

TRUTH & LOVE - CH. 7 ONLY

FRUIT & GIFTS 45 Minutes Talk

ETERNITY AND FREEDOM IS IN THE BALANCE

By Pastor Jordan Biel

SO FAR WE TALKED ABOUT ...

Chapter	Key Scriptures
1. The Difficulty With Truth	Romans 3:31
2. Believers Or Disciples	John 14:15
3. Snakes & Doves	Mark 16:15
4. Confidence & Humility	Gal. 2:20
5. Giving The Truth In Love	Eph. 4:15-16
6. Riches & Poverty	Matt. 6:19-21

TODAY, we're talking about Spiritual Gifts & The Fruit of The Spirit

Why? Because I want each of you to leave this 7 week study willing to speak the truth in love to people and that happens best in the context of using your spiritual gifts - the gifts GOD has given you to lead others to Him.

John 1:14 "...The Son, came from the Father full of love and truth."

Eph. 4:15-16(NLT), "Instead we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of His body the church. He makes the whole body fit together perfectly."

The Holy Spirit makes the "whole body fit together perfectly" by giving each of us a different set of spiritual gifts. You'll discover these gifts as you grow more and more in your walk with Christ.

You've been given more than one gift.

Take steps of faith to use ALL the gifts God's given you.

At 7:10, we're going to take a break and ask all of you to take a Spiritual Gift Assessment. It'll help you discover the areas that God may have given you certain strengths - areas that come easy to you.

The goal is that you would 1st DISCOVER those gifts and 2nd DEVELOP those gifts by using them to serve others.

Remember the goal of this book is to inspire Christians to genuinely love people - not just attend church - but genuinely love people. I think when that happens we'll see the revival that we've been praying for. Revival doesn't begin at church on Sunday. It begins with you - in your heart. With YOU let the Holy Spirit do a new and deep work in YOU?

TRUTH & LOVE

Chapter 7 - Gifts & Fruit

1 Corinthians 12-14

Nobody likes bad, old fruit! I have a feeling that if you were at work and basket of old, brown, mushy fruit arrived with your name on it, you wouldn't be really excited. In fact, you'd be pretty annoyed because now you've got to dispose of this nasty fruit before it stinks up the entire office!

The same Holy Spirit who gives us the gifts, gives us the fruit we need to display and use the gifts properly.

The same is true in the spiritual realm. We as believers are called to bear spiritual fruit, good fruit, that is. God lists all these "fruits" in

Galatians 5:22-23 NIV, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control..."

These fruit are like attitudes of the heart that are displayed in our behavior and demeanor. Plain and simple, if you're quick-tempered you're not showing the fruit of self-control. If you're rude and condescending in the way you talk to people or your spouse, then you're not showing the fruit of kindness and love because as we'll see in 1 Corinthians 13, love is never rude or demeaning. But why is it that many believers feel they can operate in their gifts without displaying any fruit? Why is that we have so many Christians claiming to be Spirit-filled and doing great things for God yet they lack the *fruit of the Spirit*?

The same Holy Spirit who gives us the gifts, gives us the fruit, the ability to display and use the gifts properly. The fruit is HOW the gifts are used and HOW we are to live & treat others.

The same Holy Spirit who gives us the gifts in order to advance the Kingdom such as teaching, hospitality, prophecy, faith, and so on is the same Holy Spirit who teaches us how to teach with kindness in our voice. He teaches us how to show true hospitality, taking on the role of a servant to others. He teaches us how to prophesy in love, yes in boldness but with the motive of communicating how much Father God loves that person that is being prophesied to.

What I've noticed over the years is that sometimes a Christian stops displaying the fruit of the Spirit even though they seek the gifts of the Spirit. Let me give a completely hypothetical example.

Tim Smith received Christ back in 1997, he's been a Christian for over a decade and half now, and the last few years, God's been teaching him about the gifts he has. Tim starts out super excited about the gifts God has given him with a humble heart; he's anxious to start using them. For the next three years, Tim is growing more and more and more in his gifts. He's prophesied to nearly 200 people and always seems to be right on, he has the gift of being able to teach and has taught Sunday School at his local church for the last year and a half. But something begins to happen. He gets more and more rude with his family. He feels his wife and his kids start to become annoying and a hindrance to his ministry. He spends less and less time with them.

Tim gradually starts to operate in his gifts out of a motive of pride, hoping people will see what he's doing "for God." He starts to prophesy very demeaning and condescending things to people out loud for everyone to hear. He's continually short-fused when his waitress messes things up. Tim's wife tries to talk to him about his behavior over the last year or so and Tim won't even let her finish a sentence. He's so wrapped up in himself it seems he constantly has the answer and could never be wrong. Tim's wife prays about it. She confronts him again a month later, but only to get the same response. She can't take it anymore. Tim is no longer the man she married but some super-spiritual nut that cares only about himself. She leaves Tim and

takes the kids with her. The divorce papers are signed, and Tim has lost his family. What happened?

Although hypothetical, this example is all too close to what I've heard occur take place in Evangelical or Pentecostal realms. And sad to say, I've seen it first hand. Nothing is worse than seeing a minister act completely differently on stage than they do behind closed doors in the green room.

Because I've seen this a number of times, it makes me even more grateful when I find true ministers with humility of heart and kindness in their voice no matter who they're talking to or where they are.

Let's read what Paul shared right before giving us a list of Spiritual fruit.

Gal. 5:13 through 6:1

For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴ For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁵ But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

¹⁶ "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these."

"I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. **6** Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness." ESV

What happened to Tim? I'll tell you what happened to Tim. He forgot the "why"

He forgot that the gifts God gave him were for the purpose of edifying people and glorifying God like the Bible teaches us. He bought into the lie that so believers do, that "Gifts were given to glorify me." **No, Gifts were given to you glorify God, the giver, by edifying others.**

The fruit of the Spirit opens the heart to receive the gifts of the Spirit.

When the gifts of the Spirit are in operation without the fruit, without love and patience and kindness, the result is very harmful. The result is a complete opposite of the intended purpose of the gifts; instead of edifying and building up the person, it confuses the person and closes their spirit to possibly receive encouragement from another in the future. Instead of causing the recipient to grow, you actually stunt the growth of the recipient if you operate in your "gifts."

So how does that basket of rotten fruit look? How does it smell? Appalling? Revolting? How about the flies circling the rotten apples and maggots crawling out of the pairs? Does it make you want to puke? That's how people feel when "Christians" operate in their gifts without any fruit.

People want to know, first of all, that you love them and that God loves them. And when you operate in God's sincere love, people will know it.

If you operate in your "gifts" without the love of Christ in your eyes, you actually can stunt the growth of another instead of building them up.

They'll sense it. They'll see it in your eyes and hear it in your voice, even if you're confronting a sin issue. I've had a handful of circumstances where I've had to operate in the gift of discernment when, to be honest, I didn't want to. There have times when I've had to warn somebody of something in their life something that will ultimately be used by Satan to destroy them. But every time, my message was received with grace and humility because they could sense the love of God within the message. They

knew that I loved them and they knew it was because I loved them, that I warned them.

I'm not saying our ministries can never be bold or cutting edge. In fact, I'm extremely passionate about being used of God and stepping out in faith to do anything and say anything on God's behalf. I want God to use me. I want God to know that He can trust me to carry out a message. But no matter how bold or confronting the message is, it must be shared in love. Many of the Old Testament prophets were quite bold, and some would say today "negative" in their approach. Just because someone is bold, doesn't mean they're wrong or not in the Spirit.

I believe the prophet Nathan had tears in his eyes when he spoke with King David. Do you know that story? Here was King David, "a man after God's own heart" yet his heart had gone astray. He's slept with another man's wife and even killed her husband to cover his tracks. He felt he got away it. He knew what he had done was wrong, "but hey, it's all swept under the rug now, who's ever going to know anyway?"

