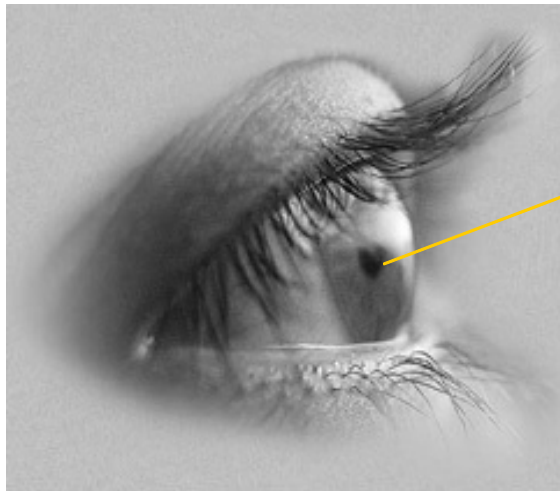


A 16-lesson course for small groups



The Power of VISION

by David A. Huston



The Power of **VISION**

INSTRUCTIONS:

These lessons have been designed for use in biblical home groups. At the meeting when the series is introduced, each group member should be given a copy of this booklet containing all 16 lessons. In this meeting, the group leader should explain that the members will be asked each week to read in advance the lesson that will be discussed the following week. For example, the members should all read lesson 2 during the upcoming week in preparation for next week's meeting. It should also be explained that each lesson contains two to four Reflection Points which the members should think about and prepare to discuss. Space is provided in the booklet where they can jot down their thoughts.

In the meeting when the series is introduced, the leader should review the first lesson titled Introduction to Vision. This lesson is only two pages long and should be read out loud. The leader can do all the reading or he can share it with different members reading different portions. At the end of the lesson is a Reflection Point which the leader should read to the group to initiate a discussion. This lesson is designed to provide an overview of the series and to set the tone for the lessons that follow.

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Published by

Rosh Pinnah Publications

PO Box 337, Carlisle, PA 17013 717-249-2059

www.RoshPinnah.com RoshPinnah@aol.com

Rosh Pinnah means 'Chief Cornerstone' in Hebrew.

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The Power of Vision

Lesson 1. Introduction to Vision

This series is based on the proposition that unless we can see where we are going, we have no hope of ever actually getting there. This pertains not only to our future in eternity, but also to who we are and what we do in the here-and-now. In fact, visualizing where we are headed in the present life is a vital component in preparing for the life to come.

For example, where are you headed in your relationship with God? Do you imagine your relationship to be full and complete, or are you aware that there are areas where you need to grow? Can you describe those areas in words? Can you envision them? How can you hope to grow if you don't know what it is you need to grow into!

We could ask the same questions concerning your development in godly character, your development in interpersonal relationship skills, in developing your Christian service, and in your capacity to reach out to and win those who do not know the Lord. Most of us need to grow and become more fruitful in each of these areas of spiritual life. Yet many do not understand exactly where they need to go and what they must do to get there. This is why everyone of us needs God-given vision!

In the story of the Tower of Babel, we see the great power of vision when combined with communication and cooperation. The Bible says, "Now the whole earth had one language and one speech" (Genesis 11:1). And as they communicated with one another, they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens..." (v.4). They envisioned a tower and worked together to construct it.

Apparently God was impressed with their efforts, for when He came down to see what they were doing, He declared, "Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them" (v.6). When vision is communicated, embraced, and acted on, virtually anything is possible!

Someone defined leadership as *the ability to turn vision into reality*. As Spirit-filled believers, each of us needs to accept responsibility for being a leader in our own spiritual growth as well as the growth of those around us. We must not wait around, passively sitting on our hands, hoping that someone else will do our work for us. Each of us must roll up our sleeves and actively pursue our purpose in Jesus Christ. As we each take responsibility for our own growth and commit ourselves to helping one another grow, we will find that nothing will be withheld from us.

Spiritual leadership is the process of leading God’s people toward His glory. As this process moves forward, there will be many steps of growth along the way, some seemingly minor and others of great significance. Each of these steps can be thought of as a leadership objective. To have vision is to have a mental picture of each needed objective—each growth step—before the step is taken. Vision comes first, then the specific objective. Since every leadership objective represents a step toward the fulfillment of God’s purpose, every objective must flow out of a God-derived vision.

Paul appealed to God’s people to be like-minded with him; that is, to have the same mind, to share in the same vision (Philippians 2:2; 3:16). This does not mean, however, that we are all free to have any vision that pleases us. As Spirit-led people, we must embrace God’s vision for His people. This is not some mysterious thing that only a few can grasp; God has clearly expressed in His Word exactly where it is that He wants everyone of His people to move toward.

Any believer who does not understand this and does not have the ability to clearly communicate it to others is not yet fully equipped. He may attempt to help others move toward spiritual growth, but he may not be moving them in the right direction. Great leaders are not men of great vision; they are men of God’s vision. Their aim is to be found well-pleasing in His sight and to present to God the people they lead “perfect in Christ Jesus” (Colossians 1:28).

God’s purpose is fulfilled in the here-and-now when His people are speaking and acting like Jesus at all times. In practical terms, this is when people are walking in relationship with God, modeling His holiness, both outwardly and inwardly, living together in true fellowship, working together to build up the body of Christ, and reaching out to those who do not know the Lord. It will achieve its ultimate fulfillment when Jesus comes to be glorified in His saints and our lowly bodies are transformed into the likeness of His glorious body (2 Thessalonians 1:10; Philippians 3:21).

The 19th century writer Henry David Thoreau said, “In the long run you hit only what you aim at. Therefore, though you should fail immediately, you had better aim at something high.” What could be higher than the glory of God? Therefore, as we begin these lessons, let us all focus in and take careful aim!

Reflection Point 1: Take a few moments and think about what it means to be just like Jesus. How would you describe what it means to be like Him? In what ways are you like Him and in what ways are you not?

Instruction to Group Members: There will be 15 more lessons in this series. Each week you will be asked to read the lesson for the upcoming week. For example, please read Lesson 2 before our next meeting. We would also like you to consider the Reflection Points found in each lesson and write out your thoughts. You should come to our next meeting prepared to talk about each Reflection Point. Does everyone understand these instruction?

Lesson 2. The Need For a Compelling Vision

Hebrews 12:1-2

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Jesus was a man of vision. The reason He had a vision of the joy that was set before Him was because He knew the Scriptures. For example, He knew that Psalms 16:9-11 speaks of the joy of the resurrection (and Acts 2:25 tells us that these verses pertain specifically to Jesus). We know from this passage that long before He ever actually experienced the joy of eternal life, He saw it. It may have been way off in the distance. It may have had a painful cross standing in front of it. But He saw it nonetheless. He saw the joy that awaited Him—that had been set before Him. And this was the vision that empowered Him to endure the cross.

How many of us have such a vision? What are we focused on? What occupies our thoughts? What are we looking forward to? A family? A career? A happy and successful life on earth? That's all nice. But if that is your fundamental reason for living, you have missed the whole point.

Proverbs 23:5

Will you set your eyes on that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away like an eagle toward heaven.

Living primarily for what you can obtain or experience in this present life is the lowest form of living. This is because it will all one day “fly away.” Those who live for what they can obtain are living without vision. Paul, on the other hand, was a man of great vision.

2 Corinthians 4:17-18

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,¹⁸ while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

The reason Paul could endure the difficulties and hardships of this present life (which he called “light affliction which is but for a moment”) was because he was focused on the things that are unseen and eternal. He understood that these are the things that give the present life meaning and empower us to get through it without losing our faith.

What then are these “things which are not seen”?

2 Corinthians 5:1-7

For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. [how do we know? because we have a vision of it] 2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, [why do we earnestly desire this? because we have a vision of it] 3 if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked.4 For we who are in this tent [the present life] groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality [the present life] may be swallowed up by life [eternal life]. 5 Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. 6 So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. 7 For we walk by faith, not by sight.

Paul’s eyes were not set on the things of the seeable, earthly, temporary realm—the things that fly away like an eagle! His eyes were set on the unseen eternal things—the things that have real and enduring value. This was his vision. This was his focus. This was what moved him forward. This was what he lived for. And where did this vision come from? It all came out of his vision of the Lord Jesus Himself.

1 Corinthians 15:5-8

And that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. 6 After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. 7 After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. 8 Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.

