths in the Bible is that God's greatest interest is to glorify the wealth of his grace by making sinners happy in him!

When we humble ourselves like little children and put on no airs of self-sufficiency but run happily into the joy of our Father's embrace, the glory of his grace is magnified and the longing of our soul is satisfied. Our interest and his glory become one.

When Jesus promises in Matthew 6:6, "Your Father who sees in secret will reward you," this is a reward he wants us to seek. He does not lure us with joy we shouldn't have! But this reward — this joy — is the overflow of turning away from human praise and going into our closet to seek God, our Father, who will reward you.

October 7, 2022 - Sword of The Spirit

In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Ephesians 6:16–17)

When I am anxious about getting old, I battle unbelief with the promise, *"Even to your old age I am he, and to grey hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save" (Isaiah 46:4).*

When I am anxious about dying, I battle unbelief with the promise that *"none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living" (Romans 14:7–9).*

When I am anxious that I may make shipwreck of faith and fall away from God, I battle unbelief with the promises, *"He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).*

Join me in this battle! Let us make war, not with other people, but with our own unbelief. Unbelief in the promises of God is the root of anxiety, which, in turn, is the root of so many other sins. The sword of the Spirit is the word of God, let us fight the good fight of faith.

October 8, 2022 - Joy In Worship

Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. (Philippians 3:1)

Joy in God is the very thing that makes our praise an honour to God, and not hypocrisy.

God glorifies himself towards the creatures in two ways: (1) by appearing to their understanding; (2) in communicating himself to their hearts, and in their rejoicing and delighting in, and enjoying the manifestations which he makes of himself.

We must pursue joy in God if we are to glorify him as the surpassingly valuable Reality in the universe. Joy is not a mere option alongside worship. It is an essential component of worship. Indeed the very essence of worship — being glad in the glories of God.

We have a name for those who speak their praises of God when they have no pleasure in what they praise. We call them hypocrites. Jesus said, "You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: *'This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me'" (Matthew 15:7–8).* This fact that authentic praise means consummate pleasure and that the highest end of man is to drink deeply of this pleasure for God's glory is a most liberating discovery as we experience Joy in Worship.

October 9, 2022 - Delight Yourself

Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. (Psalm 37:4)

The quest for pleasure is not even optional, but commanded (in the Psalms). The psalmists sought to do just this: *"As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God" (Psalm 42:1–2).*

The image of thirsting has its satisfying counterpart when the psalmist says that men "drink their fill of the abundance of Your house; and You give them to drink of the river of Your delights" (Psalm 36:8 NASB).

I found that the goodness of God, the very foundation of worship, is not a thing you pay your respects to out of some kind of disinterested reverence. No, it is something to be enjoyed: *"Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!" (Psalm 34:8). Taste! And see.*

God in the Psalms is the "all-satisfying Object." His people adore him unashamedly for the "exceeding joy" they find in him (Psalm 43:4). He is the source of complete and unending pleasure: "In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Psalm 16:11). Go ahead, delight yourself.

October 10, 2022 - Plans of His Heart

The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations. (Psalm 33:10–11)

"Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases" (Psalm 115:3). The implication of this text is that God has the right and power to do whatever makes him happy. That is what it means to say that God is sovereign.

Think about it for a moment: If God is sovereign and can do anything he pleases, then none of his purposes can be frustrated. If none of his purposes can be frustrated, then he must be the happiest of all beings.

This infinite, divine happiness is the fountain from which the Christian drinks and longs to drink more deeply.

God is never out of sorts with frustration or discouragement. And, as Psalm 147:11 says, he *"takes pleasure . . . in those who hope in his steadfast love." S*o the aim of the Christian is not to avoid this God, not to run from him, or tiptoe through the living room lest his gloominess become anger. No, our aim is to hope in his steadfast love. To run to him. To be happy in God, to delight in God, to cherish and enjoy his fellowship and favour.

October 11, 2022 - Steadfast Love

"The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness." (Exodus 34:6)

God abounds in steadfast love and faithfulness.