And then Nate shows up. The prophet Nathan, send by God, came up to King David, probably unannounced, and shared a story.

Please take a few moments to read 2 Samuel 12:1-13 and you'll find the gift of prophecy being used.

Prophecy will usually fall into one of three categories: Confront, Comfort or EnCourage.

Confronting a sin - like we'll read about in the case of King David.

Comforting a broken heart - many times God has given me words of knowledge about someone's situation and how they're hurting. I'll often share them quietly in their ear.

EnCouraging words simply point people towards their future in God.

And the Lord sent Nathan to David. He came to him and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. ² The rich man had very many flocks and herds, ³ but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children. It used to eat of his morsel and drink from his cup and lie in his arms, and it was like a daughter to him. ⁴ Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take one of

his own flock or herd to prepare for the guest who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him." ⁵ Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, ⁶ and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

⁷ Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. ⁸ And I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your arms and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if this were too little, I would add to you as much more. ⁹ Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. ¹⁰ Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.' ¹¹ Thus says the Lord, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. ¹² For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.' " ¹³ David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." And Nathan said to David, "The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die. ¹⁴ Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, the child who is born to you shall die." ¹⁵ Then Nathan went to his house.

I believe Nathan had tears in his eyes when he shared the harsh truth with his friend and King. And because it was the truth and because it was shared in love, it caused King David to weep in repentance. Sure enough, David lost his son and his family became a total wreck. Sometimes we are forgiven of sin but will still face the consequences here on earth.

I believe that the vast majority of prophecies are going to be simply encouraging, uplifting words that are to be spoken with the fruit of love and kindness but even those difficult things to say that God requires us to say to confront sin are to be shared in love and patience.

I want to ask you to grab your Bible and read 1 Corinthians 12-14, 3 chapters you may be very familiar with, but I encourage you to ask the Holy Spirit to bring new light, to illuminate His Word like only He can do.

I'll just take quick excerpt here from that first chapter. 1 Corinthians 12:7-11(NIV), "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸ To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines."

Clearly, God has given each of us different gifts. In fact, in the next portion of scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that each of us are like different body parts, needing one another; we are co-dependent upon each other with Christ being the head, the one in the charge.

Have you ever wondered what gifts God has given you? I don't want to take time in the book to somehow help you evaluate your personal gifts, but there are great resources out there that will help you. Our church uses a Spiritual Gift Assessment to help our servant-leaders/members discover their spiritual gifts so they can get plugged into the right ministry. A simple Google search will help you find one of those tools.

It's vitally important that you know that you *do* have gifts, gifts given to you by God in order that you can share His truth and love with others. The truth and love is the *what* and the gifting is the *how*. And there are many reasons God gave you those gifts. There are people that are meant to be impacted by you using your gifts with a motive of love. There are people that are destined to be drawn by the Holy Spirit through you using your gift. whether it be discernment, encouragement, the gift of teaching, the gift of healing or another.

I challenge you to pray. I challenge you to ask God what gifts He's given you, grab a pen and write them down. Ask the Lord "How do You plan on using me in this area?" Schedule a time to talk with your pastor about it. Let's step out in faith and start using our gifts to encourage and build up the body of Christ!

A PICTURE OF A SPIRITUAL GIFT

So you may be thinking "How do they work in real life?" I can't speak for others of course, but I'll give a few examples of how some of the gifts have been used in my life.

This last Sunday, I prophesied to a teenage boy. I don't know his story at all. But God prompted me to prophesy to him. So I shared with him in bullet point list the following:

You WILL graduate.

You WILL attend college and in fact, I'll personally contribute when that day comes.

You will NOT fall into the same traps as your family and your life WILL look DIFFERENT than you have been imagining lately.

You WILL prosper and succeed. In fact, you'll do really well.

God has given you a charismatic gift and personality and God will use that to open doors of favor...

He spoke to me afterwards saying "Everything you said, I've been thinking lately. I just failed my grade last year. All week long I've been afraid I'm going to fail again and that I'll never make it. ..."

Sometimes it's a picture in your mind. Last Sunday I saw numbness and pain in the legs, primary the right leg. A visitor came forward and said "that's me."

After I prayed he said he FELT healing and felt different. He could "feel the power of GOD" he said! WOW!

GOD is so good!

You see God simply wants us to see what He sees and hear what He hears. He wants us to know who is hurting and who is in need, whether they're hurting physically or just hurting inside. God wants to heal them and we should want to see them healed too.

Two weeks ago, a similar experience happened. This, I believe is the gifts of discernment or knowledge and the gift of faith. Right in the middle of worship, I felt God stop me and ask me to say this "I believe there's a woman to my left that just started taking sleeping pills because you simply can not sleep at night. God is going to heal you and give you peace and you're going to sleep soundly from now on."

It was so cool! This sweet lady, who actually is the administrator for our boys' Royal Ranger's program, raises her hands in faith and God met her at her point of need. She told me last Sunday, three days ago, that she has slept like a baby all week! God simply healed her.

Could God have healed her without me? Absolutely! Look, He doesn't need us, but He sure does like to include us in the miracle. And I love that about God. He's a Father who loves his kids to experience cool stuff. I mean "*give good gifts to His children.*"

I want to share with you the power of a prophetic word. Around 2009 I'd guess, a man walked into church with his family named Brian Zeifang. The Holy Spirit highlighted him in the midst of our corporate worship time and gave me a word for him about becoming a Spiritual Leader. I remember telling him "Stop fighting God. Stop telling God you weren't mean to lead! You'll be a leader of many! You have a pastor's call on your life. Quit running from it. Step up and serve God where He's called you. You will be a pastor. You ARE called to ministry. No more fighting it. No more running!"

He soon joined our small group and their family became very close to ours. 3 years later, he moved because he was an active Marine. Remembering that word though and the Holy Spirit constantly knocking on his heart. **He took a step of faith.** He began Bible College through distance learning. He finished and guess what happened. The church he was attending asked him to be their pastor. He called me out of the blue one day last summer, and I was working outside. I was cleaning up the yard with the girls. He calls and says "Hey it's Brian. Brian Zeifang. I said "How you doing?" He said "good" then I started to cry when he said "Guess what? I'm a pastor!" I couldn't believe it! Well, actually I could! I could see that anointing all over him and I was overjoyed that he had found his calling. In fact, he came up the following year to be our guest speaker at a men's retreat our church was hosting. Man, did he do a great job! He brought the Word with conviction, clarity, and transparency. We talked about the power of a prophetic word. One word from Jesus can change the course of our lives! Let's be open to what HE wants to do!

Some words are so powerful and life-changing!

Shawn Boltz says "There's life before that word and then there's life after that word." It's a tipping point. And that is SO SO true.

GOD WANTS TO INCLUDE US IN THE SUPERNATURAL

Remember, what we discovered in chapter 3 when we read about the miracle of the bread and fish? God wants to include us in the miracle! God wants His power to collide with your faith and that faith become a pipeline for those in need to receive their miracle! Sometimes people need a miracle emotionally and sometimes people need a miracle physically.

I recently got back from a vacation with my family. We went to the Dollar Store to get a few fun things for the girls to do and on my way out of the store, I felt this slight nudge from the Holy Spirit. So I thought "Lord, do you have a prophetic word for her?" Then quickly this thought entered my mind "She has a sister she's concerned about." So I open the door back up, popped my head in and said, "Excuse me. Do you have a sister you're concerned about?" She looked at me kind of odd and slowly said, "Yes" with a kind-of question-mark ending to her tone. I said, "Well, would you mind if I prayed for you about that?" She said, "No, I wouldn't mind that. I wouldn't mind that at all."