Have you seen Jesus? Have you received a revelation of Him? Could this be where some among us are lacking? We have experienced Jesus in the forgiveness of sins and in the gift of the Holy Spirit. We have known Him in doctrine and in the body of Christ. But maybe we haven’t yet really experienced *Him!* Maybe we haven’t really *known Him!*

Reflection Point 2.1: How would a clear vision of the good things that lie ahead help you to get through difficult and painful situations today?

John the apostle had experienced the new birth. He had received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. He knew the doctrine well and had written about it. He had preached Jesus Christ to multitudes for many years. But when Jesus appeared to him in Revelation 1:16 as One whose “countenance was like the sun shining in its strength,” John wrote, “And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead.” There is something about a real revelation of Jesus Christ that makes you want to just shrink away.

To really see Him—to see Him as He really is—will change you immediately and profoundly forever. You see, it is only when we see Jesus as He really is that we are able to see ourselves as we really are. Perhaps this is why some don’t really want to see Jesus.

Consider the experience of Job. He was said to be an upright man who feared God and shunned evil. But even though he served God diligently, he did so only in a religious sense. And it was only when Job fell on hard times that his true spirit began to come to the surface. After trying to reason with him for a while, finally his friends gave up. Job 32:1 says, “So these three men ceased answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes.” Then God showed up on the scene and began to question Job Himself. Notice what Job said after God had appeared to him: “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:5-6).

Reflection Point 2.2: Share an experience where you endured a difficult situation because you knew that there was something positive awaiting you once you made it through.

Some among us are apostolic Christians by experience, by doctrine, and by name, but not by revelation. Some are not walking in heavenly vision because they have not yet had a vision of heaven. This is why their eyes continue to stare at the things of this world and not the things of the Spirit. And if this situation does not change, they will perish in their lack of vision.

Job said, “I abhor myself and repent...” The literal meaning of this phrase is, “I feel small. I feel like hiding. I feel like disappearing. I am embarrassed for God to be seeing me” This is the essence of true humility. It is the recognition of our own worthlessness before God and our desperate need for Him to save us. It is the deep realization that He is our only hope.

Lesson 3. The Cloud of Witnesses

Each of us needs a vision for our lives that will carry us into the next life. Without such a vision we will certainly perish. But a vision of this significance does not come cheaply. You must want it. And you must understand where it comes from. Just as it was for Paul, to receive a compelling life-vision we must first have a profound vision of the Lord Himself.

Listen to Paul's response to Jesus when the Lord appeared to Him on the road to Damascus: "So he, trembling and astonished, said, 'Lord, what do You want me to do?'" (Acts 9:6). This is an example of the right kind of response to a revelation of Jesus Christ—trembling, astonished, submissive. Now read Jesus' response to Paul.

Acts 26:16-18

"I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. 17 I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, 18 to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me."

Jesus appears to His people for a purpose. It is not just so we can get excited and jump and shout; it is so He can give us a vision for our lives. At the very moment of this heavenly revelation, Paul had the true purpose of his life laid out before him by Jesus Himself. Notice he didn't get every detail. Jesus spoke of "the things which you have seen *and* of the things which I will yet reveal to you." But the bottom line is: Paul got up from that encounter a changed man with an entirely new reason for living. He was now a man with a vision!

How badly do you want to be a person of vision? Maybe you have never realized before just how important vision is. Maybe you never realized how much vision, or the lack of it, can affect your salvation. Could this be why Hebrews says, "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith."

The word translated "looking" means to stare at, to perceive, to discern clearly. It involves much more than just an occasional glance. When the Israelites were attacked by fiery serpents, God told Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live" (Numbers 21:8). The idea here is also more than just a quick glance. The words "look at" mean to gaze upon, to stare at, to set your eyes upon.

David was also a man of great vision. He knew the Lord intimately and He understood the reason for his life on earth. He wrote...

Psalms 123:1-2

Unto You I lift up my eyes, O You who dwell in the heavens. 2 Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters, as the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the LORD our God....

This is the starting point of vision. We need to lift up our eyes to look upon the Lord. He is willing to reveal Himself to everyone of us, but He only does it for those who earnestly desire to see Him. Paul prayed for the people of Ephesus that God would send them the Spirit of revelation, that the eyes of their understanding would be enlightened (ref. Ephesians 1:17-18). We need to be praying that God will give us this same Spirit.

Reflection Point 3.1: Why do you think God would withhold divine vision from those who are not earnestly and consistently seeking Him?

Jesus has the ability to give sight to those who cannot see, regardless of whether their blindness is physical or spiritual.

Matthew 9:27-30

When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, “Son of David, have mercy on us!” 28 And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” They said to Him, “Yes, Lord.” 29 Then He touched their eyes, saying, “According to your faith let it be to you.” 30 And their eyes were opened.

Notice that these men had to believe that Jesus was really able to give them vision. Do you believe He is able? Do you believe He is able to give *you* vision?

Matthew 20:30-34

And behold, two blind men sitting by the road, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, “Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!” 31 Then the multitude warned them that they should be quiet; but they cried out all the more, saying, “Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!” 32 So Jesus stood still and called them, and said, “What do you want Me to do for you?” 33 They said to Him, “Lord, that our eyes may be opened.” 34 So Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes. And immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him.

Notice that in this case the blind men had to tell Jesus exactly what they wanted Him to do. Have you done that? Have you said, “Lord, give me vision”? And if He does, are you committed to following Him, wherever He may lead?

John 9:1-7

Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth.² And His disciples asked Him, saying, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”³ Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him.⁴ I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work.⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”⁶ When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay.⁷ And He said to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing.

Jesus wants to give everyone of His people a vision for their life. He wants each of us to see clearly where we are headed. Without such a vision we have no capacity to arrive at our God-ordained destination. In the midst of his suffering, Job had a deep-seated belief that in spite of his shortcomings, he would one day see God in eternal glory. Read this expression of godly vision...

Job 19:25-27

For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; ²⁶ And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, ²⁷ Whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

Does your heart yearn for Him? Do you earnestly desire to see Him? Where is your gaze directed? Toward the earthly material realm or toward the heavenly eternal realm? If you want a revelation of Jesus, you must be steadfastly looking up. Not just taking a quick glance on Sunday mornings or at other “official church meetings.”

Hebrews 12:1-2 says, “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses....” Who are these witnesses that surround us? To learn the answer we need to look at Hebrews 11.

Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Faith is the evidence of things not seen. This is why we are to walk by faith, not by sight. We need to understand that we are involved in things that cannot be seen. They are real. They actually exist. But we cannot see them with our eyes. The alternative to living by physical sight is living by faith. Faith is the expression of our spiritual vision. It is our spiritual vision that informs and defines our faith.

Hebrews 11:7

By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household....

Notice that Noah did not see any rain. But he had a vision of rain. He could picture it in his mind. This is because he really believed it when God said it was going to rain. This vision of rain informed His faith. It moved him forward. It gave his life a divine purpose. And it set before him the joy of riding above the waters of the flood.

Hebrews 11:8

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.

Abraham had never seen the Promised Land. But after God appeared to Him and spoke to him, he had a vision of it. He could see it in his mind's eye. By faith he could see the mountains, he could hear the streams, and he could feel the rich soil under his feet. This vision propelled him out of the familiar and into the promises of God.

Hebrews 11:24-27

By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, 25 choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, 26 esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. 27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.

The Bible does not tell us how Moses got his initial revelation of God, but obviously before God appeared to him in the burning bush, Moses was already forsaking the pleasures of sin and enduring hardship by the power of his vision. It was his vision—seeing Him who is invisible—that propelled Moses out of Egypt and into God's plan for his life.

Summation: These are just some of the witnesses that are presently surrounding us. They are standing around us as examples by which we can be encouraged. And they are carefully watching us to see what we will do. Their message to us is this: If we could get a vision that would elevate our lives out of obscurity and into the supernatural, then so can you!

Reflection Point 3.2: What are some things in the earthly realm that are currently distracting you from staying focused on the heavenly realm?

Lesson 4. The Place Where God is Taking Us

The bedrock of the spiritual life is the eternal purpose of God. Everything depends upon it. To fail to understand God's purpose is to fail to understand what God is all about.

Ephesians 1:9-10, 12

Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, 10 that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ...12 to the praise of His glory.

