

From Randall J. Brewer's book
**BORN TO LOVE,
CALLED TO SERVE**

LOVING THY NEIGHBOR

*Loving Your Neighbor
With The God-Kind
Of Love*

RANDALL J. BREWER

LOVING THY NEIGHBOR

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CONTENTS

FOREWORD

EVERYONE THAT ISN'T YOU ... iii

CHAPTER ONE

LOVING THY NEIGHBOR..... 1

Be God's Example 1

Intergrity is the Origin of Quality... 1

The Main Theme 2

You Change, Adjust, Adapt 3

The Ministry of Peace..... 3

Your Spirit is Preprogrammed..... 4

Love is Something You See..... 5

CHAPTER TWO

BEAR MUCH FRUIT 8

What is a Priority? 8

The Most Valuable Thing..... 8

What Are You Doing, and Why? 9

Be Fruitful and Multiply..... 10

Eat From the Right Tree..... 10

Our Duties Are Clear..... 11

We Are Not Alone..... 12

Pruning is Painful 12

What You Don't See Is Real 13

CHAPTER THREE

SEEK YE FIRST 15

The Act of Seeking 15

There is More to Life 16

Look Out for Others 17

God's Plan and Purpose 18

Help Wanted 19

Priority No. 1 20

CHAPTER FOUR

GOD'S BUSINESS 21

The Great Failure..... 21

Your Works Are Documented..... 22

Faith People Are Laborers..... 22

The Power of Diligence..... 23

The Spiritual Life is a Busy Life..... 24

Diligent People Are Ready 25




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Born to Love, Called to Serve:

- I. Born To Love
- II. The Love Command
- III. Radical Love
- IV. Loving Thy Neighbor
- V. A Living Sacrifice
- VI. Take Up Your Cross

EVERYONE THAT ISN'T YOU

n Planet Earth, there are only two kinds of people: those you can easily love, and those you have to work at it. I mean *really* work at it. But this much you can be certain, everyone that isn't you, is watching you.

It is said that “love is blind, but the neighbors aren’t.” The neighbors are the targets of our love. According to the Bible, a neighbor is everyone that isn’t you. Love God and your neighbor as much as you love yourself. Simple? Not really.

Look at the news headlines and see what your neighbors are up to. Some of them are extremely violent; some of them are extremely naive; all of them Jesus died for, even the ones who kill other members of our society and then take their own life in the end.

Today, we have many organizations that say, “Become like us first, and then you can join our group.” The Church is the guiltiest party of all in regards to this attitude. “Clean up your act, and you can join us.” And yet, Jesus associated with all kinds of social rejects.

People protest the prejudice in America today, but the Jewish nation of Christ’s time were the most prejudice of all, all in the name of God. They rejected everyone that wasn’t of the mainline norm. But Jesus accepted them because He loved them. Our pews should be full of social rejects, the spiritually unclean, and those the church has looked down on.

Reading author Randall J. Brewer’s latest excerpt from his book, *Born to Love, Called to Serve*, we see that God accepts no excuse for not loving the next person. He takes it personal when we neglect our fellow man. On Judgment Day we will be asked, “What did you do for everyone that isn’t you?”

Paul Baker,
Publisher and friend of Randall J. Brewer

CHAPTER ONE

LOVING THY NEIGHBOR

We are here for a purpose. We didn't get saved so we could have an easy life. We are here to be witnesses for God. We were born to love and called to serve. We are here to make a positive difference in the lives of other people and that means we are here to help them have an easier life, a life more blessed than had our paths not crossed with theirs.

BE GOD'S EXAMPLE

People are watching you, because the world is desperate for something real and genuine. They need help, but they're tired of phony believers who talk the talk, but don't walk the walk. More than anything you need to upgrade your testimony by the way you live your life. Don't just witness to people, be a witness for them by displaying a tremendous outpouring of love into their lives.

Show people by your words and actions that you truly care about them and their circumstances. Let them know you'll be there for them if the need arises, and even if it doesn't. You'll be a friend who stands closer than a brother ^{Prov. 18:24} in good times and bad.

God wants to use you. You can be a light in a dark world if you'll get out of your comfort zone and do something good. Don't be content to just go to church, *be the church*.

Too much emphasis is given to going to church on Sunday mornings. People think if they do this they've fulfilled their Christian obligation and then go off and live like the devil the rest of

the week. These people are hypocrites, and one day will hear Jesus say to them, **"I never knew you; depart from Me"** ^{Matt. 7:23}.

Know with certainty that God has a personal, individualized plan for your life. If you will follow that plan, you'll have a life that will amaze you and God will use you to bless people and to draw them out of the grasp of the evil one and into the kingdom of God.

INTEGRITY IS THE ORIGIN OF QUALITY

Quality workmanship is hard to find. Scarce are people who are truthful, honest, and keep their commitments. This is not pleasing to God. Do what you say you will do even if you have to suffer doing it. God is not going to bless liars.

Be led by the Spirit. Think before you sign on the dotted line. God will bless a person of integrity, a person who will do what they say they will do.

The flesh is lazy and compromising and will only do what it absolutely has to. It thinks only about itself. A person controlled by their flesh will merge into the left lane of traffic when it sees a person pulled over on the right side of the road with a flat tire.

It is impossible to be selfish and happy at the same time. You can't do it! Get your mind off yourself and be a blessing to somebody else. You are blessed to be a blessing, not to consume everything you get on yourself. Paul said, "I die daily" ^{1 Cor. 15:310}. Every day he said "no" to his stinking flesh. Stop letting your flesh rule you and once and for all get your selfish self off your mind. You really haven't lived until you get

*Don't just witness to people,
be a witness for them to see.*

free from “me”! Die to yourself daily and become an extreme, radical, over-the-top Christian. Love Jesus out loud. Go upstream when the rest of the world flows downstream.

THE MAIN THEME

The main theme of your life should be love, a love that gives and expects nothing in return. Don't complain about what you do for others, especially if they don't appreciate what you do. Zip your lip and do it unto God. Live to please Him. Good people always do more than enough. They go the extra mile. The rich young ruler didn't want to go the extra mile and he walked away from Jesus sad and grieved (see Mark 10:17-22).

Jesus said in Matt. 26:41, “**The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.**” The Message® Bible says, “**There is a part of you that is eager, ready for anything in God. But there's another part that's as lazy as an old dog sleeping by the fire.**”

Real life is hard and you must walk in the Spirit and be strong in the Lord to live a victorious life. If everything was easy you wouldn't get strong. Take notice of a selfish person and you will see how weak they are. It takes strength and spiritual energy to love thy neighbor, because only a strong and mature believer will humble themselves under the mighty hand of God and not insist on their own way.

Paul didn't have to have his own way all the time. He was willing to adjust and adapt to the needs and personalities of the people he encountered. He wrote in 1 Cor. 9:19-22, “For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant of all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews, to those who are under the law,

as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law, to those who are without law, as without law...that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.”

The Message® Bible says, “I didn't take on their way of life. I kept my bearings in Christ - but I entered their world and tried to experience things from their point of view. I've become just about every sort of servant there is in my attempts to lead those I meet into a God-saved life. I did all this because of the Message. I didn't just want to talk about it; I wanted to be in on it.”

Jesus did the same thing. He was willing to adjust and adapt Himself to the needs of sinful man.

Phil. 2:5-8 MSG says, “Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of Himself. He had equal status with God, but didn't

think so much of Himself that He had to cling to the advantage of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, He set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human! Having become human, He stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, He lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death - and the worst kind of death at that: a crucifixion.”

Jesus ate with sinners. He related to them. He showed them that He cared. He discerned what the needs of the people were and He gave it to them. That's love to the highest degree. When you love people, the walls come down and they'll open up to you. God is knocking on

*Real life is hard; be strong
to live a victorious life.*

doors, but He uses us to open up those doors. Treating people right motivates them to open up the doors of their heart to God so He can change their lives.

Daily follow the leading of the Holy Spirit and readily adjust yourself to other people and their needs. Learn the personalities of those you associate with and adapt the way you communicate with them.

Paul said in Rom. 12:15,16a, “Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another.”

YOU CHANGE, ADJUST, ADAPT

Don't wait for other people to change, *you* change. You adjust! You adapt! You become all things to all men. We tend to give people what *we* need instead of what *they* need. You need to study people and listen to them in order to find out what they want and need.