I prayed a simple prayer, something like "Lord, thank You that you know everything about her and her sister. I pray that you comfort her sister and give her the wisdom she needs to make godly choices, choices that please you and get her life on track. In Jesus' Name, Amen"

Now that was pretty much painless and to be honest, only took a few minutes. But in that few minutes, she was reminded that God *does* know her concerns, her prayers, her inner-most thoughts and God displayed to her that He cares. All it takes is a listening ear.

I want to tell you about a few times I've seen God heal people physically. Here I was, a 27-year-old American youth pastor about to enter a 14 x 14 foot home on dirt road in Mexico that could hardly be defined as a "house." It was my first missions trip ever; accompanied by 15 of our youth group teens a few adult leaders. We joined Global Expeditions in an effort to build a few homes and rebuild many hearts. From the first day, I felt a renewed sense of God's power in my life. I had seen God move through me before through the simple act of prayer and faith but never like this.

On day three of our trip, we were busy hammering away at the frame of the new house, when I was asked to join another youth pastor to go three houses down to pray for his daughter who was suffering from extreme back pain. When we entered their humble home, and there she was, a woman in her thirties, bent over in pain and crying uncontrollably. With the help of our interpreter, I asked the father if she'd been to a hospital yet and what the doctors thought was wrong. He said they believe her sciatic nerve was pinched as her pain was constantly shooting from her back down through her legs. She hadn't been able to stand or sit up straight in over a month.

We laid our hands on her back and simply prayed in Jesus' name just like God's Word instructs us to. I was completely taken back as I felt my hand suddenly get really hot. It was so hot that I asked the other youth pastor "Do you feel that?" With his eyes wide open, he nodded in similar shock. Within moments she started to smile and scream "Gloria Dios! Gloria Dios!" And she stood straight up! Suddenly her tears of pain were transformed into tears of joy and gratitude. She knew, and everyone there knew, Jesus Christ had just healed her! I'll never forget her father's tear-filled eyes as he finally saw his daughter relieved of pain. What I love about this story is that two days later, we saw them again and she was smiling ear to ear confessing she hasn't had a hint of pain since God healed her!

God has given us gifts and he's given us fruit. Let's use the gifts He's given us and bear the fruit that comes from following Him to point a dying world to Jesus! The truth is God wants to heal people. The reason is love. Let this truth permeate our hearts!

LIFE IS SHORT USE YOUR GIFTS WHILE YOU HAVE THE CHANCE

James 4:14(NLT) says that, “Your life is like the morning fog, it’s here for a little while, then it’s gone.”

Life is short. In fact, life is *really* short. And because it’s so short, we should realize how brief our time is in which we have to produce fruit and use our gifts to advance God’s Kingdom while we have the chance.

I know eternity is FOREVER, an infinite amount of time, it can not be measured, but just for the sake of aiming to understand this, I want to tell you what I did in church about 8 years ago in a sermon to illustrate this. I bought a huge red ball of yarn. This thing was “YUGE” as they say in New York. In fact, if you don’t mind a quick funny story, the lady in front me turned around and looking at me confused and said, “You sowing something?” I said, “No, I’m a Pastor and this is for a sermon illustration.” She said, “Pastor! You don’t look like a Pastor! You look like a player!” Then she laughed some crazy cackle that I’ll never forget. I started laughing so hard at myself! I’m not sure if it was because of her joke or because of the deep cackle coming out of this crazy woman. So, yeah that doesn’t help make my point whatsoever, I just figured you needed a good laugh today.

So I took the yarn to church and put a small paper clip on it and wrote, “Your Life” with a fine-point sharpie. I asked a few ushers to wrap the yarn around the sanctuary until it stopped. They got around the entire sanctuary about six times stretching out the yarn. We meet in an old gym, so this was quite a bit of yarn! I held up the tiny paper clip in the middle and said “This tiny thing here, this is your life. Inspiring right?”

And the left side of this light paper clip sign represents the beginning of your life. The right side, only 2 cm over, represents the end of your life on earth. The yarn represents eternity.

For us as Christians, it’s the moment we finally see Jesus. From this point on, you can not change your past. From this moment on, you can not change how you lived your life on earth. It’s done. It’s over. What’s done is done. Every opportunity you had to obey God is gone. Every opportunity you had to show the love of God is gone. Sometimes you obeyed, and sometimes you ignored Him, and now you stand at the edge of eternity waiting to enter in.

What you do in this little span of time we call “life” or “life on earth” affects your entire eternity! Let’s make it count!

Jesus wanted to make this point clear, so He gave us a few allegories to drive the point home.

ONE MASTER, THREE SERVANTS, DIFFERENT GIFTS

Matthew 25:14-30(NIV), *“Again, it will be like a wealthy man, a Master, going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. “After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.’ “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’ “The man with two bags of gold also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.’ “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’ “Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’ “His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. “So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*

Notice that they weren’t all given the same amount of talents or gifts. It is up to God and God alone when it comes to the amount of gifts given to you and what your responsibilities are as they are given by God.

They were not given the SAME gifts or talents either.

Comparison is always a trap set by the enemy - a trap aimed to keep immobile and unable to move in your areas of gifting.

GOD is sovereign, and He is God so why do we act as if men who are given such great gifts are any greater than others? We should never compare our gifts or talents with others, period. Comparison is always a trap set by the enemy, a trap aimed to ensnare you and keep you immobile and unable to move in your areas of gifting.

I don’t know about you, but I want to please my Master, King Jesus!

I don’t know about you, but I want to be a useful instrument in God’s hands! I want to purify myself so as to be an instrument of holiness, an instrument of noble purposes. I want to be “useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work!”

I want to give God a good return on His investment in my life. I want to get to the end of my life and feel like I've put a smile on God's face and not wasted what He's given me to steward. Don't you?

Let's not bury the gifts we've been given! Let's invest them! Let's work hard! Let's give to people, serving them with our God-given gifts to bring glory to the Giver, Jesus Christ!

WHEN CHRIST RETURNS

The Bible says that we will each be judged by King Jesus according to what we have done, good or bad. Some Christians have believed that because of Jesus dying on the cross for them, they'll never face Him as judge, but that's not the truth. We'll all be judged according to what we have done and the motives of our hearts. We'll be held accountable not only for the sins of commission, the things we did that we knew we shouldn't have done and the sins of omission, the things God told us to do, but we disobeyed. Remember, God is both loving Father and Righteous Judge.

We're all going to spend eternity somewhere in Heaven ruling and reigning with God, and worshipping Jesus or suffering unquenchable pain in Hell. Hell was not designed for you or any other person. It was designed for Satan and all the other angels who rebelled against God. If you haven't accepted Jesus Christ into your life as Savior, He stands at the door of your heart, waiting to have a relationship with you, waiting for you to simply accept His gift of salvation. And I need you to know that hell was not meant for you, but Heaven was created for you! Jesus Himself has prepared a place, a home in heaven for YOU! Accepting Him as the one who died for your mistakes, for all your sins and making the choice to serve and follow Him will not only give you the peace your soul has been looking for, but it will give you eternal life with Him!

Because of Jesus and what He did on the cross, you'll be acquitted, forgiven of all you've done, of every sin, but you'll still be held accountable for them in that moment. Yes, as Christ-followers, Jesus will step in and declare that we are forgiven because of what He's done for us. But we still need to have the fear of God that leads to wisdom, a respect of God that leads us to make choices that please Him.

In fact, Jesus goes on further in Mathew 25, beginning in verse 31 about that day when He will separate the sheep from the goats, those that know Him, accepted His gift of grace and love Him as their Shepherd from those that have ignored His voice and offer of salvation.

James 3:13(NIV) says "Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom."