Ephesians 3:21

To Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

God has purposed from before the foundations of the world that He will fill the earth with His glory as the waters cover the sea, and *nothing* can prevent this from happening (ref. Habakkuk 2:14). This is what God is all about. This is what He has been heading toward from the very beginning. And this is what He is doing in the earth today.

According to Paul's letter to the Ephesians, the fulfillment of God's purpose will be in the fulness of the times when He gathers together in one all things in Christ. Until that time arrives, each of us is responsible for understanding this ultimate purpose and moving diligently toward it.

Godly vision flows directly out of an understanding of God's purpose. It is the capacity to visualize the fulfillment in the mind's eye—to call those things that are not as though they already were. For example, Moses envisioned the Promised Land long before he ever actually saw it from the top of Mount Nebo.

Exodus 32:34

Now therefore, go, lead the people to the place of which I have spoken to you.

God's intention was to take the children of Israel into the Promised Land where He would establish them as His own unique people and where He would be glorified in their midst. Beginning there, he would then proceed to fill the earth with His glory as the waters cover the sea. How do we know this was His purpose in taking them there? Because on the way there, at a time when God had to deal with the people's rebellion and unbelief, He said to Moses, "But truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD" (Numbers 14:21).

Why did God say this? Because this is His ultimate purpose. It is not just to see people saved. That is only a means to the end. His purpose is that He would be recognized as God throughout His entire creation and that He would live in peaceful harmony with free-willed people. And this is what God is all about accomplishing in the world today. So you see, to have godly vision you

must understand God’s purpose—you must understand what He is all about.

God intends to take everyone of us to the place He has spoken of. But to get there, each of us must have vision. And just as the Israelites had to follow Moses, we have to follow Jesus. He is the source of our vision. He is the light who shines on our pathway. He has gone before us, and we must follow in His footsteps.

The place which God has spoken of can be thought of in two ways: 1) the life that *now is* and 2) the life which *is to come*. In the life which is to come, our vision has to do with the eternal things that await us in glory. This is what Paul was speaking of when he wrote, “We have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Corinthians 5:1). This is what Peter was speaking of when he wrote of “an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:4).

Reflection Point 4.1: Describe in your own words the place Jesus is taking you to in the life to come.

There is also the place which God has spoken to us about and which we must visualize and move toward in this present life. Paul wrote prolifically about this spiritual place.

Romans 8:28-29

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

The word “predestined” means that God has determined in advance where each of us should end up in this life. He saved us for this purpose.

Romans 8:28-29 (The Message Version)

God knew what he was doing from the very beginning. He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his Son. The Son stands first in the line of humanity he restored. We see the original and intended shape of our lives there in him.

Think about this statement: “We *see* the original and intended shape of *our lives* there *in him*.” Do you have a vision of Jesus? You cannot have a vision for your life until you first have a vision of Him. You first get a vision of Jesus. You then, like Job, Peter, and Isaiah, get a vision of yourself,

which is intended to bring you to the complete end of yourself. The idea is that once you have seen Jesus, you give up whatever your plans were for your life in favor of living for Him. When Jesus called to Peter and Andrew, He said, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." The Bible says, "They immediately left their nets and followed Him" (Matthew 4:19-20). It is only when we give up on ourselves and "leave our nets" that we get a life-vision by which we can live an eternally significant life. This is where the kind of vision these lessons are addressing comes from.

The Bible depicts life as a journey with a starting point and an ending point. Vision is the ability to see the end of the journey from anywhere along the pathway. We all need this in order to have direction in life. We all need to have a sense that we are heading somewhere. Without it life is no more than existence. Vision is what makes life meaningful.

Many believers do not have a compelling vision. They attend the meetings of the assembly, but they are spiritually stagnant. Rather than moving forward they are just existing. How was Paul able to say that he had finished His course? It was because He had received a vision early in his ministry which enabled him to know where he was heading. He wrote, "One thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14). Paul reached and pressed forward because of his God-given vision.

Hebrews 12:1-2

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

This passage tells us that there is a race that has been set before each one of us, which represents the specific pathway that God has established for us to walk in. None of us have exactly the same course. We each have our unique capabilities and our unique calling. Our responsibility is to keep seeking Jesus until we discover exactly what it is He wants us to do. It may not all come at once. You may not get all the details in a single flash of revelation. But this is why we must each run our unique race with *endurance*, all the time looking unto Jesus. He is the author of our faith, which means that He is the one who first implanted faith in our hearts. And He is the one who can finish it, if we will just keep our eyes focused and fixated on Him.

The image of life as a journey and the way we live our lives as walking along a pathway is found throughout the Bible.

Proverbs 4:18-19

But the path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.
19 The way of the wicked is like darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble.

This passage shows us that vision is a powerful force. When we can see clearly what lies before us, we can walk forward with confidence and go wherever we need to go. But when we are in darkness, every step is tentative. Anxiety clings to every forward movement. That's because we are not really sure what is lying before us. We cannot tell where we should step in order to get to where we think we need to go. Jesus said, "He who walks in darkness does not know where he is going" (John 12:35) and, "When the blind follow the blind, they both fall in the ditch" (Matthew 15:14).

Vision may come to you progressively, shining "ever brighter unto the perfect day." If you don't have a full and clear vision yet, then you need to keep living according to the Word until the light of understanding shines brightly.

Proverbs 4:20-22

My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. 21 Do not let them depart from your eyes; keep them in the midst of your heart; 22 For they are life to those who find them...."

Do not let God's words "depart from your eyes." Does this mean, do not stop using your eyes to read the Bible? No. It means, do not stop allowing the Word to provide you with enlightenment so that you can see the road ahead.

2 Peter 1:19

And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts....

Summation: The prophetic word is described here as "a light that shines in a dark place." Our hearts are darkened by sin and self-will. This is why we all need the Word to enlighten us. But once the light of understanding begins to dawn in our hearts, then we won't need to rely exclusively on the Bible for direction in our lives. Then Jesus Himself will rule. Then we will be able to simply follow the Spirit. Then our lives can be directed by our vision—our God-given understanding of the purpose He has established for our lives. But until that happens, we need to be committed to simply living in accordance with the Word of God.

Reflection Point 4.2: Describe in your own words the place Jesus is taking you to in this present life.

Lesson 5. What is Your Cross?

The Hebrew idea of understanding is *the ability to put all the pieces together*. It is being able to see both the whole and the individual parts that make up the whole; plus how the parts fit together to form the whole. Without this kind of understanding, life will be haphazard, inconsistent, and ultimately unfruitful. Understanding life is what *stands under* us—it supports us, it bears us up during times of difficulty and struggle.

Do you ever feel as though your life is disjointed? This is happening and that is happening, but you can't see how it all fits together. This is evidence of a lack of understanding and vision.

Psalms 119:104-105

Through Your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way. 105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Can you see the connection between knowing the Word, getting genuine understanding, and having a clear vision for your life? This is why Paul prayed this way....

Colossians 1:9-10

We...do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will [His will for you, your God-ordained purpose] in all wisdom and spiritual understanding [having a clear vision of this purpose]; 10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work [fulfilling your purpose] and increasing in the knowledge of God [as we continually please God we will continually grow in our relationship with Jesus]....

Proverbs 4:5-7

Get wisdom! Get understanding! Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth. 6 Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; love her, and she will keep you. 7 Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom. and in all your getting, get understanding.

Proverbs 16:16-17

How much better to get wisdom than gold! And to get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver. 17 The highway of the upright is to depart from evil; he who keeps his way preserves his soul.

Is it important to you to preserve your soul unto everlasting life? To succeed in this vital task we must have vision. Jesus is our example, and He was a man of vision. “Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame,...and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Our destiny is also to sit down at the right hand of the throne of God. Revelation 3:21 says, “To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame

and sat down with My Father on His throne.” Every one of us needs a compelling vision of this glorious and joyful day when we enter into everlasting life—when we rule and reign with Christ. This is what we each need a vision of. This is the place God has shone us. But standing between *this day* and *that day* is a cross.

The order of events is this: we must endure the cross, despising the shame—then we will experience the joy of sitting down at the right hand of the throne of God. So the only question that remains to be answered is: What is your cross?

Whatever your cross might be, it will include as a central element a certain amount of shame. You see, when Adam and Eve sinned, the first consequence was shame. So in order to undo the effects of their sin, we must endure a certain amount of shame. This is an intrinsic element of the cross.