Two images come to my mind:

1. *The heart of God is like an inexhaustible spring of water that bubbles up love and faithfulness at the top of the mountain. Century after century the spring keeps on flowing.*
2. *Or the heart of God is like a volcano that burns so hot with love that it blasts the top off the mountain and flows year after year with the lava of love and faithfulness.*

When God uses the word "abounding" — "abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" — he wants us to understand and feel that the resources of his love are not limited. You can drink at this mountain spring all day, year after year, generation after generation, and it never runs dry.

You might even risk saying that God is like a government that simply prints more money when there's a need. Inexhaustible, right? Well, there's a difference. God has an infinite treasury of golden love to cover all the currency he prints. The government is in a dream world. God banks very realistically on the infinite resources of his deity.

God's infinite self-sufficiency spills over in love to us — to sinners — who need him, and the gift of himself in Jesus. We can bank on his love precisely because we believe in the absoluteness of his existence, the sovereignty of his freedom, and the limitlessness of his power.

October 12, 2022 - You Have Loved Me

"I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them." (John 17:26)

That's what Jesus prayed the night before he died. Imagine being able to enjoy what is most enjoyable with unbounded energy and passion forever. This is not now our experience. Three things stand in the way of our complete satisfaction in this world.

One is that nothing in this created world has a personal worth great enough to meet the deepest longings of our hearts. Another is that we lack the strength to savour the best treasures to their maximum worth. And a third obstacle standing in the way of complete satisfaction is that our joys here come to an end. Nothing lasts.

If God's pleasure in the Son becomes our pleasure in the Son, then the object of our pleasure, Jesus, will be inexhaustible in personal worth. He will never become boring or disappointing or frustrating.

No greater treasure can be conceived than the Son of God. Moreover, our ability to savour this inexhaustible treasure will not be limited by human weaknesses. We will enjoy the Son of God with the very enjoyment of his Father. That's what Jesus prayed for!

God's delight in his Son will be in us and it will be ours — our delight in the Son. And this will never end, because neither the Father nor the Son ever ends.

October 13, 2022 - I Will Repay

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." (Romans 12:19)

All of you have been wronged at one time or another. Most of you, probably, have been wronged seriously by someone who has never apologized or done anything sufficient to make it right.

One of the deep hindrances to your letting go of that hurt and bitterness is the conviction — the justified conviction — that justice should be done, that the moral fabric of the universe will unravel if people can just get away with horrible wrongs and deceive everyone.

That is one of the hindrances to forgiveness and letting grudges go. It's not the only one. We have our own sin to deal with. But it is a real one.

We feel that just to let it go would be to admit that justice simply won't be done. And we can't do it.

So we hold on to anger, and play the events or the words over and over again with the feelings and our bitterness starts to poison everything. God's word is given to us by God to lift that burden from us.

It means, when you lay down the burden of vengeance, God will pick it up. He will Repay.

October 14, 2022 - The Blessed God

Sound doctrine [is] in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God. (1 Timothy 1:10–11) A great part of God's glory is his happiness.

It was inconceivable to the apostle Paul that God could be denied infinite joy and still be all-glorious. To be infinitely glorious was to be infinitely happy. He used the phrase, "the glory of the blessed God," because it is a glorious thing for God to be as happy as he is — infinitely happy.

God's glory consists much in the fact that he is happy beyond our wildest imagination. This is the gospel: "the gospel of the glory of the happy God." That's a quote from the Bible! It is good news that God is gloriously happy.

No one would want to spend eternity with an unhappy God. If God is unhappy, then the goal of the gospel is not a happy goal, and that means it would be no gospel at all.

Jesus invites us to spend eternity with a happy God when he says, *"Enter into the joy of your master" (Matthew 25:23). T*he happiness of God is first and foremost a happiness in his Son. When we share in the happiness of God, we share in the very pleasure that the Father has in the Son. This is why Jesus made the Father known to us.

October 15, 2022 - God Works For Us

From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who works for those who wait for him. (Isaiah 64:4)

Only a few things have gripped me with greater joy than the truth that God loves to show his God-ness by working for me, and that his working for me is always before and under and in any working I do for him.

At first it may sound arrogant of us, and belittling to God, to say that he works for us. But that's only because of the connotation that I am an employer and God needs a job. That's not the connotation when the Bible talks about God's working for us.