Wisdom comes from fearing God and desiring to serve Him and love Him. Wisdom will beg you to use your gifts, the gifts that was given to you by the Giver in order that you would bring attention to the Giver. A gift is meant to bring joy to the recipient and attention to the Giver and it would be so much wiser of us to begin to ask God what our gifts and passions are and begin to use them for His glory, serving in the church and outside the church wherever we fit best.

G.P.S.

I'm not sure about you, but I have a horrible sense of direction. I'm talking H-O-R-R-I-B-L-E! I walk out of a hallway and make one turn, and I'm lost! Forget it. If we're at a restaurant together and I got to the bathroom, don't even plan on me finding my way back! Now my wife, on the other hand, Mrs. Sacagawea over here, she takes a quick glance at the stars, even if they're hidden behind the clouds and knows exactly which way to go. Imagine how frustrating it is for me as a man to come to the point where I don't even pretend to know where I'm at anymore. If I don't have my iPhone or GPS with me, I'm just like "Babe, Pochohantas, Sacagawea! Which way do I turn, I'm lost." She can have her eyes closed and point in the right direction. Not fair. Not fair at all.

And sadly, this is how a lot of people feel when it comes to serving God. Lost.

When I meet with people who are curious about what God is calling them to I often come back to a teaching I put together years ago I called GPS. Your GPS, your sweet-spot of serving God, your "calling", if you will is often, but not always, at the intersection of your giftings and your passions that is where you should serve.

GIFTS

God has given each of us different gifts, gifts that have the express purpose of building up others and glorifying God. Everyone around you knows what you're actually good at, at least for the most part. You may think you're good at something but in reality, the opinion of everyone around you may tell a different story. American Idol anyone?

Ok, but good news. There's a good chance that some of the things you think you're good at, you're actually really good at! Wahoo! Now, on to step two.

PASSIONS

Passions are those things that gets your fire going, that thing you can't stop talking about, that area of life that you care about that thing that you tend to gradually gravitate toward because you like it. THAT is your passion. Another way to define your passion is that problem you want to solve. If you always think "Now someone needs to do something about _____ because _____ could be so much better if _____".

Now here's where it gets fun. The G.P.S. is the intersection of your gifts and passions. If there's five things you are passionate about doing, but everyone seems to mention just one of those five as an area of natural ability or gifting, then that is your sweet spot, and that is where you should start to SERVE.

G. P. S. Gifts Passions Serve

Of course, you need to pray about where to serve and simply ask a mentor or Pastor. Sometimes God uses what seems to be our obvious weakness in order to display His glory! And God can do that! Let Him do it if that's what He wants to do! God used a man with a stuttering problem to lead the entire nation of Israel and speak to Pharaoh on their behalf! God used some fishermen without theology degrees from the local Synagogue to lead His very first church.

God used Mose's staff because that's what was in his hand. God used David's sling because that's what was in his hand. What's in your hand? What can you do?

I'm simply trying to give you a good place to start. Because starting is key. Doing nothing is what you *don't* want to do! Remember our "wicked and lazy servant" friend? Yeah, not a good idea to do nothing.

Because life is a vapor, by faith, I'm going to do all that God has called me to do. I want to use the gifts God's given me to advance the Kingdom of God despite what anyone around me may think. And I want to invite you to do the same! This is the life worth living! A life of serving King Jesus!

We must understand that every time we step out in faith to use our gifts to advance the Kingdom of Jesus, there will be people who will judge us and others who will misunderstand us. Welcome to the life of Jesus! He was the most misunderstood, ridiculed man alive! Why? He was doing His Father's will. He was in complete surrender to the leading of the Holy Spirit. One of the best things my dad ever shared in a staff devotion was "If you want to follow Jesus, you have to be willing to be misunderstood." That bothered me for a few days.

Just like Jesus, when we are bent on doing our Father's will, when we are being led by the Holy Spirit, we will do things and say things that not everyone will understand or agree with. And that's ok. That's ok because they're not going to stand beside me on Judgement Day when my life is under the microscope! They're not going to stand beside me when I'm standing before Christ and say "Well, God, just so you know, I kinda pressured him to ignore you. I told him that he'd look really stupid if he did what You were telling him to do." And Jesus isn't going to say, "Yeah, friend, you're right. I'm glad you're here to set the record straight."

No, friend. We will each stand before God alone and give an account for everything we did and didn't do in our lives and many believers are not doing some of the things they're called and gifted by God to do. We must begin to balance our fruit and our gifts.

What we're going to see in this next passage may really open up your eyes, I know it surprised me when I read it.

1 Cor. 3:7-9(NIV) "(In regards to reaching people for Jesus) So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building."

What did that say? "Each will be rewarded according to his own labor..." What does this tell us? We will be rewarded in Heaven individually, different from one another not dependent upon how many gifts or assignments we were given but to the extent of our faithfulness regarding whatever little or much we were given.

In short, what matters is how faithful you are in doing what God has gifted you to do. God knows whether we are obeying His calling and using the gifts He's given us or not. He knows, and I believe we know as well. I believe we know when we're ignoring His voice. Sure, over time, the more you ignore God's voice, the harder it will be to hear, but it's still true that we know when

God asks us to do something and in that moment, we have a choice: we can obey and use the gifts He's given and do it in love, or we can disobey and go on our way.

This truth will set you free from comparing yourself to others as if you need to measure up to them or accomplish what they're called to do.

We've got to be reminded that we are the Body of Christ and that none of us is greater than the other, but we are all needed in our own unique ways and when we keep Christ as the Head as the one who commands the body parts to do what He wants them to do, we'll give Father God glory, and we'll become truly Christ on earth to a dying world.

ALL OF US are called to do "greater things" as Jesus has given us His Spirit and authority to do so as we read about in John 14!

ALL OF US are called to be compassionate toward one another showing the love of Jesus.

ALL OF US are called to reach the lost giving unbelievers the hope and truth of Jesus Christ.

BUT EACH OF US are gifted and called uniquely by Father God for certain things.

We can see that in the parable of the talents in Matthew 25, in 1 Corinthians 12, the book of Ephesians, in this scripture in 1 Cor. 3 that each of us are given different skill sets, different gifts, different personalities, completely unique unto ourselves. I mean think of it, each of us are even given a different DNA! We're given a different calling, a unique role to play in order to bring Father God the glory He deserves.

I like what John Bevere said in his book I referenced earlier, *Living for Eternity*, "*Pure wisdom's goal is to be obedient to the call, not to be the most successful.*"

Isn't that so true? I mean, I think God is going to be really frustrated with some of us when we stand before Him and say "God, I didn't lead that cause, that missions trip because I just didn't think I was good enough and besides Steve was there to help out and I figured they just didn't need me." I think God is so frustrated when He hears our excuses: "God, I know you wanted me to open our home more and invite people over, but God, I was so busy, and really, our house just wasn't nice enough.. and... and.. I just.. I..."

And in that moment when we stand before King Jesus on the day of Judgment, you'll know. You'll know that you simply ignored His Spirit's voice. You'll know that you ignored God when He gave you a direct order.

Friends, I don't want that to be me! I want God to say "Well done, good and FAITHFUL servant! You did all that you were called to do! I'm so proud of the way you lead this or served at that ministry or gave to that person or that cause and I'm proud of the way you did that, the great attitude you had while you served in..."

You see, if you are so worried about what other people are going to think, you'll never accomplish what God has called you to do.

Proverbs says "the fear of man is a snare." Because life is a vapor, let's do ALL that God has called us to do.

Listen, I believe God is really wanting to drive this point home. If you're called to be a missionary, and you know it, You can give, give, give, you can give \$100. A month to missionaries and you'll stand to be held accountable for NOT obeying your assignment to GO to the mission field.

I know that sounds rough, but I feel it's true deep in my spirit. Not all of us are called to actually GO and be missionaries. Not all of us are called to give up our career and homes and move across the world, but some of us ARE. Are you?