Think about the cross of Jesus Christ. It was a place of exposure [He hung naked], a place of ridicule and contempt [they mocked Him and taunted Him], a place of discomfort and agony [He hung there writhing in pain], a place of loneliness [He hung there all alone]. In our humanity we don't like all that. In fact, nearly everything within us wants to move away from that. But God has established the cross as the pathway to glory. We cannot move away from it; we must instead embrace it.

Psalms 69:19-21

You know my reproach, my shame, and my dishonor; my adversaries are all before You. 20 Reproach has broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness; I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. 21 They also gave me gall for my food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

This is a description of how it sometimes is serving God. It is not all glamour and glory. There is a lot of unappreciated work, a lot of agonizing prayer, a lot of rejected relationship. If we do not have a compelling vision to keep us moving forward, we will quit before we reach the end of our race.

Reflection Point 5.1: Describe a time when God required you to bear a difficult and painful cross.

Jesus experienced incredible shame, far worse than any of us will ever have to go through. But it says that He endured the cross, despising the shame. The word “despise” means to disesteem or to devalue. As our example, Jesus devalued the shame-laden opinions and attitudes of the unbelieving world around Him. He did not consider being well thought of by the world as having a much value. Isaiah 53 says that the world devalued Him. But we also see that He devalued the world. Why? Because He wasn’t living to please the world around Him. Besides that, the world could not give Him the joy that was set before Him.

Hebrews 12:1-3 (The Message)

Do you see what this means—all these pioneers who blazed the way, all these veterans cheering us on? It means we’d better get on with it. Strip down, start running—and never quit! No extra spiritual fat, no parasitic sins. Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished this race we’re in. Study how he did it. Because he never lost sight of where he was headed—that exhilarating finish in and with God—he could put up with anything along the way: Cross, shame, whatever. And now he’s there, in the place of honor, right alongside God.

This passage goes on to tell us what we are to do when we are struggling to endure—when we are being tempted to quit the race.

Hebrews 12:4

For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

Hebrews 12:4 (The Message)

When you find yourselves flagging in your faith, go over that story again, item by item, that long litany of hostility he plowed through. That will shoot adrenaline into your souls!

What is your cross? What kind of shame will be directed toward you? You have to get the answers to these questions directly from the Lord Himself. But we must know this: Without a clear and compelling vision of our reason for being alive on this planet, we will eventually quit before we reach the end of the race.

Reflection Point 5.2: What positive effects can the cross have on you and how can it move you closer to God’s vision for your life?

Lesson 6. The Crucified Life

We have seen that to have godly vision, we must first have a vision of Jesus—the real Jesus, as He really is. When we see Jesus as He really is, we will also see ourselves as we really are. We saw that when the great men of the Bible saw Jesus, they were instantly humbled, feeling as though they wanted to just disappear. Once we reach this place of utter brokenness before God, we are then in a position to receive God’s vision for our lives. We have also seen that God’s vision for our lives is intricately connected to His eternal purpose for His creation, which is to cover the earth with His glory.

So let’s say that you are getting a clearer vision of Jesus. And by this you are also getting a clearer vision of yourself. You are getting a greater sense of your unworthiness, your utter sinfulness, and your total inability. When you compare yourself to His glory and His holiness, you see that you are merely an earthen vessel and that without Him you can do nothing. This is where Job was when He said, “Now my eye sees You, therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes”—dust and ashes being a symbol of death.

If you are at this place, or approaching this place, then the next thing is to allow God to give you *His vision for your life*. Having this vision is what will elevate you from the earthly and mundane to the glorious and transcendent. But God isn’t going to give it to you as long as you are filled with self-will and the lusts of the flesh. You must become utterly broken before Him! But let’s assume you have reached this place. What then?

Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Notice several points Paul makes in this verse.

1. He has been crucified and no longer lives.

How did this crucifixion happen? He was crucified “with Christ.” This is saying that Paul accounted Christ’s crucifixion as his own crucifixion. He understood that Jesus died not only as our *substitute*, but also as our *representative*. When Jesus died, we all died in Him. From God’s perspective, the death of Jesus was the death of all humanity. It was God’s method of putting an end to sinful, self-willed, self-serving humanity so He could create a new generation of people who are conformed to the image of His Son.

This is why Jesus said, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh [only flesh, nothing more], and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born

again” (John 3:6-7). Through the new birth our old man is crucified with Christ and an entirely new man, a spiritual man, is born into this world. This is the reality and promise of your new birth experience.

Is this how you see yourself? Is the person you were when you were born no longer alive? This is a dramatic way of saying that you have reached the place in your life where you can sincerely say, “Not my will but God’s will be done.” You had to do this to get saved, and you are ultimately going to have to do this if you want to stay saved.

Reflection Point 6.1: Describe in your own words what it means for you to be crucified with Christ.

2. Christ is now living in him.

It is one thing for you to receive the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues. It is another for the Spirit to *live in you*. To have Christ living in you means that His Spirit is the motivating and governing force of your life. You are no longer living by what seems right or what feels good to you. This is living according to the flesh. But once you have been crucified by your revelation of Jesus Christ, you are to live according to the Spirit, and the Spirit is not particularly concerned about what *you* think is okay or what makes *you* comfortable.

The Spirit of Jesus has His own agenda. This is because God has a specific purpose in what He is doing in your life. Jesus modeled this way of living for us.

John 5:19

The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.

Reflection Point 6.2: What would be different in your life if Jesus Christ were living out His life in you fully and completely?

John 5:19 (The Message)

The Son can't independently do a thing, only what he sees the Father doing. What the Father does, the Son does.

Could we say it this way: A human being cannot accomplish anything of eternal significance when he operates independent of God's Spirit.

John 5:30

I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.

Can you hear the echo of Gethsemane in this verse? "I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me." "Not my will but your will be done."

The reason Jesus could submit to the cross was because He had lived His whole life in submission to the will of God. We cannot wait until something really important comes along—submission to God's will must begin in the small, everyday aspects of life. Then when the big stuff comes along, we will be ready. We will be trained in submission.

John 8:28

I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things.

He then said to His disciples...

John 15:5

He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

It is not that there is nothing for us to do; it's that there is nothing for us to do apart from Jesus. We are to live in and by the Spirit. Jesus said in John 6:63, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing." When you allow your flesh to rule, you are accomplishing nothing, nada, zero! But God has something much much better in mind for everyone of us. And it all begins with vision.

3. The life Paul is living he is living by faith in the Son of God.

What does it mean to live by faith in the Son of God? It means to live by depending completely on Jesus. It means to live *His* way and not your own. It means allowing the Spirit of God to have complete autonomy over your life. It means living, not by your circumstances but by your God-given vision.

Summation: According to the Scriptures, we died when we repented and submitted to baptism in the name of Jesus Christ. When we were filled with the Spirit, Jesus Christ came to dwell within us with the intent that He would live out His life through us. We allow Him to live out His life by living the life of faith. As we live by faith, Jesus lives out His own life through us.



Jesus embraces His cross.

Lesson 7. The Life and Work of the Body

If you are interested in your life counting for something, then you need to take this matter of vision seriously. The vision God gives each of us will be unique in certain respects. In other respects it will be the same as everyone else's vision. The dividing line between uniqueness and sameness is the line between *work* and *life*.

Everyone's personal vision will contain elements that have to do with the *life of the body* AND elements that have to do with the *work of the body*. As it concerns the life of the body, we all have the same vision. Concerning the work of the body, each of us have a unique vision. The life of the body has to do with our *connection* to the body of Christ.

Galatians 3:28

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

The things that make us different in the flesh do not make any difference at all when it comes to being part of the body. We are "all one in Christ Jesus." This means that the principles concerning the life of the body are the same for everyone of us. We all connect according to the same principles of relationship. For example...

Ephesians 4:1-4

Walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,² with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love,³ endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.⁴ There is one body and one Spirit....

This instruction applies equally to everyone of us. God expects us all to be gentle and to bear with one another. No one is exempt. No one has a different vision for how he is expected to relate to the rest of the body. There is one body and one Spirit uniting us together. On the other hand, in the book of Romans Paul affirms the singleness of the body, yet adds something else...

Romans 12:4-6

For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function,⁵ so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. ⁶ Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them....

In the body of Christ, we see both unity and diversity. There is one body yet many members and many functions. There is one Spirit yet many gifts and many ministries. Think of the body of Christ as being like a prism. As the Spirit moves through this one unified body, it is like light moving through a prism. As the Spirit moves through us, it becomes manifested in a variety of gifts and ministries.