Very few people will be like you and like the same things you like. Adjust yourself to these people and adapt to them so that you'll be able to not give them what you need, but rather what they need.

Married or not, your relationships with people are all over the place. You will encounter people different than you at home, church, work, the store, practically everywhere you go. You need to realize that not everybody is like you and that they have different needs and desires, likes and dislikes. You must be educated on how to love thy neighbor and learn how to relate to and get along with other people.

Paul wrote in Phil. 4:2 ^{MSG}, “I urge Euodia and Syntyche to iron out their differences and make up. God doesn't want His children

holding grudges.”

THE MINISTRY OF PEACE

There is power in agreement and a house divided cannot stand ^{Luke 11:17}. Strife destroys homes and churches and is a sign that love is lacking. You must humble yourself to stay out of strife since unity is the number one sign of maturity.

Ps. 133:1 says, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.” We need to network together and live in harmony, because unity is the atmosphere through which the blessings of God flow. Phil. 2:2 says, “fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.”

The Message® Bible says, “Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends.” If you want peace, you're going to have to work at it.

Eph. 4:2,3 says, “with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

The Message® Bible says, “And mark that you do this with humility and discipline - not in fits and starts, but steadily, pouring yourselves out for each other in acts of love, alert at noticing differences and quick at mending fences.”

Prov. 20:3 says, “It is honorable for a man to stop striving, since any fool can start a quarrel.” Where there is no peace, there is no power. Not treating people right quenches the Holy Spirit and strife will remove the anointing from off your life ^{1 Thess. 5:19}. Love seeks not its own way, so learn to adapt yourself to other people, because more times than not they won't

If you want peace, you're going to have to work at it.

adapt to you.

Your success as a Christian is linked to your love walk so seek to do good and learn to “be at peace among yourselves” ^{1 Thess. 5:13b}. If you get mad because you don’t get your own way all the time, then not too many people will want to hang around with you. Don’t be moody, touchy, and insecure where everybody has to always submit to what you want. People who complain all the time because they don’t get their own way are takers and not givers, and they don’t obey the command to love. They are never happy and the more they get the more they want.

Unhappy people want to make everybody else unhappy. Hurting people try to hurt other people. Let God supply all your needs, and aggressively seek for ways to be a blessing to someone else.

Love is not a feeling, it’s something you do on purpose. Take time to plan ways to be a blessing to people. Don’t wait for an angel to appear telling you what to do. Bless somebody for no reason at all, not just at Christmas or on their birthday. This helps build good relationships.

Give somebody a kind word and love people with your thoughts. Creative love thinking will cause you to think good thoughts about other people where you can turn those thoughts into action.

If you follow Jesus you’re going to have to be generous. You’ll have to go the extra mile. Jesus said, “**And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away**” ^{Matt. 5:41,42}. This means that you go to work ten minutes early and stay ten minutes late. Do above and beyond what’s asked or required of you. Be the type of person

who on purpose does more than you have to.

Kick it up to a higher level. God is El Shaddai, the God of more than enough. He goes the extra mile and so should you. God is able to do far more than you could ever think or imagine in your wildest dreams ^{Eph. 3:20 MSG} and you need to do the same.

YOUR SPIRIT IS PRE-PROGRAMMED

Your spirit wants to work and be fruitful and accomplish something good. Your flesh wants to eat donuts and play video games all day. The good news is that it is never too late to begin again to live life led by the promptings of the Holy Spirit and not the flesh.

Go out into the world and begin to act like Jesus. Put a smile on your face. Too many people are frowning and act like they have nothing to live for. When people walk in the flesh there is agony and destruction, and this is why the world needs Spirit-filled and Spirit-led individuals who will forget about themselves long enough to go the extra mile

and be a blessing to someone else.

As this becomes your lifestyle you also will be blessed because what you make happen for others God will make happen for you ^{Eph. 6:8}.

Be prepared to be a blessing. Don’t wait until the last minute and then find out you don’t have the time or resources to do it. Have a supply of finances and things with which to bless other people. Set up a blessing account at the bank so that when the need presents itself, you’ll be able to respond immediately.

Make a sacrifice and give away something you value and that which cost you something. Don’t give away broken down, second-hand things that you no longer want or need. God

Love is not a feeling, it's something you do on purpose.

gave you His best when He gave you Jesus, so you also must be willing to give the best things you have.

Give freely and abundantly with no strings attached. Expect nothing in return. Don't have the attitude, "I'll scratch your back if you'll scratch mine." If there are strings it's not a gift. It puts a burden on the receiver and it won't bless the giver. The value of the gift is diminished if people think you're trying to buy them and that they owe you something back. But gifts given with a pure heart has eternal value.

Mark 12:41,42 tells of a poor widow who gave two mites and the value of her gift was determined by the heart giving it. We still talk today about the woman with the alabaster box of perfume that she gave to Jesus. David said in Ps. 57:7, "My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and give praise."

When a person has a heart that is steadfast and perfect toward God, they'll give freely and willingly with no expectations except to see the person receiving the gift happy and blessed.

Follow the way of love ^{1 Cor. 14:1}. Do what love does all the time. God is love and you also are to be love. The value of a gift is determined by the heart giving it. A gift without love attached to it has no eternal value and is not a gift at all.

Go out of your way to make relationships special. Compliment people and bless them with your words. Edify, exhort, and encourage others. Accept people for who they are, and don't put them on the potter's wheel and try to change them. Put them in God's hands and love them anyway.

Love is knowing what somebody's weaknesses are and not making a big deal out

of it. Don't be a fault finder and don't demand perfection out of other people. Love always believes the best of everyone and does not deliberately keep records of wrongs and past mistakes. This is not always easy to do, because some people's behavior makes it hard to believe there's anything good in them. Still, love is God's command and loving the ungodly is what sets us apart from the rest of the world.

A friend who walks in love will stay close in times of trouble, will hover over people to protect them during the storms of life rather than expose them and their flaws in the view of others.

Love protects, shields, guards, seals, and safeguards people from exposure.

Love strains forward with all its might refusing to give up and to always believe the very best in every situation.

Love always expects and anticipates the best in others and the best for others.

Love never disappoints, never fails, never falls, and never lets anyone down.

Love is not blind. It sees the weaknesses and faults of people, but it always endeavors to believe the best.

If you will do this, if you will truly love people unconditionally in spite of their shortcomings, you will have more friends than you know what to do with.

LOVE IS SOMETHING YOU SEE.

Wounded people need to see unconditional love, and not just a little. They need a great abundance of love and patience and they need to know that somebody cares about them. When you've been hurt by people you don't respond well to other people. You put walls up and if

Love has a way of pulling the best out of a person.

you've been hurt you just automatically want to hurt someone else. What happens to you will flow through you.

Love does not feel overjoyed when it sees an injustice done to someone else, but when stretched to its fullest limit has a way of reaching into a person and pulling out the best in them.

Love will seek to endeavor in some way to restore that person and is elated, thrilled, and overjoyed when that hurting person gets set free to become the person they truly desire to be. Hurting people need to be loved and feel that they are appreciated and understood.

Love is seen in how you treat people so if somebody is hurting be nice to them, talk sweet and lower your voice tone. Don't have a rough tone to your voice for soft words turn away wrath ^{Prov. 15:1}. Voice tone and body language is what hurting people notice first, because words by themselves is a small part of communication.

- Be straight forward with people and speak the truth in love ^{Eph. 4:15} and always remember,
- It's not what you say, but how you say it.
- Don't try to correct somebody until you first tell them something you like about them.
- Show them you care and be willing to share your own faults with them. People won't respond to you well if you act like you're perfect and don't make any mistakes. We've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, but if people know you love them, they'll receive your correction.

2 Sam. 19:7a says, "Now therefore, arise, go out and speak comfort to your servants. For I swear by the Lord, if you do not go out, not one will stay with you this night."

Don't act "bossy" telling people what to do all the time, bossing them around in a cruel,

harsh manner. Love edifies ^{1 Cor. 8:1} and makes allowances for other people so give them a break and don't be judgmental.