In the next Scripture, Paul is confronting the believers about the way they're comparing different spiritual leaders one to another and putting some leaders on pedestals, and he's bringing to light that we are all servants of King Jesus, assigned different tasks by Him.

1 Cor. 4:1-7(NLT) *"So then men ought to regard us a servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed I do not even judge myself. (what he's saying here – is your opinion of me, though I do value it, isn't of great importance compared to the importance of me obeying God in my calling)*

He goes on to say in Vs. 4 My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. (remember Paul is talking to the church here so he's stating that we'll each as believers be judged at the appointed time when Christ comes) He will bring to light what is hidden in the darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time, each will receive his praise from God."

Did you hear that?

Each will receive HIS praise from God, another translation says, "Each will receive his reward from God." Each of us will be rewarded differently in conjunction to which we obeyed God in doing all that He called us to do and if we did it with pure motives and a pure heart.

He goes to say in Vs. 6 *"Now dear brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying 'Do not go beyond what is written.'" Then you will not take pride in one man over another. For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive (as a gift from God)? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not? NLT (why do you boast as if your gifts are of your own earning or goodness? no, they're all from Father, God)*

To imprint your love for God into the heart of another, to me, is the greatest thing you can do for God.

HE TREATED ME LIKE I WAS HIS SON

In our church, we mourned the death of a great Christian man, Don Haun. He was a man that was incredibly loved by his family and people in his life that Don made feel like family. I was

visiting Don with my dad a few days before he passed and a man shared that Don used to pick him up as a boy and take him to church. He shared that he'd often had bruises from the abuse he received from his father and yet Don would take him to church weekly and sometimes just hang out with him and teach him about what it was to really be a man. Don taught him about what it meant to be also be a man of God.

Don not only taught him but more importantly demonstrated for him, exemplified what it meant to serve God, what it meant to be a good husband, what it mean to be a good father, what it meant to walk in love. He teared-up in moments thinking back about all that Don did for him. In his own words, he said "*He treated me like I was his own son. He saved me.*"

I'll never forget hearing those words.

Here's a 43-year-old man saying, "He treated me like I was his own son. He ... saved... me." Those 3 words meant so much! They carried such weight in my heart because I knew that in that little phrase he was saying, "He saved me from a life of abuse. He saved me from becoming just like my dad. He saved me from living a dead-end life. He taught me what it meant to have a good work ethic. He saved me from a life of drunkenness. He saved me from only God knows what. And he saved me from a life and eternity without God."

WOW! Now that man is teaching HIS family what it means to follow Jesus Christ.

And just the beginning of a legacy that man will pass down through the generations and all that is only one man's testimony of how Don Haun impacted him.

What's my point? Did all that happen out of coincidence? Happenstance? No, Don was clearly focused in his effort to show that young man the love of Jesus Christ the love of our Heavenly Father through visible acts of kindness, through words of affirmation, through spending time with him, demonstrating the love of God to him.

My questions for you are these: Are you living in the truth that life is but a vapor? Are you making an effort to show someone God's love?

Or, are you stuck inside this Christian bubble, this routine where you AGREE with everything spoken about how we need to be reaching the lost, you AGREE that Christians need to love and accept and befriend people who are different, but who is the last person you had over for dinner for the express purpose of showing the love of Christ? Who have you had over for dinner that thinks completely different from you and is far from God? If you haven't, I want to challenge you to do so. This is *how* we walk in truth and love.

Have you gone out of your way to demonstrate the love of God to imprint the love of God onto another person's heart?

It's possible you're reading this and you know what you're gifted at. You know what you're called to do, but you've simply been running from it.

You're like that rich young ruler who in his mind had things all figured out, but in reality was unable to use the riches God had given him to bless others because he wasn't yet fully surrendered to God's love.. Are you like that person? Have you been given a gift, a gift of faith and you're not praying

A gift of compassion and you're not talking
 A gift of intercession and you're not praying
 A gift of generosity and you're not giving
 A gift of hospitality and you're not opening your home
 A gift of teaching and you're not teaching
 A gift of discernment and you're not praying
 A gift of prophecy and you're not prophesying?

If you operate in your "gifts" without the love of Christ in your eyes, you actually can stunt the growth of another instead of building them up.

Eternity is a long time and once you're there, you can never come back here. You've got one life, one shot at pleasing God and advancing His Kingdom by doing what YOU are called to do.

I'm so thankful for God's grace and the promise of His Word! 1 John 1:9 NIV reads *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us of our sins and ALL unrighteousness."*

I don't care if you murdered somebody or if you stole 50 cents or if you simple knew you were supposed to write that card to that person and didn't do it. Sin is sin, and it separates us from God. And for us as believers, 'when we know the right thing to do and decide not to do it, that's sin for us' James says. And that sign leaves us feeling empty and distanced from our Creator. Father God sent His Son Jesus to save us from that to forgive us and give us a new start. If you're reading this right now and the Holy Spirit is speaking to you, why don't you just put the book down and answer God's loving voice? Repent for the times you've ignored His voice asking you to use your gifts for Him. Get things right with God in this area and make a commitment to Him that you're going to do your best to discover your unique gifts and start using them to produce fruit, eternal fruit seen in the lives of people you've impacted.

FEARING GOD IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM AND WISDOM LEADS TO ACTION

Psalms 25:14 NLT, "Friendship with God is reserved for those who fear Him."

Is it possible for us to be friends with One who is also to be feared? When the Bible talks about fearing God, it's different than fearing a grizzly bear that's attacking you and about to eat you alive! Is God powerful? Yes. Is God Almighty? Yes. Is God worthy of being feared? Yes. Why? God going to judge us one day for every idle word spoken, every action, and every impure motive? (Heb. 4:12-14) But can One who is so worthy to be feared also be loved, loved as a friend? Yes. What an amazing paradox! The fact that the God who spoke the very universe into

existence would want to be our friend is astounding! But we must learn to again fear God. It's a message that I believe has slowly seeped out of our pulpits and therefore out of our culture and society. It's definitely wouldn't be picked as one of the more popular messages but I believe it's needed more than ever. Just look at what the Word says about fearing God.

Take a few moments please, get your Bible and read Psalm 111.

Psalm 19: 1, 9, & 14(NIV), Also puts us in the right perspective. *"The heavens declare the glory of God. The skies proclaim the work of His hands." He goes on describing God then He says in vs. 9 "The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever." In vs. 14, David says "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer."*

You see, that is the prayer of one who fears God. And it should be our prayer as well. So why does David fear God? He fears God because he can clearly see the sky above and as he thinks about all that God has created, he concludes that God is a big God! That He's so powerful and big that He's worthy to be feared. He has learned that "fearing the Lord" is the only thing that will "endure." Let me rephrase verse 9. "If you fear God, you'll endure into eternal life." So his prayer in verse 14 is this "God, I pray that everything I say and even my very thoughts are pleasing to you." This is the prayer of one who fears God. Is this your prayer? Our prayer and goal in life should be to know and please God, the Father.

So how will you end up doing the right thing on a day to day basis? When you go to college? When you get a job? You'll have the wisdom to know what to do IF you fear God.

Fearing God will motivate you to pray, to ask God for wisdom and discernment, to know the right choice to make. Fearing God will guide you like wind in a sailboat. If you adjust your sails, you'll go in the right direction. You'll live a life that is pleasing to God and fulfilling to You. Jesus said in John 10:11 that He came to give us life and life to the fullest. We'll miss out on that life if we don't stop and fear God.

If you'll stop and ask in every decision "God does this please you?" That fear of the Lord is like adjusting your sails, and then you'll know what to do. If you don't think something would please God and you decide not to do it – even at the expense of losing friends or money or popularity – you'll find that you made the right decision and you'll be so glad you did.