Lesson 8. C¹...Committed to Christ

Those who have met Jesus in the new birth are expected to go on to seek to know Him in revelation. What we need to see is that the responsibility to pursue this kind of relationship rests on us. God expects us to seek Him. He expects us to be committed to seeking Him and knowing Him more intimately. This is what a commitment to Jesus Christ is really all about.

Let's call this C¹ (C to the first power). This is the first step in living a life based on divine vision. C¹ represents a vision of being fully Committed to Christ. If you are not committed to doing whatever is necessary to have a real relationship with Jesus, then you need to make that commitment right now! This is the starting point that everyone of us needs to commit to. Before we are done, you will be challenged to a C⁵ vision for your life.

A C¹ vision involves approaching Jesus, connecting with Him, and seeing Him. These are the elements of any relationship. You draw near, you stay close, you gain insight. If you are not committed to this, today would be a good time to make a commitment! Let's look at how we approach Jesus and connect with Him.

James 4:8 says, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." This means that even though God is not far away from anyone of us, it is nevertheless up to each of us to take the initiative in drawing near to Him. This is the relational dynamic: We don't wait for Him to draw near to us; we draw near to Him. We take the first step. The key to doing this is *recognition*. We draw near to Him because we recognize who He is. We first recognize that He is our Savior. We also recognize that He is our Lord. We recognize that He is our Father. We also recognize that He is God.

We do not need a deep revelation of Jesus to recognize these things about Him. We can know these things simply by reading the Bible. This means that recognition, the first step in drawing near to God, is based on doctrine. It is based on knowing and understanding the Word, at least in some minimal way. This is why from the very start of your walk with God you have been encouraged to get into the Word for yourself.

Isaiah 43:11

"I, even I, am the LORD, and besides Me there is no savior."

Isaiah 45:22

"Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other."

Anyone hearing these words who has been born again should be inspired to immediately take steps to draw near to God. If He really is the only Savior, how can we not draw near to Him? If He is the one who saved you, *why* would you not draw near to Him? If these words do not move you, how about these...

Are you willing to commit to a C¹ vision? It begins with knowing and believing enough of the Word to recognize Jesus for who He is. He is our only Savior. He is also our Lord, our Father, our God, and our Judge.

Following recognition, which is based on knowing the Word, there must be *closeness*. How can you connect with someone unless you get close? James 4:8 says, “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” But how do we draw near? The Bible tells us not only why we should want to approach God but how to approach Him. We cannot approach Him just any way we want to. We must come to Him His way, which is actually very simple.

James 4:7 says, “Submit to God.” And James 4:8 says, “Cleanse your hands... and purify your hearts....” In other words, quit doing the things you know you shouldn’t be doing and quit thinking about the things you know you shouldn’t be thinking about. Instead, focus your mind on Jesus and place yourself under His authority.

James 4:10 says, “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord....” A humble spirit is one that submits, one that recognizes how completely dependent we are on God’s grace. We don’t like to think of ourselves as being dependent on anyone, but we are all dependent on God, whether we want to accept that reality or not. The practical application of this is *praise*.

Psalms 100:2-4

Come before His presence with singing. 3 Know that the LORD, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. 4 Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise.

Can you see the connection between our dependence on God (He has made us; we are His), our submission to Him, and our praise of Him. To praise God is to lift Him up, to highly esteem Him, to place Him within our hearts where He actually is. When we praise God, we are lowering ourselves by lifting Him up. This is what puts us into our proper position relative to God. He is above us. He is over us.

To accept that reality is submission. It is to place ourselves under Him, which is where we belong. There can be no closeness without submission. If we try to get close without submitting, we will only find resistance from God. James 4:6 says, “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

We must recognize who Jesus is from the Word, and we must get close to Him by humbling ourselves and submitting to Him. But we must not stop there. Once we get close we must then communicate with Him. This is prayer. Without prayer there is no communication.

Prayer, praise, and learning the Word are the basics of approaching Jesus and forming a real relationship with Him. To ignore anyone of these is to place limits on how intimate we are willing to get with Him.

Lesson 9. C²...Committed to Character

In the last lesson we saw what it means to have a C¹ (C to the second power) vision. C¹ simply stands for being Committed to Christ. We saw that a C¹ vision involves approaching Jesus, connecting with Him, and seeing Him. This is the first level of revelation. It gets you to a place where God can show you more of Himself and reveal more of Himself in you. We saw that being committed to Christ includes being...

1. Committed to reading and studying the Word.
2. Committed to praise.
3. Committed to prayer.

Do you have a C¹ vision? Can you envision yourself as a student of the Word, an enthusiastic praiser, and a having a consistent prayer life? If not, you need to get such a vision today! Can you say with total assurance: “Come what may, I am committed to Jesus Christ and there is nothing that will separate me from Him. Not my failures and shortcomings. Not Satan and his demons. Not any person or circumstance that may come my way. I am COMMITTED! I will pray, I will praise, and I will keep increasing my knowledge of the Word.”

We can think of a C¹ vision as being like the roots of a tree.

Colossians 2:6-7

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, 7 rooted and built up in Him....

We each received Christ when we were born again. But there is a big difference between receiving Jesus and walking in Him. It is the difference between just meeting someone and developing a relationship with that person. A C¹ vision is all about building a relationship with Jesus Christ. Everything else in your spiritual life hinges upon this.

This verse says that we are to be rooted in Him. The picture is that of roots getting deep down into the ground where they become so intertwined with the ground that the tree cannot be uprooted. Some trees, like some believers, have very shallow roots. But this is not what the Lord wants. He wants our roots to go deep. He wants our relationship with Him to be close and strong. He wants our spirits to be intertwined with His Spirit.

Do you have a vision for that kind of relationship? Is there anything that could get you to quit living for God? Is there anything that could uproot you? Jude 12 describes certain believers as being “clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots....”

What kind of chance does a tree have of living once it has been uprooted? Zero! We need to get our roots down deep into the soil of God.

Reflection Points 9.1: How deeply rooted in God do you believe yourself to be?

Jesus Himself is our best example of a man with a C¹ vision. When Jesus was tempted by the devil, He answered, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God’” (Luke 4:4). Jesus knew the Word so well that the devil could not trick Him or deceive Him.

Luke 10:21

In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit...

Jesus modeled our need to praise God by rejoicing in the Spirit.

Mark 1:35

Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.

Jesus was certainly a model of prayer. He showed us through His life in the flesh what we need to do to walk in relationship with God.

The next level of vision is what we will call C² (C to the second power), which stands for Committed to Character. Character can be defined as “the complex of mental and ethical traits marking and often individualizing a person; moral excellence and firmness (for example, we might speak of a man of good character). From God’s perspective, good character means having exactly the same character traits as Jesus Christ. He is our model for good character.

Just as the trunk of a tree grows up straight and tall as the tree become well rooted in the soil, so it is that good character should arise out of our relationship with God. Paul said that as we walk in Him we will become both rooted and “built up” in Him. Being built up has to do with our character.

Let's look at the two key elements of good character mentioned in the dictionary:

Moral excellence and firmness.

Moral excellence has to do with our outward actions. It means to always act correctly, regardless of circumstances and regardless of whatever external pressures or temptations you may be facing to do otherwise. This will only be possible if you have determined to base your actions on something other than what you are feeling or perceiving at the moment.

There is a philosophy today called "moral relativism." This is the belief that morals can vary depending on the situation. It is also called "situational ethics." The essence of this belief was summed up in a song back in the 1970's that said, "If you can't be with the one you love, then love the one your with."

Reflection Points 9.2: How straight and tall do you believe your trunk to be? Explain why you see yourself this way.

God has given each of us the power to decide how we will act in any given circumstance. We can act based on what feels good to us or what we think would make us feel good. We can act on what we perceive to be in our best interests. We can act based on what seems to be the path of least resistance; in other words, what would be the easiest thing to do. We can act on what seems right to us. Or, we can act based on godly principles. In other words, we can act in accord with the Spirit of God.

Romans 8:1

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

This is why we need to live by vision! Again, Jesus is our example. 1 John 3:4 defines sin as "to do what is against God's law." 1 Peter 2:22 says that Jesus "committed no sin." Hebrews 4:15 says that He "was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." Jesus exemplified moral

Lesson 10. Full of Grace and Truth

The Bible uses the term “upright” to describe people who have good character.