Encourage people to grow to their full potential and speak kindly to those who are with you. If you don't, they'll all leave. It's our job as ambassadors of the Lord to make people feel good about themselves. Use words to build up and not tear down.

Paul said in Eph. 4:29, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers."

The Message® Bible says, "Watch the way you talk. Let nothing foul or dirty come out of your mouth. Say only what helps, each word a gift."

Don't be discouraged if you don't see any results right away. Some people have been beat down with negative words for so long that the concept of them being special— is hard

for them to grasp. A house is built one brick at a time and so it is with people's lives. They are edified and built up one kind word and one kind deed at a time. Don't grow weary telling people how special they are. Stay with it. Show the same love and compassion you started out with.

Love never fails and if you'll stir it up and stay with it, you will be a vessel of honor that God will use to bring a positive change into the lives of other people. There is no greater blessing than that.

Gal. 5:13 says, "For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another." You are not called to make yourself happy, nor are you anointed to get all your selfish desires met. You are called to liberty

*Use words to build up and
not tear down.*

so you can serve one another and this is the only thing that will bring fulfillment to your life.

Take up the needs of the body of Christ as if they were your own needs. As you diligently seek the benefit of others God will step in and seek to meet your needs. This will give you the freedom to take your thoughts off yourself and onto other people, to put their needs above your own.

Love will lead you and give you the opportunity and the ability to make a positive difference in the life of another. Love enables you to be the bigger blessing, and when people see the love of God in you they see God, because He put it there.

You are love in the world and 1 Cor. 13:4-8 is a description of you:

- You endure long and are patient and kind.
- You are never envious nor do you boil over with jealousy.
- You are not boastful or vain glorious and neither do you display yourself haughtily.
- You are not conceited, arrogant, or inflated with pride.
- You are not rude, unmannerly, and you do not act unbecomingly.
- You do not insist on your own rights or your own way, because you are not self-seeking. Like a professionally cut diamond, love sparkles in many ways.

*Be the type of person
other people will be
thankful for.*

When the world cries out, “Are you going to be there when I need you?” the light of love steps in and brightens the day.

Be the type of person other people will be thankful for. They are talking about you behind your back. The question is, “What are they saying?”

CHAPTER TWO

BEAR MUCH FRUIT

There are two super important things that you need to learn in life. You need to know *what is* important, and you need to learn *what is not* important.

WHAT IS A PRIORITY?

For example, some people think texting their friends is more important than staying in the proper lane on the highway. Or how about the pleasure seeking father who would rather play golf with his friends than attend his son's championship ball game? You need to learn what's important in life, what's valuable, and what's worth spending your time, energy, and your resources on. If you don't discern what's important you could spend your entire life on that which is not important.

There are things we all need to do, but a lot of those things are not as important as people think they are. People are wasting days of their lives doing nothing important.

They spend two hours fixing their hair and another two deciding what clothes to wear. Some people spend an entire day shopping and looking for things, but leave the mall without buying anything. Others spend three hours deciding which pair of shoes to buy and a couple days later spend more time taking them back to the store. If they were led by the Spirit they wouldn't have bought the wrong thing in the first place.

Foolish people do whatever comes up, whatever their friends want them to do, and whatever strikes their mind and tickles their

end result is a wasted life, a life that bears no fruit for the kingdom of God. When it comes to time, you can never get back that which you've wasted. Once it's gone and it's gone forever.

THE MOST VALUABLE THING

The most valuable thing you have is your time. Not your house, your car, your job, or your money. You can't put a price on time, because it is irreplaceable and precious beyond cost. Only a fool will take something that is priceless and trade it for that thing which is worth nothing, something that is common and useless. Still, people are doing this every day. They act like they have all the time in the world to do the things they are supposed to do, when suddenly the curtain drops on their life and they pass on

God will not forget your labor of love.

to the other side.

Time is flying by quickly and there are only a few days left before it will all be over. Heb. 9:27 says, "...it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment." People think and act like they'll be going about the daily routine of life forever, and don't realize that their lifetime is a very brief amount of time.

James 4:14b tells us, "For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away." The Message® Bible says, "You're nothing but a wisp of fog, catching a brief bit of sun before disappearing."

Job had a revelation of this when he wrote, "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle..."^{Job 7:6a} and "Oh, remember that my life

is a breath!” Job 7:7a.

Time is precious, so don't waste it. You get to live your life one time and one time only, so spend it on eternal things and not on that which won't mean anything next week or next year. In just a few more days you're going to look up and your life is going to be over.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING, AND WHY?

Time is precious, but it is also short. Your life is like a mist, you're here one moment and gone the next. Years come and go quickly like telephone poles flying by on the highway. People live like this life is all there is and what they're doing now they'll be doing forever. They don't realize that nothing that's happening now is going to last very long. Not where they're living, not where they're working, and not with the people they associate with.

Things are different today than it was yesterday and things will be different tomorrow. Change happens to everybody, but soon and very soon it's all going to be over.

When the time comes for your departure from this planet, you don't want to look back at your life and find out that you've wasted a great portion of your time on things that have no eternal significance. Check up on yourself and take account of your life.

Ask yourself,

- “What am I doing with the one life I've been given?”
- What *are* you doing and *why* are you doing it?
- Who told you to do it?
- What's it worth and what is it producing?

Don't live for self-gratification and don't make being rich and famous your primary goal in life. Reject the notion that “he who dies with the most toys wins” and “let's eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die.” Both are a lie of the devil and he'll never reveal to you the severe consequences of living solely to satisfy your flesh.

People who think this world is all there is, live to satisfy their own lustful desires with no regard for anybody else, and they never consider or worry above the consequences. These are the people who need to take heed to the words of the apostle Paul written in Eph. 5:14, “Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.”

Most of the world is either spiritually dead and not born-again or else they are born-again, but are asleep. They're saved, but are doing nothing with their lives to advance the kingdom of

God. It is time for the church to wake up and get rid of all those mundane things that rob you of your time.

It has been estimated that people spend one year of their life looking for their socks and deciding what clothes to put on.

Spend more time with God and...

- He'll show you what's important and what's not important.
- He'll show you what to do and what not to do.
- He'll show you what to change and do more of and what to change and do less of.
- He'll show you how to do things in less time and how to get more results from your labor.

Prov. 9:10,11 says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge

What are you doing and why are you doing it?

of the Holy One is understanding. For by me your days will be multiplied, and years of life will be added to you.”

BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY

With wisdom and God’s direction, you can produce more in one year than the previous ten years put together. God can make you fruitful beyond your wildest dreams. This is what your future and your life should look like. It doesn’t matter what your background is. You may have been unfruitful for fifty years, but you can be fruitful now. It’s never too late to begin.

God is gracious and He loves you so much He’ll help you make up for lost time. He’ll restore the years the locust and the caterpillar have eaten up ^{Joel 2:25}. You’re here, you’re breathing, and God is still on the throne. There’s still time to be fruitful and do something good with your life. Don’t go to heaven empty handed.

God is expecting you to bear fruit and plenty of it. Jesus said in John 15,1,2,

“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.”

You are not here just to get saved and then wait to die so you can go to heaven. Religious folks put a high emphasis on getting saved and going to church when you can, but say very little or nothing on bearing fruit.

EAT FROM THE RIGHT TREE

We’ve been dazzled by church services with laser shows and bright lights and smoking mirrors and loud music. People get amazed and moon-eyed and follow these preachers

down the path not knowing where it will lead. People should not be so gullible and so easily swayed.

The Bible says you will know them by their fruit, not by what they say or dream or by what type of brilliant show they put on. Some people, all they do is talk, talk, talk, but produce no fruit. You can put any type of label you want on an empty can, but the bottom line is “Where’s the fruit?”

Churches today are filled with much activity. There are plenty of meals to eat and much gossip to go around with all that food. Sunday services have turned the church into a social club with no thought or teaching on denying the selfish appetites of the flesh and rising up to advance the kingdom of God.

Barrenness and doing nothing for God is a serious thing and has severe consequences.

God expects a return on what He’s poured into your life. He expects you to bear much fruit and to do what you’re supposed to do.

Ezekiel 15 tells the “Parable of the Vine” that the Lord spoke to the prophet. It says in vs.2-4, “Son of man, how is the wood of the vine better than any other wood, the vine branch which is among the trees of the forest? Is wood taken from it to make any object?”