The proper connotation of saying God works for me is that I am bankrupt and need a bailout. I am weak and need someone strong. I am endangered and need a protector. I am foolish and need someone wise. I am lost and need a Rescuer.

God works for me means I can't do the work. I am utterly in need of help. This glorifies God not me. The Giver gets the glory. The Powerful One gets the praise.

The Bible talks about God working for you, be freed from the burden of bearing your own load. Let him do that work.

October 16, 2022 - Doing Them Good

"I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me. I will rejoice in doing them good, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul." (Jeremiah 32:40–41)

God's pursuit of praise from us and our pursuit of pleasure in him are one and the same pursuit. God's quest to be glorified and our quest to be satisfied reach their goal in this one experience: our delight in God, which overflows in praise.

For God, praise is the sweet echo of his own excellence in the hearts of his people. For us, praise is the summit of satisfaction that comes from living in fellowship with God.

The stunning implication of this discovery is that all the omnipotent energy that drives the heart of God to pursue his own glory also drives him to satisfy the hearts of those who seek their joy in him.

The good news of the Bible is that God is not at all disinclined to satisfy the hearts of those who hope in him. Just the opposite: The very thing that can make us happiest is what God delights in with all his heart and with all his soul. These are amazing words.

With all his heart and with all his soul, God joins us in the pursuit of our everlasting joy because the consummation of that joy in him redounds to the glory of his own infinite worth as he continues doing them good.

October 17, 2022 - Christ The Power

We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. (1 Corinthians 1:23–24)

Over against the terrifying news that we have fallen under the condemnation of our Creator and that he is bound by his own righteous character to preserve the worth of his glory by pouring out eternal wrath on our sin, there is the wonderful news of the gospel.

This is a truth no one can ever learn from nature. The truth of the gospel has to be told to neighbours and preached in churches and carried by missionaries.

The good news is that God himself has decreed a way to satisfy the demands of his justice without condemning the whole human race. Hell is one way to settle accounts with sinners and uphold his justice. But there is another way. God provided another way. This is the gospel.

The wisdom of God has ordained a way for the love of God to deliver us from the wrath of God without compromising the justice of God. There it is. The gospel. What is this wisdom? The death of the Son of God for sinners!

The death of Christ is the wisdom of God by which the love of God saves sinners from the wrath of God, all the while upholding and demonstrating the righteousness of God in Christ.

October 18, 2022 - Faith In Jesus

God put [Jesus] forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:25–26)

These may be the most important verses in the Bible. God is wholly just! And he justifies the ungodly! Really? A just judge acquitting the guilty! He acquits the guilty but is not guilty in doing so. This is the greatest news in the world!

- *"[God] made [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21). He takes our sin. We take his righteousness.*
- *"By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3). Whose flesh? Christ's. Whose sin condemned in that flesh? Ours. For us then? No condemnation!*
- *"[Christ] bore our sins in his body on the tree." (1 Peter 2:24)*
- *"Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God." (1 Peter 3:18)*

The best news in all the world, the gospel, is that God has decreed and enacted a way of salvation that also upholds the worth of his glory, the honour of his Son, and the eternal salvation of his elect. We need to have faith in Jesus.

October 19, 2022 - Apart From Me

"I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:5)

Suppose you are totally paralysed and can do nothing for yourself but talk and a strong and reliable friend promised to live with you and do whatever you needed done. How could you glorify this friend if a stranger came to see you?

Would you glorify his generosity and strength by trying to get out of bed and carry him? No! You would say, "Friend, please come lift me up and would you put a pillow behind me so I can look at my guest and would you please put my glasses on for me?"

Your visitor would learn from your requests that you are helpless and that your friend is strong and kind. You glorify your friend by needing him and by asking him for help and counting on him.

How then do we glorify God? Jesus gives the answer in John 15:7: "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." We pray! We ask God to do for us through Christ what we can't do for ourselves — bear fruit..

October 20, 2022 - He Himself Gives

"The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything." (Acts 17:24–25)

We do not glorify God by providing his needs but by praying that he would provide ours — and trusting him to answer and living in the joy of that all-providing care as we lay down our lives in love for other people.