Psalm 111:10(NIV) is also said like this, *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."*

You know what that tells me? Fearing God is where it all begins. If you're not fearing God in the way that you live your life, you're completely missing out on everything! Fearing God is the beginning of wisdom." In other words, you can't begin to have a clue in life, how to navigate being a parent or a great employee or enjoy a great marriage until you first learn to fear and respect God for who He is.

THE GIFT OF GENEROSITY

Fearing God will teach you how to manage your money like we talked about in chapter six. Those who fear God and see Him as their supply like we discussed in chapter 6, understand that HE is the giver of everything we need and even what we want when we ask in His name and it's according to HIS will. (John 11:22, 15:16, 16:23) And because they see God as the source of their income, not the government, not Wal-Mart, not Lowes, not their employer, they treat the money they have as a gift. In fact, they see it as God's money. And when you start to view the money in your wallet as God's money, you'll spend it a little differently. You'll start to give it away

the moment the Holy Spirit tells you to and as your obedient, God will give you more because He sees that you can be trusted.

You will be unable to operate in your gifting of generosity if you're unwilling to see yourself as a steward of God's money.

Ask God to give you wisdom regarding your finances and He will! Prov. 19:20 says "Get all the advice you can and be wise the rest of your life."

The more you fear and respect God, the less you will sin which separates you from God. And the less you fear God, the more you will give in to the temptation to sin. I did not say the less God will love you. God will always love you and always want to restore relationship with you. That's why He sent Jesus! But to respect Him as God, as Creator of the Universe, as the One who gave His life for you, this respect and God-fearing wisdom will keep us from sinning and hurting His heart.

In Jeremiah 2:13(NIV), God says through the young prophet, "*My people have committed two sins...*

Then in verse 19, God says something really interesting. He rebukes the nation further by saying "*Your wickedness will punish you; your backsliding will rebuke you. Consider then and realize how evil and bitter is for you when you get forsake the Lord your God and have no awe of Me.' Declares the Lord, the Lord Almighty.*"

USE YOUR GIFTING & FEAR GOD YET HONOR THE KING

Now some people are not walking in truth and love because they believe they only have to submit to God and never to the people God has placed in authority over them. The problem is, that's simply not the truth.

They're believing a lie and are usually the same group of people who have a hard time living in community, in long-term friendship with people. The minute, there's an argument, they're gone.

This is not the type of church that God wants. God wants a church that is united, a church that stands in truth, but is submissive to authority as long as that authority doesn't demand we rebel against His Word and truth.

Romans 13:1-4(NLT), "*Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God. 2 So anyone who rebels against authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and they will be punished. 3 For the authorities do not strike fear in people who are doing right, but in those who are doing wrong. Would you like to live without fear of the authorities? Do what is right, and they will honor you. 4 The authorities are God's servants, sent for your good. But if you are doing wrong, of course you should be afraid, for they have the power to punish you. They are God's servants...*"

GET IN THE VAN NOW!

I remember in Bible College I was on ministry trip and one of our 2 15 Passenger vans broke down. We had to squeeze 17 of us in the other 15 P and leave a few leaders with the broken-down van to be repaired. One student, we'll call him Tom, was enraged. He was so adamant that we were disobeying the law in having 17 people in a 15 Passenger van. He was going on

and on about it and our trip leader, who was also the assistant to the College President, urged him politely to calm down. He couldn't take it anymore and in the middle of downtown Nashville, TN, he jumped out of the van and ran across 4 lanes of traffic and started walking. We couldn't believe it! Tom was so passionate about being legal that we were willing to directly disobey the authority God had placed Him under and put his life and the lives of others at risk. Our leader finally coaxed him back into the car after threatening him repeatedly. I couldn't help myself. I had to say it. "Hey Tom, do you realize that you just J-walked across 4 lanes of traffic, completely breaking the law and putting yourself and others in harm's way?" For the first time in His life, he was speechless. (Finally!) Tom, and all of us for that matter, learned a few invaluable lessons that day.

I take it Tom wouldn't like ministering with Isaac Smithia, an Assemblies of God missionary who uses the Speed The Light pickup truck in the Philippines to transport about 18 guys to Teen Challenge every day!

What's my point? Don't jaywalk? Of course not. My point is this: We all need convictions. They are spiritual boundaries that keep us from being "of the world." But the moment those convictions are more important than anybody else and the mission of the team you're working with, you're off balance and in need of a good slap.

There are many believers I've run into over the years – especially millennials, who have a really hard time with authority.

Let me give you another instance, a conversation I just had a few months ago.

WHY ARE YOU THE YOUTH PASTOR?

I was at my merch table meeting people and selling CDs after a youth event when one of the youth pastors, a young lady around the age of 27 came up to talk with me. It went something like this.

"Hi, I really enjoyed tonight."

"Great! I'm glad you came. Are you a youth pastor?"

"Yeah, I am. I brought my youth group."

"What church are you from?"

"I'm from _____. But my pastor just doesn't get it. He doesn't know what he's doing. He does so many stupid things, it's ridiculous. But I'm just really passionate you know and I want the best for our teens..."

I said "So why are you his youth pastor?"

She said "What?"

I said "Why are you his youth pastor? If you can't submit to his authority and be in unity how can you be effective together?"

She looked puzzled and pretty angry.

I said "Look, I can understand if you have different viewpoints on certain things but I can clearly see you're angry with him and you're definitely not in unity. So either you need go talk to him and apologize for slandering him, try to see his point of view, share your points of view and if you can't come into agreement, you need to find another church. But don't stay there bad-mouthing him to people. That doesn't glorify God. That's not love."

She had not yet chosen to walk in love and truth. Even if she was passionate about the way *she* felt ministry should be done, it doesn't excuse her for slandering her pastor behind his back. The sad thing is, I've seen this attitude before in youth pastors.

She should've simply taken her frustrations first to the Lord in prayer and asked if she needed to change. Then if she still felt angry with her pastor's leadership, she should've got directly to him like we read about in Matt. 18, and share that with him, asking for understanding, with the intent to be reconciled and back together in unity. Does God give us a clear-cut verse on how to treat authority?

Heb. 13:17(NIV) *"Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you."*

WHAT IF SUBMISSION TO AUTHORITY MEANS SINNING AGAINST GOD?

The fear of God compels us to obey God, and that's a good thing; like we read earlier, it's the beginning of wisdom. But there will be times when obeying God means disobeying men, even men in authority over us. The question then is "Where do we draw the line between fearing and obeying God and honoring the authority of men, men who've been placed there by God?"

Just like the Apostle Paul and the early disciples, we will suffer because we preach the name of Jesus. But this doesn't mean ask for confrontation or go looking for it! Some people will actually develop a spiritual pride by practically asking for punishment because they want to be seen as a "Rebel for Jesus" or someone bold enough to "tell it like it is!" So where's the love of God in that attitude?

Church, that is not what Christ wants. Does He want us to be passionate in our pursuit of Him and in our vision to see souls saved? Absolutely! Will we at times, be outcast and put off and even punished for our faith in Christ, but should never ask for it by intentionally being rebellious. I don't see Christ doing that anywhere in scripture.

The balance of truth and love comes in being submissive and sweet-spirited to all authority God places us under until it leads us to compromise our Christian values.

This has to be the case in every situation, long-term careers and temporary occasions.

ONE MORE SONG

Some gifts to the body of Christ include musical abilities. Yet, like any gifting, if it's not submitted to the leadership of that house, it won't edify and build up the people. A good example on a bad decision happened in March, 2009. We'll call her Susie to protect her name. I was a part of a conference where some of us artists were given the cool privilege of playing a few songs for everyone at the conference. Months before, we were told that we'll have 15 minutes on stage so that meant roughly 3 songs. When we got there, the MC clearly told every artist performing, including Susie, that because of schedule changes, we were each now allowed only 2 songs.