“Or can men make a peg from it to hang any vessel on? Instead, it is thrown into the fire for fuel; the fire devours both ends of it, and its middle is burned. Is it useful for any work?”

This passage of scripture says that branches are good for either bearing fruit or for burning. They are not good for building anything and they cannot produce their own life. The branches actually display and bear the fruit of the vine.

There’s still time to be fruitful and do something good with your life.

Jesus is the Vine and all born-again believers should be thinking about being fruitful every day of their lives. Going to church and warming a pew is not being fruitful. Most people don't even care if they're fruitful or not. For them the zeal languishes, the professed love is gone, prayer is neglected, the sanctuary is forsaken, and the soul becomes like a withered branch reserved for the fire on the last great day.

God will take from His church, all professed Christians who give no evidence by their lives that they are truly united to the Vine, the Lord Jesus Christ. Heb. 10:30,31 warns, "For we know Him who said, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' And again, 'The Lord will judge His people.' It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

The Message® Bible says, "This is no light matter. God has warned us that He'll hold us to account and make us pay. He was quite explicit: 'Vengeance is mine, and I won't overlook a thing,' and 'God will judge His people,' Nobody's getting by with anything, believe me."

Jesus said in Matt. 9:37,38, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

OUR DUTIES ARE CLEAR

We are here for only a brief amount of time and you have got a job to do. You are here to produce and bear much fruit for the Master. If you are already bearing fruit you can produce a hundred times more than you have been.

God can make you fruitful beyond your wildest dreams. The question is, "What are you doing with your time?" If you are striving to

serve God and please Him with it then that time becomes precious to Him. When you serve God with the time you now have and show Him what you would do if you had more,

- He'll give you the resources that will help free you up and give you more time with which to serve Him.
- He'll give you the finances so that you won't have to work all that overtime.
- He'll give you good health so you don't have to sit in the doctor's office for hours at a time.
- He'll give you a new car so you don't have to waste time waiting for the old one to get fixed.

If you are faithful over a little time, God will make you ruler over much time. Be a good steward with what you have now and God will

give you more. He'll give you the things that will help you redeem the time ^{Eph. 5:16}

and save more hours and days. He'll give you more money, more ability, more

opportunity.

Let God lead you and make every day of your life count. He will lead you to greater fruitfulness when you abide in the Vine. Withered up branches don't produce any fruit, so let nothing hinder the full flow of His Spirit and His life that causes you to produce an abundance of fruit that pleases Him.

What good is a branch that bears no fruit? Every branch that isn't bearing fruit needs to start doing so in a hurry before it becomes withered and cut off. This is serious business. Bearing fruit begins with the fear of the Lord. Abide in the Vine and get God involved in everything you do.

The life is in the Vine and if that life is blocked, the branch dries up and withers. When

Going to church and warming a pew is not being fruitful.

people don't stay connected to the Vine their creativity is cut off and their joy is dried up. They lead a dead, boring, fruitless life. To bear much fruit you need to stop wasting so much time and be led by God.

Prov. 11:30a says, "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life..." When you do things that God tells you to do, it will produce life. It will be profitable for there will be life in it. It will be valuable and it will touch the lives of other people. It will quicken them and make them more alive. It will draw them deeper into the things of God. The Greater One inside you will lead you so that your life will be more sufficient and more profitable. Slow down and take time to hear from Him.

You don't have to do a lot of the things you think you have to do. Check your heart and be more particular about the decisions you make. Prov. 3:5,6 says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."

If you're more selective, you'll be more effective. People today are getting worn out doing things they shouldn't be doing. They're not being led by God and end up being at the wrong place at the wrong time. Things happen that wouldn't have happened had they taken the time to get before Him and be led by His direction. Ask God what you should do. Remember, pride assumes, but humility asks.

WE ARE NOT ALONE

We are co-laborers with God ^{1 Cor. 3:9}. We are not called to do things "for" God, we are called to do things "with" God. Do what He says. Don't add to it or take anything away. Don't change anything, because you're not going to have a

better idea than God. Jesus said, "**Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in Me**" ^{John 15:4}.

The word "abide" means 'stay' and Jesus is saying to stay in Him and He will stay in you. The enemy will tempt you to leave, but stay hooked up to the Vine; stay joined and stay connected.

The nature of the flesh is impatience. It doesn't want to stay anywhere for very long. It's flighty. It's here, it's there. With the Lord you have to learn to be still and see and know that He is God. Wait on the Lord and He will renew your strength and he will make your heart strong. To be fruitful you must stay connected to the Vine and have continuous communion with Him. You can be aware of Him and commune with Him all day and all night.

Stay in Him and His words will stay in your mind and in your heart and in your mouth. This is the way to make every second count and not waste your precious

life here on the earth. You were called to the fellowship of Jesus Christ. The great deeds and miracles in the life of Jesus were a product of His fellowship with the Father. He did not waste His life on fleshly pursuits, but did only what the Father told Him to do. He knew what to do and say every minute of every day. Look how much the Father did with Jesus in a little more than three years. What can He do with you in a year, or two, or three? Abide in the Vine and make your life count.

PRUNING IS PAINFUL

There are many courses in the university of life. Some are painful, but God uses these required lessons to drive people to a more intimate relationship with Him, that in turn will produce spiritual fruit that remains for all eternity.

*If you're more selective,
you'll be more effective.*

Jesus said that branches that produce fruit get purged and pruned so that they will bear much fruit that remains and glorifies God.

Pruning involves the cutting away of dead branches, but also the cutting back of living branches to enhance the quality and quantity of the crop. The worst thing God could do would be to leave you alone and let you have your own way, but if you'll get before Him and listen to Him, He'll trim you up. He'll show you in the days to come those things that are a waste of your time and resources that need to be cut off.

There is no such thing as a fruit tree that doesn't need trimming. Even the very best fruit trees and vines need some dead stuff cut off, so it can put out new shoots and new branches and thus become more fruitful. Purging may not sound good, but it's better than being cut off and burned.

1 Peter 5:10 states, "But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you."

The Message® Bible says, "So keep a firm grip on the faith. The suffering won't last forever. It won't be long before this generous God who has great plans for us in Christ - eternal and glorious plans they are! - will have you put together and on your feet for good. He gets the last word; yes He does."

Purging is not a pleasant experience and most people wouldn't want to go through it again. Jesus said it was like plucking your eye out or cutting your hand off ^{Matt. 5:29,30}. A useless life is an unproductive life, a life that bears no fruit.

Start up that spiritual chain-saw and cut off those things that are hindering your walk with God and holding you back from bearing much

fruit. Every believer needs some weed pulling and limb trimming and dead stuff removal. Discipline yourself and ask God to show you every hindering thing in your life that needs to be removed. Disdain the things that are wasting your time and your resources and your life. If you live for only what's down here, you are throwing your life away. You only have a short window of opportunity to produce fruit that remains for all eternity, but if all you do is live to please yourself and try to make your flesh comfortable, then you have thrown away something that is precious and beyond price.

WHAT YOU DON'T SEE IS REAL

There is a God, there is a heaven, there is a kingdom that lasts forever, and there is a judgment to come. The biggest fear in your

life should be that you do not obey God. Don't be concerned about how much money you have, or if you'll be comfortable in your retirement years. Seek first

the kingdom of God and all these things will be added to you ^{Matt. 6:33}. Now is the time to work. God wants you to enjoy your life, but don't make having fun your top priority.

The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. We've got to double up on our work effort, because there are millions of believers doing nothing and who don't care about anything, but their own ease and comfort. God says, "You fool! This night your soul will be required of you" ^{Luke 12:20a}.

As painful as pruning may be, those who go through the process wouldn't trade it for anything in the world, for there is a benefit that comes through the pain that takes place. 2 Cor. 5:17b says "old things have passed away; behold, all things become new." Old branches that produce no fruit have become new branches that bear

The biggest fear in your life should be that you do not obey God.

much fruit. What a glorious day that will be when it is revealed that you didn't waste your time, money, and opportunities on things that don't matter in the long run. Instead, you were fruitful and the Father was glorified by all you did for the kingdom.

When you love God and people you just automatically want to do more. If you have a heart toward God you want to do more this year than you did last year.