Here we are at the heart of the good news, God's insistence that we ask him to give us help. *"Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me" (Psalm 50:15).* This forces on us the startling fact that we must beware of thinking he needs us. We must beware of serving God and we must take special care to let him serve us, lest we rob him of his glory.

This sounds very strange. Most of us think serving God is a totally positive thing. There is a way to serve God that would belittle him as needy of our service. Jesus said, *"The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).* He aims to be the servant. He aims to get the glory as he himself gives.

October 21, 2022 - Riches of His Grace

. . . so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:7)

A most astonishing image of Christ's second coming is in Luke 12:35–37, which pictures the return of a master from a marriage feast like this:

"Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them."

We are called servants — and that no doubt means we are to do exactly as we are told. But the wonder of this picture is that the "master" insists on serving. We may have expected this during Jesus's ministry on earth, since he said, *"The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).* But Luke 12:35–37 is a picture of the second coming. Why would Jesus be portrayed as a table waiter at the second coming?

Because the very heart of his glory is the fullness of grace that overflows in kindness to needy people. God never relinquishes the role of inexhaustible benefactor of his ever-dependent, happy people as he showers on us the riches of his grace.

October 22, 2022 - I Will Heal Him

"I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will lead him and restore comfort to him and his mourners, creating the fruit of the lips. Peace, peace, to the far and to the near," says the Lord, "and I will heal him." (Isaiah 57:18–19)

In spite of the severity of man's disease of rebellion and wilfulness, God will heal him. How will he heal? Isaiah 57:15 says that God dwells with the crushed and humble. Yet the people of Isaiah 57:17 are not humble. They are brazenly pursuing their own proud way. So, what will a healing be?

It can only be one thing. God will heal them by humbling them. He will cure the patient by crushing his pride. If only the crushed and humble enjoy God's fellowship (Isaiah 57:15), and if Israel's sickness is a proud and wilful rebellion (Isaiah 57:17), and if God promises to heal them (Isaiah 57:18), then his healing must be humbling and his cure must be a crushed spirit.

So the healing of Isaiah 57:18 is a major heart transplant — the old hardened, proud, wilful heart of stone is taken out and a new soft, tender heart is put in, which is easily humbled and crushed by the memory of sin and the sin that remains. This is how God will heal him.

October 23, 2022 - A Jealous God

"The Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God." (Exodus 34:14)

God is infinitely jealous for the honour of his name and responds with terrible wrath against those whose hearts should belong to him but go after other things, like a spouse running after another lover. He says to faithless Israel in Ezekiel 16:38–40,

"I will judge you as women who commit adultery and shed blood are judged and bring upon you the blood of wrath and jealousy. And I will give you into their hands, and they shall throw down your vaulted chamber. . . . They shall strip you of your clothes and take your beautiful jewels and leave you naked and bare. They shall bring up a crowd against you, and they shall stone you and cut you to pieces with their swords."

I urge you to listen to this warning. The jealousy of God for your undivided love and devotion will always have the last say. Whatever lures your affections away from God with deceptive attraction will come back to strip you bare and cut you in pieces.

It is a horrifying thing to use your God-given life to commit adultery against the Almighty. For those of you who have been truly united to Christ and who keep your vows to forsake all others and cleave only to him and live for his honour — for you the jealousy of God is a great comfort and a great hope.

Since God is infinitely jealous for the honour of his name, anything and anybody who threatens the good of his faithful wife will be opposed with divine omnipotence. That's good news for the faithful wife — the faithful people of a jealous God.

October 24, 2022 - Present The Church

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendour. (Ephesians 5:25–27)

The reason there is so much misery in marriage is not that husbands and wives seek their own pleasure, but that they do not seek it in the pleasure of their spouses. The biblical mandate to husbands and wives is to seek your own joy in the joy of your spouse.

There is scarcely a more lovely passage in the Bible than the one on marriage in Ephesians 5:25–30. Husbands are told to love their wives the way Christ loved the church.

How did he love the church? Verse 25 says he "gave himself up for her." But why? Verse 26 says, *"that he might sanctify" and cleanse her. But why did he want to do that? Verse 27 answers, "that he might present the church to himself in splendour!"*

There it is! *"For the joy that was set before him [he] endured the cross" (Hebrews 12:2).* What joy? The joy of marriage to his bride, the church. The joy of presenting the church to himself in blood-bought splendour.

