



GCSD
GRACE CENTER FOR
SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

STUDY GUIDE



SECURITY & SIGNIFICANCE

Building a Life That Matters, For Good

By Tracy Marshall



ABOUT THIS GUIDE



This study guide is brought to you by the Grace Center for Spiritual Development (GCSD), an extension ministry of Grace School of Theology. Our desire is to provide non-degree learning opportunities for anyone who wishes to grow in their spiritual walk.

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The Quest for Significance

SESSION 1

Stories Resonate With Us

"All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us."

- Gandalf, Fellowship of the Ring, by J.R.R. Tolkien

"It is a world of magic and mystery, of deep darkness and flickering starlight. It is a world where terrible things happen and wonderful things too. It is a world where goodness is pitted against evil, love against hate, order against chaos, in a great struggle where often it is hard to be sure who belongs to which side because appearances are endlessly deceptive. Yet for all its confusion and wildness, it is a world where the battle goes ultimately to the good, who live happily ever after, and wherein the long run everybody, good and evil alike, becomes known by his true name. That is the fairy tale of the Gospel with, of course, one crucial difference from all other fairy tales, which is that the claim made for it is that it is true, that it not only happened once upon a time but has kept on happening ever since and is happening still." - Frederick Buechner

Our Story Within The Greatest Story - The Desire for Significance

Matthew 20:20-28

²⁰ "Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. ²¹ And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom."

²² But Jesus answered and said, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They said to Him, "We are able."

²³ So He said to them, "You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father."

²⁴ And when the ten heard it, they were greatly displeased with the two brothers. ²⁵ But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. ²⁶ Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great

among you, let him be your servant. ²⁷ And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

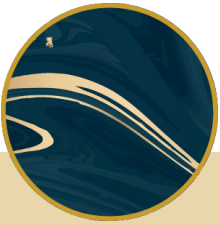
Jesus Didn't Rebuke the Disciples for Wanting to be great. He told them HOW to be great.

- **Like Most Desires, Whether They Are Sinful or Not Depends on How We Seek to Fulfill Them**

Matthew 25:34-36 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.

- **Jesus warned them that a great life is, at times, a life of suffering.**

Matthew 20:22 But Jesus answered and said, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They said to Him, "We are able."



The Quest for Significance

SESSION 1

(Continued)

- **But also a life of immeasurable joy!**

Hebrews 12:2 *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.*

John 15:11 *These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.*

James 1:2-4 *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, (tests, sufferings) knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*

Two Separate and Distinct Choices:

1. **Security:** Will we choose to believe in Jesus and become a forever child of God?
2. **Significance:** Will we choose to follow Jesus, realizing that how we live our lives matters, now and for eternity?

You are living in an epic adventure. Jesus, the Ultimate Hero, invites you to follow him and live a heroic life. You have a stunning opportunity to do something great, something significant with your life.

Will you take the challenge? Will you join the adventure? Will you trust God and keep going even when it's scary or hard?

Application

Do you relate to the idea of still wanting your life to be heroic or have significance?

What fears might keep you from coming along on the adventure God offers? From acting courageously in some area where He is calling you?

There's an Arab proverb that says, "All sunshine makes a desert." Do you agree? Do you think it's supported by Scripture?



Buckle Up: Accepting the Free Gift of Eternal Life

SESSION 2

A Love that Cannot Be Earned and Cannot Be Lost

"Then suddenly there dawns upon us the vast, entire endowment of God's free love and forgiveness...It is this which bowls us over...frees us...transforms us."

- Paul Tournier

Buckle Your Seatbelt, Unconditional LOVE OF GOD.

"Once you begin to understand it, it will not only take your breath away, it will put your life back together."

- Dwight Edwards

"... the infinite abyss can only be filled by an infinite and immutable object, that is to say, only by God Himself."

- Blaise Pascal

Jeremiah 31:3 *The Lord has appeared of old to me, saying: 'Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore, with lovingkindness I have drawn you.'*

God's unconditional love provides the safety, security, and belonging we need in order to pursue the great works, the great adventure He has for us.

How?

John 3:14-15 *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.*

John 3:16 *For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

Once you believe, you are spiritually born into His family. You are a child of God, and you are eternally secure.

1 John 5:13 *These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know you have eternal life.*

Romans 11:29 *The gifts and callings of God are irrevocable.*

John 10:28 *And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall anyone snatch them out of my hand.*

Ephesians 4:30 *... you were sealed for the day of redemption.*

Objections:

1. belief + works

Ephesians 2:8-9 *For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourself. It is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

But what is the proper role of works?

Ephesians 2:10 *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

In fact, God offers us a reward for our good works done in love:

Matthew 16:27 *For the son of man is going to come... and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.*



Buckle Up: Accepting the Free Gift of Eternal Life

SESSION 2

(Continued)

2.

belief + proof

The Parable of the Prodigal Son Father

Luke 15:11-32 ¹¹ Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

¹³ "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

²¹ "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

²² "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

²⁵ "Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷ 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

²⁸ "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

³¹ "'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³² But we had to celebrate and be glad because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"

The Nature of God's Love

- **God's Love Is Unceasing.**

God's commitment toward us has nothing to do with our performance, but everything to do with His character!