Titus 3:14 ^{NIV} says, "Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order to provide for urgent needs and not live unproductive lives." Jesus said you will be known by the fruit you produce ^{Matt. 7:15}.

THE FRUIT IS THE EVIDENCE

There are wolves who wear sheep's clothing and people are swayed, because they're not looking at the fruit. They're looking at the outward appearance and the brilliance of the show they put on. Jesus said you will know them not by their beliefs and opinions and their good intentions, but by what they produced. Ask, "Where's the fruit?" What have they produced with their lives and ministry? We don't want to know how they survived the hard times, we want to know what they produced for the kingdom of God. Where's the fruit?

The fruit grows on the branch, but the power to produce the fruit is in the Vine. This is why every branch must abide in the Vine. You cannot bear fruit by yourself with your own effort and good intentions. You can only do it if you abide in the Vine. The more you are connected to Him, the more full of life you are, the more vibrant you will be, and the more fruit you will produce. Your energy level and your patience

will soar, and you'll be able to do those things that really matter and count. You'll be led by the Spirit, and you'll know what to do in every situation.

One of the most tormenting things in life is being confused and not knowing what to do. That kind of darkness is a result of withering, of not abiding in the Vine, of not being connected and trying to do your own thing. You don't hook up to God for just a few moments, you've got to stay in His presence all day long, at work and at play.

Is. 26:3 says, "You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because He trusts in You." If you don't know what to do, you won't have peace. But if you'll deny the flesh and say to the Lord, "Not my will, but Your will be done," He'll show you what to do. As you contribute to His work, His plan, and His kingdom, you'll be spending your life wisely.

The end will be here faster than you know, and when it does you can hold your head up and say you ran your race, you finished your course. And when you are asked, "Where's the fruit," you can say with all boldness and confidence, "Come, let me show you."

The power to produce the fruit is in the Vine.

CHAPTER THREE

SEEK YE FIRST

It's a sign of the times. People everywhere are searching for something. We are all by nature a seeking people, for there is just something about the act of seeking that captures our imagination.

THE ACT OF SEEKING

Shopping malls are crowded with people seeking the latest fashion design or the most updated version of the iPhone; we go to the movie theater where fascination grips our hearts as we watch the renegade pirate in search of buried treasure; we view on television a professional fisherman who travels the back waters of Africa searching for a river monster that is known to lurk there; we cheer on the gifted athlete as he seeks to win the gold medal at the Olympic games. We support them all and hope they find whatever it is they're searching for.

The act of seeking is like a giant magnet that pulls us forward in life and barely a day goes by where we are not in search of something. A relentless pursuit goes forth as we seek fortune and fame, pleasure and power. Some seek for a better education, a new job, and a new house to live in. Women seek husbands and men seek wives. That which is most important to you is what you will search for the most. People, possessions, power, prestige, and pleasure all compete for your attention, and the addictiveness of these things will cause people to search for them at all costs.

The great tragedy of life is that most people are only interested in themselves, their

advancement in life, and their own personal concerns. They become selfish, they are too busy to get involved with the needs of other people, and they are too occupied with their own pursuits to care.

There is more to life than having money in the bank, a new car in the garage, and a boat on the lake. Deep down inside themselves people know this, but they've fallen into the trap of putting material things first. They go to church and watch the clock more than they watch the preacher. It is a sad commentary that those who have received the grace of God don't extend it to others. The apostle Paul spoke of this when

he wrote Phil. 2:19-21, "But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know

your state. For I have no one like-minded who will sincerely care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus."

The city of Philippi was a Roman colony and the local church there was in need of nurturing and spiritual care. Evidently the church of Rome was wrapped up in their own affairs, and their preoccupation with the things of this life caused them to forego the privilege of ministering to the saints of God at Philippi. There were burdens to be borne and shared, and at one time the Roman church was interested in helping others.

They had a reputation for sharing their faith Rom. 1:8, but now they could care less. They appear to have lost their passion for other people, but instead are now wasting their lives chasing

The act of seeking is like a giant magnet, pulling at us.

after those things that, in the end, won't bring fulfillment to their innermost being.

The reason people keep searching for things is because what they originally sought after didn't satisfy them, so they wake up each morning and begin the process all over again. The whole world around us is consumed with making a living and climbing the corporate ladder. They get ulcers and lose sleep worrying about these things.

THERE IS MORE TO LIFE

There should be more to life than spending all your time thinking about what to wear to work, or what to eat when you get home, or where to go on the next family vacation. As Christians we are in the world, but not of the world, and if one is not careful, even the elect can get snared in the trap of seeking after worldly things, the things that won't matter in the not too distant future. Paul wrote in Col. 3:1,2, "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth."

The Message® Bible says, "So if you're serious about living this new resurrection life with Christ, act like it. Pursue the things over which Christ presides. Don't shuffle along, eyes to the ground, absorbed with the things right in front of you. Look up, and be alert to what is going on around Christ - that's where the action is. See things from His perspective."

Your life is defined by that which you seek after. If you search for the right things you will have a happy, blessed life and if you seek for the wrong things heartache and misery will follow you wherever you go. James 4:1 asks, "Where do wars and fights come from among

you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?" The Message® Bible in verses 1-3 states, "Where do you think all these appalling wars and quarrels come from? Do you think they just happen? Think again. They come about because you want your own way, and fight for it deep inside yourselves. You lust for what you don't have and are willing to kill to get it. You want what isn't yours and will risk violence to get your hands on it. You wouldn't think of just asking God for it, would you? And why not? Because you know you'd be asking for what you have no right to. You're spoiled children, each wanting your own way."

This is a description of the "me first" generation in which we now live. We are told in James 1:14, "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed."

James warns that such self-serving desires will cause divisions, wars, and fights (vv. 1,2) and will destroy your relationship with God.

*We are in the world, but
not of the world.*

James 4:4 says, "Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."

THE ANSWER TO ALL THINGS

The solution to all this is to seek after the right things. Jesus addressed this in Matt. 6:31-33 when He said, "Therefore do not worry, saying 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

Jesus did not say to seek “for” the kingdom of God, which is what He would have said if He was addressing this command to unbelievers. This command was spoken to those who are kingdom citizens, and Jesus was saying to make the interests of Gods’ kingdom your top priority. Do not be anxious about what you will eat or wear. God is faithful to provide for His own and we can have anything we can believe for.

LOOK OUT FOR OTHERS

There is, however, something you should be anxious about, something good to seek after, something that creates enthusiasm and with great compulsion drives you forward. Paul tells us what that is in Phil. 2:2-4, “fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” This is how greatness is measured, for when you forget about yourself, you usually start doing something others will remember.

The kingdom of God is an everlasting kingdom. History tells of many great kingdoms that have ruled the known world in times past. The Greek, Egyptian, and Babylonian kingdoms were all mighty and powerful at one time, as was the Roman Empire. But these kingdoms are no more. Kingdoms rise and kingdoms fall, but Luke 1:33b says, “of His kingdom there will be no end.”

As citizens of Gods’ everlasting kingdom we’ve been made in His image and we are most like Him when our thoughts for ourselves are lost in our thoughts for others. This is what it

means to “seek ye first” the kingdom of God. The word “kingdom” is a composite of the words ‘king’ and ‘dominion’ and is defined as the realm or territory where a king rules and his will is fulfilled. In the Lords’ Prayer we read in Matt. 6:10, “**Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**” Gods’ will being done on earth is a description of the kingdom of God.

When Jesus told us to seek first the kingdom of God, He was telling us to see to it that what God wants done, gets done! Stop making material things the center of your life, but seek in earnest to be a blessing to other people. Replace those desires for worldly treasures with a pursuit that has far greater significance in this life and the life to come. Be so eager for heavenly things that you leave altogether your earthly cares with Jesus. Seek God first and the rest will follow in due course. You’ve only got one life to live and if you will spend it on this one thing, it will be a life well spent.

“Of His kingdom there will be no end.”

The act of seeking demands an intensity, a perseverance that will not be denied, and a zeal to achieve the desired objective. Every nerve in your body should tingle and throb at the thought of being used by God to help somebody else. Make a conscious choice every day that your thoughts and actions will demonstrate that the kingdom of God is your top priority in a world that is quickly passing away.