October 25, 2022 - Members of His Body

No one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. (Ephesians 5:29–30)

Don't miss that last phrase: "because we are members of his body" and don't forget what Paul said two verses earlier, namely, that Christ gave himself for us "so that he might present the church to himself in splendour." In two different ways, Paul makes plain that Christ pursued his joy in pursuing the holiness and beauty and happiness of his people.

The union between Christ and his bride is so close ("one flesh") that any good done to her is a good done to himself. Which means that the clear assertion of this text is that the Lord is moved to nourish, cherish, sanctify, and cleanse his bride because in this he finds his joy.

What Christ does for his bride, this text plainly calls love: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church . . . " (Ephesians 5:25). The text defines love for us. According to this text, love is the pursuit of Christ's joy in the holy joy of the beloved.

There is no way to exclude self-interest from love, for self-interest is not the same as selfishness. Selfishness seeks its own private happiness at the expense of others.

Christlike love seeks its happiness in the happiness of others — not at their expense. It will even suffer and die for the beloved in order that its joy might be made full in the life and purity of the beloved. This is how Christ loves us, as members of his body.

October 26, 2022 - Our Father

"Pray then like this: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name." (Matthew 6:9)

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus teaches that the first priority in praying is to ask our heavenly Father to cause his name to be hallowed. In us, in the church, in the world & everywhere.

Notice that this is a petition, a request, it is not a declaration or acclamation. It is not an expression of praise but petition. It is supplication. It is a request to God that he would see to it that his own name be hallowed.

It is like another text, Matthew 9:38, where Jesus tells us to pray to the Lord of the harvest that he would send out laborers into his own harvest. It never ceases to amaze me that we, the labourers, should be instructed to ask the owner of the farm, who knows the harvest better than we do, to add on more farm hands.

But isn't this the same thing we have here in the Lord's Prayer — Jesus is telling us to ask God, who is infinitely jealous for the honour of his own name, to see to it that his name be hallowed, which means honoured, revered, exalted as supremely precious?

This teaches us two things.

- *That prayer does not move God to do things he is disinclined to do. He has every intention to cause his name to be hallowed. Nothing is higher on God's priority list but we should ask anyway.*
- *The other is that prayer is God's way of bringing our priorities into line with his. God wills to make great things the consequence of our prayers when our prayers are the consequence of his great purposes.*

Bring your heart into line with the desire of God to hallow his name, and you will pray with great effect for the cause of our Father.

October 27, 2022 - Christ and The Church

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. (Ephesians 5:31–32)

Here Paul is quoting Genesis 2:24, which Moses spoke — and Jesus said God spoke through Moses (Matthew 19:5) — *"A man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."* Paul says this word of God, spoken before the fall into sin, is a reference to Christ and the church and contains therefore a great mystery.

What this implies is that when God engaged to create man and woman and to ordain the union of marriage, he didn't roll the dice or draw straws or flip a coin as to how they might be related to each other. He patterned marriage very purposefully after the relationship between his Son and the church, which he had planned from all eternity.

Therefore, marriage is a mystery — it contains and conceals a meaning far greater than what we see on the outside. God created man male and female and ordained marriage so that the eternal covenant relationship between Christ and his church would be imaged forth in the marriage union.

The inference Paul draws from this mystery is that the roles of husband and wife in marriage are not arbitrarily assigned but are rooted in the distinctive roles of Christ and his church.

This mystery of Christ and the church is the foundation of the pattern of love that Paul describes for marriage. Each should seek to live after the distinctive model of God's pure and glad design for Christ and the church.

October 28, 2022 - Submits To Christ

Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. (Ephesians 5:24–25)

There is a pattern of love in marriage ordained by God. The roles of husband and wife are not the same. The husband is to take his special cues from Christ as the head of the church. The wife is to take her special cues from God's design for the church as submissive to Christ.