He made himself very clear about it and asked that everyone be respectful of that time frame so the conference can move along smoothly. When Susie finished her second song, the MC stood up getting ready to thank Susie and introduce the next artist. When he stood up, Susie just

stretched out her hand in a “stop” sort of gesture and said, “I just have to be obedient to the Lord and do one more song. This is called “The God Card”. You know... the “God told me to” card.

The MC reluctantly gave in and she continued to sing one more song. As song 3 ended, she quickly asked everyone to stand and asked two of her friends to join her on stage and she continued to do another song, a fourth song taking a total of about 15 minutes *over* what she was supposed to do.

Sure, we all stood, but only to be nice. Even though we were supposed to be worshipping on those last few songs, none of us could because she had clearly over-stepped the boundaries and clearly not honored the authority set in place in that room.

It's great that you have gift given from the Holy Spirit, but what's even greater is when you've got the fruit of the Holy Spirit to go along with your gift. Gifts without fruit is kind of like giving someone a fruit basket but only given them the basket, sorry, no fruit included. This would leave you a bit confused and bummed out. The same is true when someone operates in their gift without displaying the fruit.

THE GOD CARD

Anytime you try to prove your point using the God Card (using the name of God or the Holy Spirit) just because you know not many will disagree, you're spiritually manipulating people for your own interest which is a form of witchcraft!

I know that sounds strong, but that's the truth. And I'm telling you in love, don't do that. Am I saying Susie was a witch? No! Of course not! I'm saying that in her carnal, self-centered nature, she chose to not submit to the God-given authority in that building and in doing so, actually went against God's will even though she had convinced herself God was on *her* side.

Interesting right? Now understand that I am all for the gifts of the Spirit: words of wisdom, words of knowledge, prophetic words as taught about in scripture; in fact, that happens often in our ministry. But I am completely against using a phrase like “I believe the Holy Spirit is telling me to...” to do something against the boundaries set by the authority of the house and I believe God is too.

When we do that, not only do we disappoint God and grieve the Holy Spirit, but we may very well lose our good reputation and chances to minister in the future. I would never have Susie do a concert in my church because I don't know if she'll listen to my guidelines for the event. In a balancing statement, understand that I would invite people who are lead by the Spirit to minister as God leads when the event is conducive to that.

And even in conferences and time-constrained events, I think we should still be open to what God may want to do spontaneously, but we should always respect the authority of the house we're in. If God leads you, then God will also be leading the authority; be it the pastor or person in charge.

I've actually been told numerous times by venues at festival-like events “Thank you for staying in your time frame, not many bands do that.” As odd as this sounds, hearing that actually puts a smile on my face. Why? Because I know I'm honoring God by honoring them. God has given them a plan and a strategy for that event. As a guest, I am there to simply serve God by serving them, helping in any way I can, being flexible to what they have scheduled.

This is the attitude of love. The opposite is the attitude of pride. Pride will bring confusion and distraction, while love and humility always bring clarity and unity.

Jesus even teaches us to be in submission to the authority we're under by saying "*Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and back to God what is God's.*" Jesus was teaching us to pay our taxes (See Romans 13:7 and Mark 12:17)

I don't care if you're an amazing Biblical Teacher and you don't agree with the way every dollar is being spent by the government. I don't agree either with the Government's spending budget! Yet God's Word is clear. "Give to Caesar what belongs to him."

We must honor God and honor the king. That's the simple truth. It's possible in many circumstances to fear God and honor the King at the same time, it just takes wisdom. And guess what? God has promised to give you just that!

In Acts 3-4, we see Peter preaching in the temple about Jesus being the one prophesied about by all the prophets since Samuel. He declares that Jesus is the Messiah and promises resurrection from the dead. And for that, he is thrown into prison along with John.

The next morning, they were brought to stand trial, and did they back down after that long night in a Roman prison? Nope. Acts 4:8 NLT says "*Peter, filled with the Spirit...*" began to preach again and declare that the man that was miraculously healed the previous day was healed by Jesus Christ! He declared although He was the one sent by God as the Messiah, that they had crucified Him!

The balance comes in being submissive *and* sweet-spirited to all authority God places us under until it leads us to the compromise our Christian values.

Everyone saw their boldness – the confidence in the truth. I love verse 14 "*But since the man who had been healed was standing right there among them, the council had nothing to say.*"

I'm ready for a time in the church today when God's people are so full of His Spirit that even when made to stand before their accusers, their accusers go silent because of the physical miracles that are so clearly evident in the lives of those around them!

The religious council couldn't think of anything else to say but to threaten them again with jail. Peter and John replied "*Do you think God wants us to obey you rather than Him?*" *We can not stop telling about the wonderful things we have seen and heard!*"

So, what is the threshold? When do we obey God and ignore the demand of men? When should we obey men, seeing them as the authority God has given us? The balance comes in being submissive *and* sweet-spirited to all God-given authority unless it leads us to the compromise our Christian values.

We should honor and obey the authority God's placed us under including our parents, our teachers, pastors, policemen, etc unless we know we would be disobeying God's written Word and compromising our faith in Christ.

There are many situations in which we need to understand this, and of course, everyone is very different. When it's clear that what someone is telling you to do is sin or against God's Word, you must resist and do what God says.

There will also be times when you don't agree with your authority, but deep down, you know that they love you and want the best for you and have been given by God. In those situations, you must be willing to submit, and God will bless you for it.

And yet there will be other times when you're *advised* to do something that may even appear to be a good thing. But if deep inside your heart, you feel it isn't the best thing that God wants you to do, then you must listen closely to the voice of the Holy Spirit as "He will guide you into all truth" as promised by Jesus Himself in John 14.

FOLLOWING THE VOICE OF GOD

Another great example would be that of my dad, pastor Mark Biel. He was successfully pastoring a church in Ruskin, FL where he brought it out of a spiritual and financial mess to a place of steady growth and financial freedom. When God asked Him to move the family - my mother, my three older sisters and me, to Kinsman, OH to pastor a church of 80 people, everyone told him that he was crazy. Even godly, well-meaning people advised him not to go. But in his spirit, he knew this was God's leading. 25 years later, the church averages about 400 a week with two services in a town with a population of 1,900! And the best part about the church is that the believers are the most sincere, God-fearing, servant-hearted people I know.

This isn't 400 people who come on Sundays to get their "ears tickled." This is a body of believers - people who come every week to pour out their heart to Jesus in worship and to hear His voice, and they're ready to be changed by it.

There will be times in your life when you come to a crossroads when everything in your mind says "NO", but everything in your heart says, "Yes." When everyone around you says that it's foolish and yet you know it is God leading you to take a risk. In those situations, follow the voice of the Holy Spirit.

The more you obey His voice, the more clear it will become. And the more dependent you are upon the voice of others, and the more you ignore the voice of God, the more quiet the voice of God will seem in your life. Will He still speak? Absolutely.

But if you've learned to tune Him out, you simply won't hear Him anymore.

God may even lead you somewhere you don't want to go – into a time of testing. Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness. Jesus heard and obeyed the voice of God even when it meant doing something extremely inconvenient and uncomfortable and we can expect the same.

But also know that "If we suffer with Christ, we too will share in His glory."

Psalm 103:13(NIV) "As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him."

The Apostle Paul instructed us that we can no approach the throne of Grace with confidence....



APPLY IT

1. **Has it ever been hard for you to believe that you've been given spiritual gifts by God?**

2. How can better cultivate an understanding that Father God is the GIVER of good gifts?
3. What can we do to begin to walk in our gifts and passions?
4. Have I lost my fear of the Lord at all? Have I forgotten that I'll stand before King Jesus and give an account as to how I've used the gifts He's given me to use? Is there any area in my life in which I need to be submissive and helpful – my workplace, my church, my school?
5. How can I bless those teacher and managers who are in authority over me this week?