Prov. 3:27 says, “Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of your hand to do it.” A noted evangelist once said, “*Everything God has made is a solution to a problem. Your worth and significance is determined by the kinds of problems you are solving for someone.*”

There is something in you and about you that someone else needs. Realize that you may

be God's answer to somebody else's prayer. Daily be diligent and look for problems to solve. Think and look for extra ways to benefit others. Go the extra mile. Jesus said, **"And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two"**

Matt. 5:41

If you are sincere and willing, God will cause you to cross paths with someone in need. It is only when we turn our eyes off of ourselves and focus on others that we will be able to experience the true, genuine God-given joy that being a blessing to others brings. As this becomes our lifestyle it will be proven over and over again that it is indeed better to give than receive.

GOD'S PLAN AND PURPOSE

God has a plan and purpose for each of our lives, and one only has to read the first four words of the Bible to find out what His perfect will is, "In the beginning God..." Gen. 1:1. In

the beginning of the day, put God first. Every morning when you wake up begin your day by seeking with your whole heart and soul, first and foremost, the kingdom of God. Seeking for God will give you peace that passes human understanding and joy unspeakable.

Happiness is not about having and getting, it consists in giving and serving. Jesus said to take no thought for tomorrow Matt. 6:34, and the antidote to worrying is to make a daily choice to prioritize Gods' kingdom and His righteousness.

Seeking is a heart issue so make it the habit of your life, your first and ever dominant concern. Seeking first the kingdom of God is a biblical concept that touches ones' motivations and priorities including how one spends their leisure time, the goals one sets in this life, and whether or not they experience spiritual growth.

The good news is that what you seek, you will find. We read in 1 Chron. 28:9, "As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and a willing mind; for the Lord searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever" (see also Deut. 4:29).

Dan. 2:44 says, "And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever."

God's kingdom will never end, and this tells us that there will always be people doing nice things for other people. We are here on kingdom business and the kingdom of the King requires haste. There's a lot to be done and not much time to do it.

*We are here on
Kingdom business.*

Darkness is ruling in too many places and we've been called to be a light in a dark and sinful world. Col. 1:13 says God "has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love." God's kingdom is a kingdom of love and love always gives and serves. We're born to love and called to serve.

1 John 3:2 says, "Beloved, now we are children of God." Jesus is the Son of God and He came to serve. We also are sons and daughters of God and we also serve. Being kingdom-minded means you're always thinking about how you can be used by God to advance His kingdom.

Of course, this can't be done if one is forever worried and concerned about the needs of this life. "Life is more than food, and the body more than clothing" Luke 12:23. God feeds the birds of

the air and clothes the lilies in the field and He'll more than take care of you. If you will take care of God's business by seeking first His kingdom, He will be faithful and just to take care of your business.

Jesus said in Luke 12:32, **“Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”** Think about that. God will give you the kingdom. This means He will provide you with opportunities to serve Him and others, to have His will fulfilled in your life. That's precisely what the kingdom of God is.

HELP WANTED

We are living in the last days and laborers are needed like never before. Laboring is not a burden as some would think. It's a joy! Eccl. 5:20 assures us that “God keeps every man busy with the joy of his heart.”

God will use you in whatever area brings you the most joy. Take your natural gifts and talents and place them in the hands of God to be used according to His perfect will.

Eccl. 9:1 says, “For I considered all this in my heart, so that I could declare it all that the righteous and the wise and their works are in the hand of God.” When you go to work for God, don't do it half-heartedly. Give it everything you've got and then some.

Paul says in Rom. 12:11 to be “not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.” To be “fervent in spirit” means to be aglow and burning with the Spirit of God in your heart. We are to maintain that spiritual glow in our work for the Lord and have the attitude that “whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might”

Eccl. 9:10

There are two ways to advance the kingdom of God:

1. You can do something, or
2. You can help somebody else do something.

God gave Moses instructions on how to build the tabernacle, and in Ex. 31:2-6 ^{NIV} He speaks of two builders, “I have chosen Bezalel... and filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts... Moreover, I have anointed Oholiab...to help him.”

God has made each of us unique and different from anybody else who has ever been born and this means there are certain things you can do for the kingdom of God that nobody else can do. Even in your mothers' womb you were given special abilities and skills by God

that only a person with your personality can develop and perform to the degree God wants them done. Paul encourages Timothy to “not

neglect the gift that is in you” ^{1 Tim. 4:14}. Develop those skills and turn yourself over to God to be used by Him to fulfill His purpose on planet earth.

These skills may not be “religious” in a formal sense, but there is a spiritual element to everything we do. Nehemiah was a wall builder, Daniel was a government man in Babylon, and Luke was a first century physician.

When you use your job-related skills to advance the kingdom of God, you are as called as any minister. When you know you're doing what God has called you to do, whether it's preaching before thousands of people or fixing a broken pipe in the church bathroom, you will experience a lasting pleasure that can't be found anywhere else.

When you go to work for God, give it everything.

Paul writes in 1 Cor. 15:58, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” The Message® Bible says, “Throw yourselves into the work of the Master, confident that nothing you do for Him is a waste of time or effort.”

PRIORITY NO. 1

You can have fun in this life, but our top priority is to seek first the kingdom of God and do the work of the ministry. Faithful laborers are needed and the work gets done when you combine the natural with the spiritual.

Ps. 127:1 says, “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it.” A picture of how this works is painted for us in Ex. 17:8-13. After passing through the Red Sea the children of Israel were attacked by Amalek in Rephidim. Moses sent Joshua and his men onto the field of battle while he stood on the top of the hill with the rod of God in his hand. “And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed, and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed” v. 11. You can have the best of the best in the natural, but if you don’t have the spiritual you will fail.

The hands of Moses were in the air and this was a sign of faith and a symbol of victory. Eventually Moses got tired and his arms got heavy, so Aaron and Hur stood beside Moses and held up his hands until the going down of the sun v. 12. All Aaron and Hur did was hold up an arm, but it was necessary, and it shows that even the smallest of tasks can take on great significance. The warriors on the ground needed the spiritual element and the battle was won because of their efforts.

We are in the kingdom and the kingdom is in us. Jesus taught us to seek with utmost urgency the expansion and the full and total development of God’s kingdom. This is why we’re here, why we breathe, why we’re alive.

The longing of kingdom citizens is for the Lord to rule over their lives, for Godly character and behavior to be fully displayed in all that they do and say, and for the kingdom to extend into every life and corner of the globe. The highest form of happiness comes when one is in perfect submission to God’s will which must be obeyed perfectly, readily, and unceasingly. We cannot call Him “King” and not do His will.

When you pray “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done” you prove the sincerity of your prayer by laboring every day to make a positive difference in the lives of other people. There must

*We are in the Kingdom,
and the Kingdom is in us.*

be a willingness to forsake all to become a disciple of Jesus (see Luke 14:33) and it begins not outwardly, but in the heart. Heart decisions

determine the direction your life will take and direction determines destiny.

When you make a quality decision to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, it will set you on a course of action that will determine the outcome of your life. Hopefully it will be a life where you are so caught up in the things of God that you don’t even think about your-self.

If God’s will were done on the earth, there would be peace between the nations and love and happiness in all our homes. It is only because men will not do the will of God and seek first His kingdom that things are the way they are. Pray for His will to be done on earth, and that He would help you do His will flawlessly with a sense of fervency and undivided devotion. Only then shall His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

CHAPTER FOUR

GOD'S BUSINESS

One day an Ox said to a Mule, "Let's pretend to be sick."

The Mule said, "No, we need to get this work done." The Ox feigned illness and the farmer brought him fresh hay.

When the Mule came in from plowing, the Ox asked how things went and the Mule said, "All right." The Ox asked, "What did the farmer say about me?" The Mule replied, "Nothing."

The next day the Ox pretended to be ill again. When the Mule came home the Ox asked, "How did it go?" The Mule said, "All right."

After a week of this the Ox asked, "Did the farmer say anything about me today?" The Mule replied, "Well, he said nothing to me personally, but he stopped and had a long talk with the butcher." The moral of this story is that you were born to fulfill a divine purpose and when you don't, there will be consequences to pay, both in the here and now— and in the age to come.