Proverbs 11:3

The integrity of the upright will guide them, but the perversity of the unfaithful will destroy them.

Proverbs 11:6

The righteousness of the upright will deliver them, but the unfaithful will be caught by their lust.

The Hebrew word translated “upright” means “to be straight.”

Proverbs 11:20

Those who are of a perverse heart are an abomination to the LORD....

The word translated “perverse” means “crooked or distorted.” So on the one hand we have people who are described as straight and on the other hand people who are described as crooked. This is because, above all else, people are identified by their character. We say, “He is a good man, he is an honest man.” Or, “He is an immoral man, he is a liar, he is a cheat.”

Now think of the trunks of trees. Which do you want to be thought of? One who is crooked and twisted? Or one who is straight, strong, and tall?

Ecclesiastes 1:15

What is crooked cannot be made straight...

Ecclesiastes 7:13

Consider the work of God; for who can make straight what He has made crooked?

Yet, in spite of what may seem impossible to man, the Bible says this concerning the coming of Jesus Christ ...

Luke 3:5-6

“Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough ways smooth; 6 And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”

It does not matter how poor a person’s character may have been in the past, once he has seen the salvation of God, every crooked place can be made straight. God is not necessarily looking for people with good character. He is looking for people who will allow Him to develop *His* character in them.

Moral excellence has to do with acting properly in all circumstances. Our ability to do this consistently will depend on the quality of our internal attributes. In other words, moral excellence is not merely external conduct; it is external conduct based on internal attributes. Godly character is therefore both external and internal. This means that if we are going to *act* like Jesus, we must *be* like Jesus.

Matthew 11:29

Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart....

Would you describe yourself as “gentle and lowly of heart”? If not, then you need a vision of these attributes. What does it mean to be gentle? A person who is gentle can be trusted with delicate things because he will handle them with great care. A person who is gentle is not rough or harsh or overbearing. He can be approached. He doesn’t have to be feared. Are you this kind of person? Are you locked into a vision of becoming this kind of person? This is how Jesus is.

What does it mean to be lowly of heart? It means humble. This is the opposite of proud. The word “proud” means to put yourself forth as being higher than others or better than others.

Proverbs 16:5

Everyone proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD....

To be lowly in heart does not mean you see yourself as being worse than everyone else. It only means that you see yourself as you really are. You see, none of us are really any better than anyone else. Even Jesus, living as one of us, did not carry himself with an attitude of pride. He didn’t walk around as though He was better than all the rest of us. He came to model for us the kind of attitude that we are supposed to have.

<p>Reflection Points 10.1: What are some specific things you could do to humble yourself?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
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Do you struggle with a prideful or arrogant spirit? It is really only a cover-up for insecurity and a poor self-image. Why not just be honest about yourself? Just accept yourself as you are with all your weaknesses and shortcoming. You are really no different than any of the rest of us.

We are talking about being committed to Christ-like character, having a C² vision. Do you have a vision for becoming gentle and lowly of heart? You need to!

What else can we say about the internal character traits of Jesus Christ?

John 1:14

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Grace refers to the relational qualities of Christ-like character. To be full of grace means to be full of kindness. It means to be full of genuine love and concern for the well-being of others. It means to be sincerely interested in helping others to do well. It is the strong helping the weak. It is those who have, helping those who have not; those who can see, helping those who can't see. This is a very important aspect of Christ-like character.

2 Corinthians 8:9

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

Are you full of this kind of grace?

1 Corinthians 9:19

For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more....

Do you have a vision for becoming full of this kind of grace? Do you have enough grace to make yourself a servant to all?

Truth refers to God's capacity to see things as they really are. Being full of truth means that He is completely committed to dealing with man in accordance with reality. It is on this basis that Jesus is completely honest at all times. He always tells the truth. Jesus does not live in a pretend world.

We may not be able to say this about ourselves. The truth is, all of us live in a pretend world from time to time. We convince ourselves that we can do wrong and it won't have a negative consequence. But this is not reality.

Ecclesiastes 8:11

Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

God's grace may seem to be delaying His judgment, but it never does away with His truth.

Lesson 11. Full of Strength and Passion

As our relationship with Jesus grows and matures, we will begin to recognize ever more clearly our weaknesses and inabilities as human beings. This ought to cause us to become stronger in Him. The reason some believers lack spiritual strength is because they are still strong within themselves. Paul wrote, “When I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Corinthians 12:10). He told the Philippians, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (4:13). He told the Ephesians, “Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might [not our might, but His might]” (Ephesians 6:10).

As we get to know the Lord and learn to trust in His power, we ought to become stronger and stronger in Him. This means developing the character trait of strength—what the dictionary called “firmness.” A person who is strong in the Lord is resolute, determined, unyielding, self-controlled, uncompromising.

No one respects a person who is limp-wristed or lukewarm or namby-pamby. People want to follow leaders who stand for something. Someone said, “If you don’t stand for something, you will fall for anything.” Firmness is that aspect of godly character that holds all the rest of it together. John the Baptist was a great example of a man of firmness and resolve. Concerning John, Jesus said...

Matthew 11:7-8

“What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? 8 But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings’ houses.”

Was John dressed in soft garments? No way. Nothing about John was soft. He was dressed in clothing made of camel’s hair and he ate locusts. Was he a reed shaken by the wind...by every “wind of doctrine” that blows to and fro across the field of the church? No! He was a mighty oak.

Reflection Point 11.1: What kind of trunk is your character developing into? Is it thin and weak? Or is it thick and tough and strong? Are you a softy or are you resolute and determined?

Paul gave the following warning to the Corinthians...

1 Corinthians 6:9-10

Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, 10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.

Obviously, most of the people mentioned on this list are engaging in practices that have to do with moral failure. But one word in particular has to do with a failure of firmness. The word translated “homosexuals” here actually means “effeminate.” The root meaning of the word is “soft.” It does not just refer to homosexuals or to men who have feminine mannerisms. It refers to anyone who is soft, spineless, wimpy, whiny, or wishy-washy. It is the very same word translated “soft garments” in Matthew 11.

John the Baptist did not wear soft garments and neither should any of us. God is looking for men and women who will stand resolutely for the truth of God and the will of God, and won’t back down just because the circumstances get tough. Jesus is an excellent example of this character trait.

Luke 9:51

Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem....

When the Spirit of God says, “I want you to do something that will be very difficult and unpleasant for you,” a person with Christ-like character does not cave in and wimp out. He sets His face and walks straight into it. Is that the kind of character you have? This is the kind of character Jesus modeled for us.

Isaiah 50:6-7

“I gave My back to those who struck Me, and My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting. 7 For the Lord GOD will help Me; therefore I will not be disgraced; therefore I have set My face like a flint, and I know that I will not be ashamed.”

In the midst of His sufferings, when everything within His flesh was saying, “Give in. Give up. You don’t have to put yourself through this.” He did not give up. No, He set His face like flint, which is a very hard rock.

The kind of character that should grow out of a relationship with God is the kind that does not run from the cross but embraces. This is the attribute of character that has to do with firmness. Firmness has to do with your inward strength: the strength of your mind, your will, and your emotions. People who have firmness of character act deliberately, not impulsively or arbitrarily. They are known for being solid in their faith, determined in their actions, resolved in their purpose.

1 Peter 1:22

Love one another fervently with a pure heart....

1 John 4:7-8

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

Our love for one another is the truest indicator of whether or not we have seen and know God.

1 Thessalonians 4:9

But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another....

Jesus said, "Come unto Me and learn of Me...." Jesus Himself teaches us to love one another. He told His disciples...

John 13:34

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

Jesus expects us to love one another in the same way that He has loved us. This brings us to a vitally important element of love: *forgiveness*.

Ephesians 4:32

And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

Love and forgiveness cannot be separated from each other. He who loves forgives, and he who does not forgive does not love. Forgiveness is God's plan for keeping us together even when we mistreat or transgress against one another. Forgiveness says, "I'm not going to allow your failure in this relationship destroy our connection." Isn't this what Jesus says to us? Isn't forgiveness the very platform upon which our relationship with Him has been established?

Reflection Point 12.2: Do you have a hard time forgiving? How could you improve your forgiveness skills?