In doing this, the sinful and damaging results of the fall begin to be reversed. The fall twisted man's loving headship into hostile domination in some men, and lazy indifference in others. The fall twisted woman's intelligent, willing submission into manipulative dealing in some women, and brazen insubordination in others.

The redemption we anticipated when the Messiah finally came in Jesus Christ was not the dismantling of the created order of loving headship and willing submission, but a recovery of it. Wives, redeem your fallen submission by modelling it after God's intention for a joyful church! Husbands, redeem your fallen headship by modelling it after God's intention for the lavishly loving Christ!

I find in Ephesians 5:21–33 these two things: (1) the display of Christian Joy in marriage and (2) the direction its impulses should take.

Wives, seek your joy in the joy of your husband by affirming and honouring his God-ordained role as "head" or leader in your relationship. Husbands, seek your joy in the joy of your wife by accepting the responsibility to lead as Christ led the church and gave himself for her.

October 29, 2022 - He Has Spoken

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son. (Hebrews 1:1–2)

The last days begin with the coming of the Son into the world. We have been living in the last days since the days of Christ — that is, the last days of history as we know it before the final and full establishment of the kingdom of God.

The point for the writer of Hebrews is this: The Word that God spoke by his Son is the decisive Word. By the Son's own design, that word has been captured for the ages in the writings of the New Testament. This word will not be followed in this age by any greater word or replacement word. This is the Word of God — the person of Jesus, the teaching of Jesus, and the work of Jesus, captured by inspiration in the apostolic writings we call the New Testament.

When I complain that I don't hear the Word of God, when I feel a desire to hear the voice of God, and get frustrated that he does not speak in ways that I may crave, what am I really saying? Am I really saying that I have exhausted this final, decisive Word revealed to me so fully and infallibly in the New Testament? Has it become so much a part of me that it has shaped my very being and given me life and guidance?

Or have I treated it lightly — skimmed it like a newspaper, clicked through like a quick series of internet postings, dipped in like a taste-tester — and then decided I wanted something different, something more?

God is calling us to hear his final, decisive, inexhaustible Word — to meditate on it and study it and memorize it and linger over it and soak in it with the help of the Holy Spirit.

October 30, 2022 - He Is The Radiance

He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature. (Hebrews 1:3)

Jesus relates to God the way radiance relates to glory, or the way the rays of sunlight relate to the sun. Keep in mind that every analogy between God and natural things is imperfect and will distort if you press it too far. Consider for example,

1. *There is no time that the sun exists without the beams of radiance. They cannot be separated. The radiance is co-eternal with the glory. Christ is co-eternal with God the Father.*
2. *The radiance is the glory radiating out. It is not essentially different from the glory. Christ is God standing forth as separate but not essentially different from the Father.*
3. *Thus the radiance is eternally begotten, as it were, by the glory — not created or made. The rays of the sun are an extension of the sun. So Christ is eternally begotten of the Father, but not made or created.*
4. *We see the sun by means of seeing the rays of the sun. So we see God the Father by seeing Jesus.*

Trust in Jesus and love him and worship him. He is alive and sitting at the right hand of God with all power and authority and will one day come in great glory. He has that exalted place because he is himself God the Son, “the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.”

October 31, 2022 - We Were Dead

Even when we were dead in our trespasses, [God] made us alive together with Christ — by grace you have been saved. (Ephesians 2:5)

The great missionary hope is that when the gospel is preached in the power of the Holy Spirit, God himself does what man cannot do: he creates the faith that saves. The call of God does what the call of man can’t. It raises the dead. It creates spiritual life. It is like the call of Jesus to Lazarus in the tomb, “Come out!” And the dead man obeyed and came out. The call created the obedience by creating life (John 11:43). That is how anyone is saved.

We can waken someone from sleep with our call, but God’s call can summon into being things that are not (Romans 4:17). God’s call is irresistible in the sense that it can overcome all resistance. It is infallibly effective according to God’s purpose — so much so that Paul can say, “Those whom [God] called he also justified” (Romans 8:30), even though we are only justified by our faith.

In other words, God’s call is so effectual that it infallibly creates the faith through which a person is justified. All the called are justified but none is justified without faith (Romans 5:1). So the call of God cannot fail in its intended effect. It irresistibly brings into being the faith that justifies.