The apostle Paul continually focused on his calling and shortly before he was executed he wrote, "I have finished the race..." 2 Tim. 4:7.

THE GREAT FAILURE

Notice that Paul didn't retire, he finished that which he was called to do. In the Parable of the Talents the man who buried his talent and did nothing with it paid a high price. He was thrown into outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. In God's eyes

the greatest failure of all is the failure to invest the time, talent, and treasure He's given you to fulfill His purpose. One day your life will be audited. It's called "the judgment seat of Christ." Paul writes in 1 Cor. 3:13-15 that everyone's work will be put through the fire to see whether or not it keeps its value. If the work survives the fire, the builder will receive a great reward. But if the work is burned up, the builder will suffer great loss.

God has something He wants to do in you, for you, through you, and it is imperative that you find out why you are here and what

you can do to help advance His kingdom. If you're doing nothing, then don't waste another day. Pray about it. Get still before God and ask Him what He would have

you do. Do it seriously until you find out what your part is.

Your calling and assignment is not decided by you, it is discovered by you. Everything God creates is given a calling, purpose, and destiny and you need to quickly find out where you fit in. Don't bounce around and do nothing for the next twenty years.

Your purpose for living is not to see how many vacations you can go on or how many fish you can catch or how many rounds of golf you can play. Your ultimate goal in life should not be to retire early so you can sit down and do nothing. Proverbs says that the prosperity of a fool will destroy him.

With your life you need to be doing something for God. You were born to love and

*Your calling is not decided
by you, but it is
discovered by you.*

called to serve so find out where you fit and don't just sit. Do something and do it now! Work! Volunteer for everything! Don't rush home on Sunday to eat and watch a ballgame when the chairs at church need to be picked up and put away. He who is faithful over a little will be made ruler over much ^{Matt. 25:21}. Pretty soon it's all going to be over and God is going to ask you what you did for Him. These are the days in which you need to be doing everything you can to keep yourself in the center of God's will and destiny for your life.

Heb. 6:10 says, "For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His Name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister." Work is God's idea, and the work that pleases Him the most is your labor of love toward people, especially other believers. The Message® Bible states, "God doesn't miss anything. He knows perfectly well all the love you've shown Him by helping needy Christians, and that you keep at it."

*People are wasting days
of their lives doing nothing
important.*

YOUR WORKS ARE DOCUMENTED

God will not forget your labor of love, but if you do no work for Him then He'll have nothing to remember. The time to start working for God is now, so lift up those idle hands and do more for the kingdom.

Hang around people with a bigger vision than you and let their enthusiasm rub off on you. Allow them to encourage you to do more and more for the kingdom, and as you help them with their vision, God will begin to show you specifically that which He would have you do.

Work is not a bad thing. There is nothing glorious to sitting around and being lazy and getting nothing done and accomplished. It

doesn't make you feel good about yourself. Work is a spiritual thing and the Bible commands you to work. Paul writes in 2 Thess. 3:6, "But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us." The tradition Paul is talking about is the tradition to work. The Message® Bible puts it this way, "Our orders - backed up by the Master, Jesus - are to refuse to have anything to do with those among you who are lazy and refuse to work the way we taught you. Don't permit them to freeload on the rest."

Don't hang around people who refuse to work. Withdraw from those who have opportunities to work, but won't take advantage of them. You know who these people are. They're your family and friends and coworkers, but still you are commanded to stay away from them. "A little leaven leavens the whole lump" ^{Gal. 5:9}, and if you associate with lazy people you will become just as disorderly and rebellious as they are.

People who do not work "learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle, but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not" ^{1 Tim. 5:13}.

FAITH PEOPLE ARE LABORERS

Paul was a worker. He was a tent maker, because he didn't want to be a burden to anybody. Faith people are workers and are not comfortable with other people taking care of them all the time. God is your source of supply and you need not beg any man or government agency to help meet your needs.

If the truth be told, people are not victims of circumstance, they're lazy and slothful and

victims of their own rebellion. There are reasons people keep losing their jobs and floundering around year after year. They can work, but don't want to and to these people Paul wrote, "For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat"^{2 Thess. 3:10}.

The Message® Bible says, "Don't you remember the rule we had when we lived with you? 'If you don't work, you don't eat.' And now we're getting reports that a bunch of lazy good-for-nothings are taking advantage of you. This must not be tolerated. We command them to get to work immediately - no excuses, no arguments - and earn their own keep. Friends, don't slack off in doing your duty"^{vv. 10-13}.

People who don't do anything don't want to do anything. The word "lazy" means 'to lean idly.' When the government pays your bills and provides your income, people lose their incentive to work, and as a result of that they get lazy. They are able to work and have opportunities to work, but choose not to. They lean idly by and do nothing.

Believers, however, are supposed to work. Work is God's idea and even He works. He created the heavens and the earth and on the seventh day He rested. Jesus said in John 9:4, "I must work the works of Him Who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one will work." You never retire from the work of God in your life. You should always be doing something fruitful and work that is profitable as long as you have breath.

There is a Godly kingdom to be advanced and millions of people who need help. We need to work and keep busy and occupy until He comes. God will bless and prosper what you put your hand to. There is a work to be done,

so don't gripe and complain when you're asked to do something. Keep your mouth shut and do what you're supposed to do and do it diligently.

Work can be fun! It can be satisfying, fulfilling, and greatly rewarding. If it's not, then you're doing the wrong thing or else you're not doing it right. You must do the right thing diligently. Heb. 6:11,12 says, "And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

The Message® Bible states, "And now I want each of you to extent that same intensity toward a full-bodied hope, and keep at it till the finish. Don't drag your feet. Be like those who stay the course with committed faith and then get everything promised to them."

People who don't do anything, don't want to do anything.

THE POWER OF DILIGENCE

People who are diligent, do things vehemently, with intensity and passion. The word "vehement" is marked by forceful energy, it's powerful like a strong wind and intensely emotional. It's deeply felt and forcibly expressed. This describes the passion you should have for the things of God and the work He would have you do. Diligence sets a higher standard to your love walk and your service unto God and it's what separates the men from the boys. The word "diligence" also means 'wholly, completely, speedily.' It means 'to dawn.' This is not early, this is a half hour before early.

A consistent quality of diligent people is you don't have to wait on them. They're prompt and early, whereas lazy people are consistently late and tardy and are always making excuses. The father of our faith is Abraham and he was not a lazy, slothful man. When God told him to

offer up his son Isaac he got up early the next morning and set out on his journey.

Paul says in Rom. 12:10,11, “Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.”

The KJV® says, “be not slothful in business.” Everybody has a business. There is a family business, house business, work business, car business, garden business, pet business, ministry business, and God’s business. At age twelve Jesus said, “**Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?**” Luke 2:49. Heb. 11:6b says that God “is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” When you seek God, you seek His business. God is love and His business is the love business.

You must be diligent and passionate about your love walk and the things you do for God. If God calls you to do something, get up early and do it promptly and speedily. Don’t drag around and do it half-heartedly. The Greek word for “diligence” means ‘with earnestness, with speed, very promptly, energetic, to make effort.’ Serve God with a wide-open throttle. Move fast and go forward with Jesus.

Don’t be lukewarm. People who are lukewarm are not idle, but they’re only doing a fraction of what they’re capable of. In fact, most people do nothing. The body of Christ needs more workers and not just church goers. Some attend, fewer work. All of us have been put here for a purpose and we all have a job to do.

The problem is too many people are too busy living life to have time for the things of God. They’ve got a time clock to punch and a round of golf to play. They don’t realize that if you’re too busy for God, you’re too busy.

The first mention of diligence in the Bible is found in Gen. 2:15, “Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to tend and keep it.” The word for “keep” means ‘diligence’ and Adam was told to be fervent and passionate about watching over the garden and taking care of it. It was his responsibility to stay sharp, reject passivity, and don’t fall asleep on the job. Unfortunately he failed to do any of these things and the world is in the mess it’s in today, because one man did not obey the Lord’s command to be diligent.

Don’t be like Adam, but instead take care of your business and don’t wait for someone to do it for you. Being lazy will lower your standards and is a sign that your spirituality has slipped. The bad news is that what’s on the inside of you will show up on the outside. If you’re lazy on the inside you’ll be lazy on the outside. You can’t be diligent and walk in love if you look and smell like a slob.