Summation: Connection within the body is what we were talking about several lessons ago when we talked about the *life of the body*. We saw that there is only one vision for the life aspects of the body. We are all expected to be connecting, to be kind to one another, to be forgiving. This is the heart of a C³ vision.

Reflection Point 12.4: On a scale of 1 to 10, rate where you see yourself in your spiritual development. 1 means poorly developed and 10 means highly developed. Write down your thoughts about each area.

C¹ _____

C² _____

C³ _____

Lesson 13. C⁴...Committed to Calling

C⁴ stands for Committed to Calling. We will be using the word “calling” in the sense of the *work of ministry* that God has called each of us to in the body. This is what we talked about earlier concerning the *work of the body*. This is not a single, body-wide vision, but an individual vision for each person.

Romans 12:4-6

For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them....

God has prepared each one of us for specific works of ministry. And He has given us everything we need to be able to do our work. The only question is: Are we committed to our calling? What kind of vision do you have for working in the kingdom?

Jesus was a connector, but He was also a highly motivated worker. Again, He serves as our example of one who was busy in the work of the kingdom. At twelve years old He said...

Luke 2:49

“Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?”

He later said....

John 4:34

“My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.”

And just before His death He said...

John 17:4

“I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.”

The Bible says that Jesus “went about doing good.” He didn’t go about watching everyone else do good; He went about doing good Himself (Acts 10:38). He was active. He was involved. Notice that over and over Jesus described the work He did as being God’s work. This means that we each need a clear vision of the specific work God wants us to do. Once we achieve that, we must then be equipped to do that work.

Ephesians 4:11-12 tells us that God has given His people various gifted leaders “for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry.” This tells us that we cannot equip ourselves; we need to be equipped by those whom God has placed in our lives for that purpose. 2 Timothy 3:17 says that it

Reflection Point 13.2: Have you had a life-transforming encounter with Jesus? Explain.

There are certain spiritual principles that apply to every aspect of work, whether in the church, at home, or in the workplace. This is where character intersects with work. We can call this the Christian *work ethic*.

2 Thessalonians 3:10

If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.

There is no spiritual welfare system. In God's kingdom, if you want to eat, you must be willing to work. This principle pertains to both men and women. A man may be out working hard to earn a living, but that does not mean his wife can just lay around all day doing nothing. She should be working hard too. The virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 was anything but lazy. She was industrious and diligent in her work.

Proverbs 19:15

Laziness casts one into a deep sleep, and an idle person will suffer hunger.

Ecclesiastes 9:10

Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going.

This principle pertains to everything we do in life. The idea here is that life is short, so whatever we do, we should do it well. We should give it our very best.

Colossians 3:23-24

And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.

People who have a poor work ethic are only showing that they have not received a profound revelation of the Lord Jesus. As believers we serve Him, not men. We need to be careful that we are not cutting corners or doing slipshod work. Our earthly boss may not catch it, but our heavenly boss certainly will.

Lesson 14. C⁵...Committed to Caring

C⁵ stands for **Committed to Caring**. Once again, let's look to Jesus as our example.

Matthew 9:36

But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.

When you look at the multitudes who are weary and scattered, are you moved? Are you committed to caring about those who don't know the Lord? When Jesus was moved by compassion for these people, what specifically was He moved to do?

Matthew 9:37-38

Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. 38 Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

It is the compassion of Jesus that moves the gospel toward the lost. Now you may not feel very compassionate toward sinners and ungodly people. But that is exactly the reason why you need to commit to the C⁵ vision. You need to envision the compassionate Savior so that you can become like Him in caring for others.

Notice that this passage from the book of Matthew does not stop with the Lord's prayer request for laborers. It goes on to say...

Matthew 10:1

And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease.

Compassion is the foundation of the miraculous. Many people today are seeking after signs and wonders. Some seem almost desperate to see a demonstration of the miraculous. But the questions is, Why? Do they want it for the excitement? For the notoriety? For the sheer thrill of it? Or do they want it because they have been moved with compassion for those in need?

Matthew 14:14

And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick.

Matthew 20:34

So Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes. And immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him.

Mark 1:41-42

Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, “I am willing; be cleansed.” 42 As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed.

A C⁵ vision is the place where nearly everyone, it seems, wants to be. Most believers want to be soul-winners and most people want to see miracles. But what we need to understand is that this is intended to be the fruit of everything that comes before it. It is for the graduates, not those just entering kindergarten. This is not to say that we cannot touch this area until we have lived for God for 20 years. God is eager to do miracles and save the lost. But why don't we see it happening more often? Could it be because many of God's people are trying to operate in this vision while skipping over some other important aspects of being a Christian.

Can we have fruit without roots? Can we have fruit without a trunk? Can we have fruit without branches? No. Fruitfulness is the result of the growth process, not the cause of it. The desire to be fruitful may motivate us to move forward, but the fruit itself is the result, not the cause.

<p>Reflection Point 14.1: How would you describe the intensity of your desire to be fruitful?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>

You may wonder why we have not labeled this lesson “committed to soul-winning”? The reason is because we are not the Savior. We can plant and water, but only God can give the increase—only He can save someone. But what we can be committed to is caring. If we really care about the lost, we will also be committed to the things that result in increase.

If we start with a commitment to consistent prayer... and we add to that good character, a willingness to connect with others and to work hard... and we add on top of all that compassion... we will see people coming to God as *He* gives the increase. This is the fruit on the tree! But if we leave off any of these elements, we cannot complain about our lack of fruitfulness. So consider this: which of these are you not committed to?

God's purpose is to cover the earth with His glory as the waters cover the sea. Jesus said...

John 15:8

By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

The true disciples of Jesus glorify God by bearing fruit. How? By compassionately sharing the gospel with people who don't know the Lord.

Colossians 1:5-6

Which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, 6 which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit....

Summation: Like a seed, the gospel has life within itself. We just need to plant it. It will produce the fruit. Are you willing to make a commitment to caring? Are you willing to go all the way to a C⁵ vision? This is much more than just a commitment to outreach or soul-winning. This is a commitment to the roots, the trunk, and the branches. These things must be in place before you can expect on-going, long-lasting fruitfulness.

What can we say about a person who has reached the place of a C⁵ vision? How could we describe him?

1. He is committed to the Word of God: to reading it, studying it, and knowing it.
2. He is committed to praise. No one has to get him worked up. He praises Jesus because of who He is.
3. He is committed to prayer. No one has to encourage him to pray. He prays because he recognizes that without prayer he has no relationship with Jesus in any practical sense.
4. He is committed to Christ-like character. He values being gentle, humble, kind, honest, strong, and steadfast.
5. He is committed to connection. He values his relationships within the body of Christ and works hard at keeping disunity out of the body by being quick to forgive.
6. He is committed to calling. He recognizes both what he is gifted to do and what he is not gifted to do, and he is working diligently at developing his gifts and putting them to work in the kingdom of God.
7. He is committed to caring. He cares about people. He is moved by the condition of those who do not know Jesus. He cares about missions; he cares about outreach; he cares about reaching just one more person with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

This is a portrait of a mature believer in Jesus Christ. This is what it means to be like Jesus.

Lesson 15. Called, Justified, and Glorified

We have been talking about the importance and power of vision. We concluded the last lesson by looking at the C⁵ vision. This is what we should all be reaching toward. Some may be wondering why they are not more spiritually fruitful. Ask yourself these questions.

- Am I committed to fervent and consistent pray?
- Do I read and study and think about the Word on a regular basis?
- Do I have significant character flaws that I have been justifying or denying?
- Do I have on-going trouble in some of my significant relationships.
- Am I willing to work hard and put forth a lot of effort at my job or in my work at home or in the church?
- Do I really care about those who do not know the Lord?

Romans 8:29-30

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom He predestined [to be conformed to the image of His Son], these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

We were all called by God when we heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. We were all justified when we obeyed the gospel and experienced the new birth. But just as much as it was the purpose of God to call you and justify you, it is also His purpose to glorify you—that is, to conform you to the image of His Son, because the Son of God, the Man Jesus Christ, is the radiance of God’s glory, and God wants that same glory to radiate out of you!

But for this to happen, you must be solidly committed to consistent prayer. And you must add to that good character, a willingness to connect with others, and a willingness to work hard. Then, on top of all that, you must add compassion. It is by this combination of spiritual attributes that God will be glorified in you.

2 Peter 1:2-5

Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, 3 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. 5 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith...