LEADER: One practical and fun you can do to strengthen and awaken those giftings within the people in your group is to have them put their chairs in a circle and one at a time, put someone in the “hot seat” in the middle and each person will go around and share a word of encouragement starting out like this “NAME, I believe God has give you a gift of _____. Whenever I see you, I see that you are always _____ and God has given you that gift and it blesses me.”

*If your group is over 20 people, have them split up into smaller groups to do this exercise.

PRAYER:

God, we ask that today, You'd help us discover our gifts that You've given us! We pray that Your Spirit would fill us and that you would activate those gifts that are within us! We want to serve you, our Master, and we want to be found faithful when You return!

God ,we also ask for your wisdom to be Christ-like, to be submitted to Your plan and to those whom You've placed in authority over us. I want Your blessing on my life and I recognize that is only possible when I'm willing to submit to You and Your ways. I choose to live in the truth and walk in Your love.

CLOSING

I want to close this book with 2 John 1:5-8(NIV):

“I ask that we love one another. ⁶ And this is love: that we walk in obedience to His commands. As you have heard from the beginning, His command is that you walk in love. ⁷ I say this because many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist. ⁸ Watch out that you do not lose what we have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully.”

God wants to not only give you the free gift of salvation, an eternity in Heaven with Him, but also the reward of serving Him with all that you are.

The antichrist spirit is permeating the earth. It's why Israel is still struggling to declare its borders and peace within its walls. It's why Christians are being murdered by ISIS not only in the Middle East but in Germany, Europe and now even here in America. The Ishmael spirit – that of hatred towards God and His plan, will continue until Christ's return. That's the truth.

We must be willing to stand on the side of truth and walk in love as we're commanded by Christ to do, up until the last second when we meet Jesus in the air.

Obedience and surrender to the words and wisdom of Jesus is what Christianity is all about. It's what life on earth is all about!

God's Word clearly tells us that there will be *deceivers who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh*, in other words, as truly being divine, born to a virgin Mary, giving his life on a cross, then being raised to life.

There will be "ministers" who claim to be pastors, those who claim to be shepherds, who actually deceive their followers into believing less of Jesus and more of them. They'll slowly but gradually discretely discredit the word of God, and they'll slowly, gradually give credit to their opinions.

They'll be more concerned with being quoted in their quippy sayings with their cool logo and amazing ministry than they are concerned with lives being restored. You'll hear much about them and their name and not much about Jesus and His power to heal and save, forgive sins and restore lives. Watch out for these men. I'm all for being wise with our church branding and how we're viewed by the world. But I can't ignore the trends I'm seeing in today's America where men and their ideas are being celebrated instead of Christ and His amazing power to forgive, heal and restore.

Now keep in mind, all ministers who become "successful" or well-known should not instantly be deemed "wolves" after all Jesus was successful and well-known. That's not the point.

The point I'm making in this closing is to encourage you to keep reading your Bible, to stay on your toes when it comes to guarding the truth. God's Spirit warned us that in the final days before Jesus returns that more and more pastors will preach something other than the Gospel of Jesus, the repentance of sin, the restoration of relationship to Father God and the filling of the Holy Spirit.

These men and women who deceive so many in these last days aim to turn people's attention away from Christ, and His cross are not only not shepherds, they are not even sheep, but wolves. They're ravenous wolves in sheep's clothing bent on making the narrow road a bit wider so more will fill their meetings and give cred to their ever-increasing ego.

Again, this doesn't mean that every mega-church pastor is a wolf in sheep's clothing or a false witness! I've been in *many* great churches that are very large who have pastors that are as sincere in their following of Christ as can be! They look like the book of Acts! Many of my closest friends in ministry have very large churches. They look like the book of Acts early church that simply continued into the modern age. And when our churches grow out of a love for and celebration of Jesus Christ and His work of salvation, that is a beautiful thing! That is a God-ordained thing! That is what happened in the early church when God poured out His Spirit like

we read about in Acts and that's what I'm believing for now! Thank God, I'm seeing that all over America as well!

The problem is we have so many church-going believers who simply don't read the Bible so their Truth Index, if you will, is quite void. With their lack of knowledge of the Word of God, i.e., Truth, they're simply unable to discern whether they're being fed a lie or a truth. Even if the lie is wrapped in "love" it is still a lie, if it is contrary to the Word of God.

If I wrap an old rotten apple core in a beautiful silver package, it doesn't change the fact that there's an old rotten apple core beneath.

So pull back the layers, and test the prophets and preachers against the Word of God, just like God tells us to. If the Word of God says something is a sin, then it is a sin, and any sin will separate us from God. And God loves us so much! God wants us so badly NOT to be separated from Him, He sent His only Son, to die on the cross that we deserved! Why? He did it to demolish the works of sin in us! He loves us so much that He gave us a guide-book, a letter of His love in giving us the Bible and He even gives us the Spirit to guide us into the truth, He who illuminates the Scriptures and brings them to life!

Why would we entertain the idea that we are "free" to enjoy certain sins now that "we live in a different world" as if the Bible needs updated to accommodate our culture.

No my friend, just like we said at the beginning of this book, the Bible is the infallible, inerrant, unmistakable, Word of God and it is useful for correction and teaching, every word of it.

So... what do you do now with this... Truth? What do you do with the fact that the Holy Spirit of God has opened your eyes to His grief over the number of people who are deceived in our culture? He has been grieving over sin, yours and mine and that of any man or woman who has believed the lies. Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father and prays for us! He prays that we will not be deceived into thinking we can tolerate sin in our lives and still be in God's family.

Are you willing to accept truth and let it set you free? Are you willing to accept that God's love is unconditional and unequivocal! Are you accepting the truth and love that is Jesus Christ?

Are you giving the truth and love that is Jesus Christ? Is the love of God that is within you able to get out? Are you going to love someone enough to tell them the truth? Are you going to care enough to confront? Like my dad always said, "If I love you more, will you love me less?"

Other Resources from Pastor Jordan Biel



If you might enjoy some instrumental prayer music for your devotional time with the Lord, Pastor Jordan has created a few albums for that exact purpose. Scan the iTunes QR Code here or simply search "Jordan Biel" in iTunes, Spotify, Amazon or your favorite store.

He has released over a dozen albums and many singles over the years all with the one aim of *inspiring people to love Jesus more.*

A Prayer For You From The Author

I pray you've enjoyed every moment of this book and somehow, by God's grace, the Holy Spirit spoke to you and challenged you in some way. I pray that it has inspired you to pick up the Bible, dust it off and begin to read it again! I pray that God's Spirit bring to life every scripture you read! I pray you will humbly pursue every gift and call of God in your life. May you walk in humble confidence and obedience to God's direction! May the Glory of God's face shine upon you! May the glory of God be upon you. May His presence go before you! May you be fully content, thankful for God's grace, yet passionate to reach a dying world. May you begin to speak the truth in love recognizing that Jesus is both truth and love and lives inside of you! May your life make an indelible imprint on the people around you! May they know you by your fruit! May you have a new love for God's Word and may God's Word be hidden in your heart so that you will not sin against Him. May God's Spirit guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus and may His presence fill your home, car, work-place, and everywhere you go! May you allow the Holy Spirit to renew your mind daily and to lead you in every choice, whether pursuing a career change or changing the tone of your voice. May God be given glory and worship through your life; after all, that's why you and I were created!

-Pastor Jordan Biel

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We pray that God will use this as a tool to train and equip believers to be who God has called them to be and to step out in faith and do what God has called and created them to do.

Have A Testimony?

We'd love to hear testimonies of what God has done in your life through this book, just click on the "Contact Us" page on www.JordanBiel.com and share your testimony with us!

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