God is love, and you are to imitate and represent Him.

Jesus dealt with unclean spirits and the people who had them were filthy and nasty. God is love and you are to imitate and represent Him. He is wonderful and He is glorious! He is light and there is no darkness in Him. Pay attention to how you dress and how you smell. Wash your car, vacuum your house, clean those dirty dishes and brush your teeth. We have a witness to keep, for we’re not just representing ourselves, we represent the King of kings and Lord of lords.

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE IS A BUSY LIFE

There’s a whole lot of business involved in living a spiritual life. Don’t be too spiritual to clean your house and pay your bills. Don’t let your home become a trash dump because you’re too busy praying and reading your Bible. True believers who have it together are sharp,

diligent, and are hard workers. They're not sloppy and slothful and they have their home and business in order. They're not too spiritual to let their lawn be overgrown or the paint to peel off their house. Their car is clean and vacuumed and in the garage their tools are in the proper place. The sink is not full of dirty dishes, and dirty clothes don't litter the laundry room floor and the garbage doesn't overflow and spill out onto the floor.

Those who are diligent in taking care of worldly business will be diligent in taking care of God's business. These are the people who are willing to get up early and stay late. They are the ones who will put their flesh under and keep their mouths shut. People who walk in the spirit are not idle, but are those who get things done. A car idles, but goes nowhere. Believers who are diligent put the pedal to the metal, and do the best they can do, all the while believing God to help them do it better. Raise the standard in the business you perform. Put more effort into it and do it better.

Gal. 6:9 tells us, "And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart." Don't quit, don't give up, don't lose heart. Instead, be diligent week after week, month after month, year after year.

When you are given the freedom to do anything you want to do, what you choose to do reveals your heart. As a Christian you must choose to take care of God's business and be diligent to do your part to walk in love and advance the kingdom of God on the earth. Your love and obedience to God is shown in your life. People can see it, and they can see the lack of it. If it's in you, it will come out of you.

As you get stronger in your spirit, the more diligent you will become. Instead of putting something off you'll get up and do it as early as

you can. Taking care of God's business requires promptness and speed. Take it seriously when God tells you to do something. Put your hand to the plow and do it with fervor and diligence. Don't make faith confessions all day and do nothing. Add works to your faith, for faith without works is dead. Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

Eccl. 9:10a says, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might." Do it! Do it now and do it well!

The Message® Bible says, "Whatever turns up, grab it and do it heartily." The NL® Bible says, "Whatever task comes your way, do it with all your strength." Whenever you find work to do, do the best you can and do it passionately and earnestly. Do it heartily and with all your might. Diligence is early and prompt and speedy, so do it now and do it well! Be sharp, be ready, be prepared. This glorifies God and makes the Gospel message look good to outsiders.

Believers who are diligent are flexible and ready to work at a moment's notice. If you have to "get" ready, then you're not ready and if you're not ready, you're not going to be used by God. You will miss out on the rich blessings of God just like the five foolish virgins missed out, because they weren't ready.

DILIGENT PEOPLE ARE READY

We live in a lazy generation where people goof off, lay around, and are never ready. If something comes up— then they'll get ready, but by then it will be too late. The window of opportunity closed on them and these are the people who will never be used by God. Don't "get" ready, "be" ready! Live ready and be ready when God calls on you. You're needed now, not three days from now. God uses people who are ready, so you must be ready at all times. Lighten

*Don't quit, don't give up,
don't lose heart.*

your schedule and order your time and finances in a way so that you'll be ready to be used by God in a moment's notice.

People who are diligent are ready, not knowing the details or the time when they'll be called to work. These people walk in faith and they trust God, and are forever ready to say, "Here I am, Lord. Send me." Never be without the time or the money to do what God tells you to do.

If you don't have the resources to do what God tells you to do, then you're wasting vast amounts of time, money, and energy. It is selfishness to make people wait on you all the time. This means you think your time is more valuable than their time. The love of God is not selfish and is forever ready to give a helping hand no matter what time of day it is. This is diligence at the highest level.

Procrastination is the manifestation of the lack of diligence. These are the people who are lazy and slothful and always puts things off until tomorrow.

Solomon must have had these people in mind when he wrote Eccl. 5:4, "When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; For He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed."

When you know what to do, don't put it off until tomorrow. Do it now and do it well! The NIV® says, "Do not delay in fulfilling it" and the NL® Bible says, "Don't delay in following through."

People who do little, tend to do less. They waste time and get further and further behind on the things they should be doing. On the other hand, people who are diligent and do much tend to do even more. People who are laborers and one of the chosen few will take on another project

and do it well. It's as if they can't do enough for their Lord and Master. The Message® Bible says, "If you tell God you'll do something, do it now. God takes no pleasure in foolish gabble. Vow it and then do it." Don't put it off! Do it now and do it well! Do it early and do it with speed! Ezra 7:23a says, "Whatever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it diligently be done for the house of the God of heaven."

Diligence is a spiritual force just like faith and love. Desire affects "how" you do something, so do everything as unto the Lord with diligence, whether it be sweeping the floor, stocking a grocery shelf, or cleaning the toilet. Do everything as unto the Lord, because people watch what you do and how you do it, more than what you say.

Get stirred up! Be enthusiastic and excited about what you do. Be eager and determined to "show the same diligence to the full assurance until the end" Heb. 6:11b.

Don't quit halfway through a project, but see it through to the end. Don't give up, but instead keep after it until the work is done. Finish what you set out to do. A lot of people can start a project and keep at it for a few days, but when the going gets tough they bail out and quit. They jump out of the will of God because of impatience, offenses, and anger, and they leave the place where He put them.

To get the job done you need persistence and perseverance, and it takes diligence to do this. Heb. 3:5,6 says, "And Moses indeed was faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward, but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end."

Procrastination is the manifestation of the lack of diligence.

We are God's house if we persevere and hang in there until the end when the work is done. Heb. 3:14 says, "For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end." If you start a project, finish it. Be like Abraham who patiently endured to the end and obtained the promise

Heb. 6:13-15

Don't *try* to do something. Do it! Do it well and persevere until the job is done. Even Jesus said, "No one, having put his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" Luke 9:62.

In all things we are to be forever "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith"

Heb. 12:2a. Jesus is the example we follow and He is

a finisher. He is the Author and the Finisher. He is the pace-setter and we follow in His footsteps.

If you're falling behind then pick up the pace. Lay

aside those things that would

hinder you and distract you.

Turn off the TV and cancel

that golf game. Lighten your

load and stop doing those

things that prevent you from

serving God to the fullest, and finishing those

things you began to do.

Follow after Jesus Who went all the way and finished the work He was sent to do. He said

in John 4:34, "My food is to do the will of Him

Who sent Me, and to finish His work." Jesus

didn't grow weary and quit. His faith was tried

in the Garden of Gethsemane, but He pressed

forward and completed the work He was sent to

do. The last words Jesus said on the cross was,

"It is finished" John 19:30. And if He did all this for

us, we ought to do the same for Him.

Don't give up! Don't quit! Persevere till

the end. Finish the work He gave you to do.

Diligence stays with it until the work is done. You

never retire from doing the work of God in your

life, and on the day you breathe your last breath, you can agree with Solomon who wrote, "The end of a thing is better than its beginning" Eccl.

7:8a.

Then and only then can you look into the heavenlies and say with bold confidence, "It is finished!"

*Diligence stays with it until
the work is done.*

About the author:

Randall J. Brewer has been conveying the mind of God for more than thirty years, and we believe he's just getting started.

Raised in an abusive home, Randall has overcome numerous obstacles throughout his life by his trust in the One True God of the Bible. Writing for the Lord, Randall will put pen to paper anywhere the Lord finds him. From the comfort of his home to sitting in his car in a frozen Illinois parking lot, Randall can tell you that when the Spirit of the Lord is upon you to move... you move wherever you are.



Gifted with the Holy Spirit's willingness to express God's attitude and clarification of the Word, Randall has distributed a myriad of his publications worldwide over the years. Thousands of requests pour in each month needing the ministry teachings of Randall and the Holy Spirit's revelation of the character of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the King. Countless ministers throughout the world are using Randall's teaching as a basis for their sermons and study guides.

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