Faith is the starting place. Faith speak of our relationship with Jesus. Faith speaks of the basics: prayer, praise, the Word. But we can’t stop there.

2 Peter 1:5

Add to your faith virtue...

Virtue is a key element of godly character. We must add it. We must not think that God must add it. *We* must add it!

2 Peter 1:5-6

...to virtue knowledge, 6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness...

These are all attributes of character that affect our relationships with others and our work ethic.

2 Peter 1:7

...to godliness brotherly kindness...

This speaks of our connection with our brothers and sisters in the Lord. The Greek word is literally “fondness for the brethren.” It is this genuine affection we have for one another that identifies us as the disciples of Jesus.

2 Peter 1:7

And to brotherly kindness love [agape].

Here is the compassion that moves the gospel forward. This is the love that sacrifices and gives to others. This is the love that really cares.

2 Peter 1:8-9

For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ [There *will* be fruit on your tree!]. 9 For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness [no vision], and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.

He who lacks these things has no vision! So you see, no matter how you look at this, it all goes back to your vision. When we speak of vision, we are talking about more than just an acceptance of Oneness doctrine—we are talking about a profound revelation of Jesus Christ. We are talking about the kind of revelation that knocks you off your horse and throws you down in the dirt. We are talking about a revelation that demolishes the ego, crucifies the flesh, and leaves a person utterly humbled before the Presence of God.

2 Peter 1:10-11

Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble [due to lack of vision]; 11 for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We have been called; we have been elected (chosen). But we must go on to make our calling and election sure by becoming gloriously fruitful. God’s plan is to bring “many sons to glory.”

Reflection 15.1: How determined are you to become gloriously fruitful? If you have any reservations, what are they? What might be holding you back?

Let’s look at why a vision of Jesus Christ is both so important and so powerful.

Hebrews 1:1-3

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; 3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high....

Hebrews 1:3

The brightness of His [God’s] glory and the express image of His [God’s] person.

This verse describes Jesus as “the brightness of God’s glory.” The glory of God is who and what God really is. In John 4:24 Jesus said that “God is a Spirit.” Since God is a Spirit and a Spirit is invisible, it is difficult for us to perceive Him. The Man Jesus, however, is the brightness, the radiance, of God’s glory. He is the visible shining forth of that which is invisible. He is the Spirit of God radiating outward toward us in a visible medium.

Think of God as being like the sun. When you look at the sun, what do you see? You really don’t see the sun itself, because the sun is nothing but a mass of invisible gases. What you see is the light that shines forth from the sun. The Man Jesus is the light of God that makes God visible to us. This is why Jesus could say, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).

Of course, the light of the sun is not a different object than the sun itself. The light is simply that aspect of the sun that radiates out and enables us to experience the sun. This is what John meant when he wrote, “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him” (John 1:18). The Message says it this way: “No one has ever seen God, not so much as a glimpse. This one-of-a-kind God-Expression, who exists at the very heart of the Father, has made him plain as day.”

Lesson 16. Single-minded Commitment

Hebrews 2:10

For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings...

Here we are, right back where we started this series: reading about how God is going to bring His people into His glory. But how is God going to bring many sons to glory, and what will it take to glorify you? Just as it was fitting for the Captain to be made perfect (mature, complete) through suffering, so will it be for the sons. There is no eternal glory without a cross. And the reality is, there will not be an effective cross without a vision.

Hebrews 12:1-2

Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross....

What does Jesus say to us as we are looking unto Him, as we are getting that profound vision?

Matthew 16:24

If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

Luke 14:27

And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Philippians 3:18-19

For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things.

None of us want to find ourselves in the position of being enemies of the cross. This means that we need to be careful about what we are setting our minds on, what we are envisioning in our mind's eye, who we are allowing to make an impression on us.

Think about this: Who are the people you are the most impressed with? Aren't we all impressed by the people we admire, the ones we look up to, the ones we find attractive or extraordinary? And who is it that we inevitably want to be like? The people we admire.

Testimony of the author: When I was a young person, the people I admired most were professional baseball players. So who do you think I wanted to be like? We always emulate the people we admire. When I was a teenager, I admired certain singers and musicians. So who do you think I wanted to be like? I wanted to sing like them, play my guitar like them, dress like them, and wear my hair like them. In my adult years I have read biographies of various historical figures whom I find admirable, a least in certain areas of their lives. So when I read a book about George Washington’s dignity and commitment, it causes me to want to be like that. When I read a book about Teddy Roosevelt’s courage and toughness, I admire that and want to be like that. When I read a book about Martin Luther King’s willingness to sacrifice for a cause, I admire that and want to be like that.

We always want to be like the people we admire. These are the people who make an impression on us, for good or for ill. Sometimes young people admire the wrong kinds of people. Maybe there is some neighborhood gang member a young person admires. Maybe this young person has never been exposed to any positive role models, so the only people who are making an impression on him are people not worthy of emulation. This is why parents must be careful about who their children hang around with and who they read about.

Reflection 16.1: Who are some of the people you admired as a young person? What was it about these people that captured your attention?

Now the question is: Who could be more worthy of admiration than Jesus Christ?

Do you admire Him? Do you find Him attractive and extraordinary? Is He making an impression on you? Do you want to be like Him? If the answer is no, then it only goes to prove that you have not really seen Him as He is.

How many really want to see Jesus? The single most important quality for experiencing this revelation of Jesus Christ is *purity of heart*.

Psalms 24:3-4

Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place [the place of divine revelation]? 4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol [an alternative god]....

Matthew 5:8

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

We need to come before God with a pure heart. This is the number one attribute He is looking for? So what is a pure heart? What does it look like?

James 4:8

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

A person with an impure heart is a person who is double-minded.

James 1:6-7

But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

A double-minded person with an impure heart is a person who is doubtful, easily tossed about, and unstable. He is like the people with Elijah on Mt. Carmel.

1 Kings 18:21

And Elijah came to all the people, and said, "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people answered him not a word.

These people were double-minded. On the one hand they wanted to follow God, but on the other hand they were tempted to follow the god of the idolaters. In essence, they were holding back on making a 100% commitment. They were willing to pray, but they were not willing to commit to prayer. They were willing to connect, but they were not willing to commit to doing whatever was necessary to build good connections. They were willing to do some work, but they were not willing to commit to "whatever it takes." They were double-minded; their hearts were full of impurities. Their eyes were set on Jesus, but they were also set on the world.

A person with a pure heart is one who is single-minded. This is who God shows Himself to. This is why James says, "Purify your hearts, you double-minded." Paul was saying the same thing when He wrote, "Set your mind on things above, not the things of the earth" (Colossians 3:2). This is why Elijah said, "If Jesus is God, then commit to serving Him!" And this is why Paul says, "Run your race with endurance, looking unto Jesus...."

Just how impressed are you with Jesus Christ? Just how deeply has He been able to embed His character into your spirit? Just how desperately do you want to be like Him?

Proverbs 22:11

He who loves purity of heart and has grace on his lips, the king will be his friend.

Jesus does not reveal Himself fully to everyone, but He does reveal Himself to His friends. So let us encourage one another: Keep seeking Him. Keep pouring over the Word. Keep reaching out to others. And keep setting your eyes on the things of the Spirit. Once you catch the vision, the vision will catch you, and it will carry you into the glory of God.

1 Peter 2:21

For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps....

There is a specific pathway that Jesus has established for each of us to walk in. It's called the Cross. We must endure it to the end if we are to sit down with Jesus in everlasting life. But to do that we must have a vision of the joy that has been set before us. Can you see it? Can you envision the joy of entering into His eternal kingdom?

Each step we take along the pathway of the Cross represents a further step of commitment. You see, there is no standing still with Jesus. You either walk in His steps as He has called you to do or you will be left behind. There are many people in the world today who claim to be followers of Jesus Christ, but sadly, many are followers in name only.

1 John 2:6

He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

Jesus was committed to the 5th power. That's why He was such a powerful man. Every step of commitment takes you deeper into the power of God. Let's not stop at C¹ as so many do. Let's not stop at C² or C³ or C⁴. Let's go all the way to perfection.

Do anyone of us want to be fifth-power believer? There is a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us, cheering us on. Let's endure. Let's stay on course. Let's keep moving forward toward the finish line.

Reflection Point 16.2: What have you learned about your walk with God from this series? How has it helped you to move closer to your potential in the Lord?