2 Timothy 2:13 "If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny himself."

- **God's Love Is Unconditional.**

Lamentations 3:22-23 "Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed because His passions fail not. They are new every morning. Great is Your faithfulness."

- **God's Love Is Unrestrained.**

God loves us compassionately, emotionally, and relentlessly.

Zephaniah 3:17 "He will rejoice over you with gladness; He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing."

- **God's Love Is Perfect and Complete.**

John 6:37 "The one who comes to me I will by no means cast out."

Our Acceptance Is Unconditional,

But Our Approval Is Not.



Buckle Up: Accepting the Free Gift of Eternal Life

SESSION 2

(Continued)

Romans 8:31 *If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all... We are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*

The free gift of eternal life is the ultimate foundation from which to live a life of heroic service and epic adventure. So buckle up, and let's roll! There are great things ahead!

Application

As we become convinced of God's unconditional, unceasing, unrestrained, overwhelming love for us, our fundamental needs for belonging and acceptance are met. How can this impact our earthly relationships (friends, children, and especially our spouses)?

"God's grace is not something we must search to find; but something which is searching to find us." Is there an area of your life where you have wandered away from your loving Father? Does it help you to know that He is searching for you with the express purpose of pouring out His grace?

Is it hard for you to accept that God's love can't be earned and can't be lost? Why or why not?



Where We're Headed

SESSION 3

"Heaven is totally overrated. It seems boring. Clouds, listening to people play the harp. It should be somewhere you can't wait to go, like a luxury hotel. Maybe blue skies and soft music were enough to keep people in line in the 17th century, but Heaven is going to have to step it up a bit. They're basically getting by because they only have to be better than Hell." - Starbucks Cup #230, Joel Stein, Columnist, L.A. Times

We need to remember that the vast majority of eternity will not be spent in a place called "heaven" but on an earth made new.

Revelation 21:1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.

2 Peter 3:13 We look for... new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

What Heaven Won't Be Like

Isaiah 65:17-19 "See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more."

Revelation 22:3 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.

Revelation 21:4 And there shall be no more curse.

Suffering prepares us for heaven like nothing else. Broken necks, broken arms, broken homes, and hearts; they all crush our illusions that this earth can ever really satisfy, can ever really "keep its promises." Suffering moves our eyes from this world-which God knows could never satisfy us anyway-and suffering sets our eyes on a life to come. Heaven then becomes our passion. - Joni Eareckson Tada

"We're like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud-pies in a slum because he can't imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea." - C.S. Lewis

What Heaven Will Be Like

- **We Will Be With God Himself**

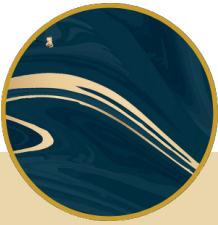
Revelation 21:3 "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God."

Psalms 16:11 "In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore."

- **Heaven Is Forever**

1 Peter 1:3-4 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.

Hebrews 10:34 ...for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of



Where We're Headed

SESSION 3

(Continued)

your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven.

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, 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.

- **Heaven Is Intense**

Revelation 1:12-17 And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead.

1 Corinthians 2:9 Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.

Exodus 33:18-20 And he (Moses) said, "Please, show me Your glory." Then He said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you... But He said, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.

- **Heaven Is Beautiful**

Revelation 4:3-6 And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne. ... From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder... Also in front of the throne there was what

looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.

- **Heaven Is A New Home**

John 14:1-3 Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

- **Heaven Is A New City**

Revelation 21:2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Revelation 21:21,23 But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.

Revelation 21:14-21 ¹⁴ The wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were written the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. ¹⁵ The angel who talked to me held in his hand a gold measuring stick to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. ¹⁶ When he measured it, he found it was a square, as wide as it was long. In fact, its length and width and height were each 1,400 miles. ¹⁷ Then he measured the walls and found them to be 216 feet thick (according to the human standard used by the angel). ¹⁸ The wall was made of jasper, and the city was pure gold, as clear as glass. ¹⁹ The wall of the city was built on foundation stones inlaid with twelve precious stones: the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, ²⁰ the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. ²¹ The twelve gates were

"I have come home at last! This is my real country! I belong here. This is the land I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it till now... Come further up, come further in!" - **C.S. Lewis, The Last Battle**



Where We're Headed

SESSION 3

(Continued)

made of pearls—each gate from a single pearl! And the main street was pure gold, as clear as glass.”

Revelation 22:1-2 ¹ Then the angel showed me a river with the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb. ² It flowed down the center of the main street. On each side of the river grew a tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, with a fresh crop each month. The leaves were used for medicine to heal the nations.”

- **You Have A Job**

Revelation 14:13 For they will rest from their labor.

Revelation 22:3 No longer will there be a curse upon anything. For the throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and his servants will serve him.

- **Martyrs Have a Special Job**

Revelation 7:15 That is why they stand in front of God's throne and serve him day and night in His Temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them.

Luke 19: 17 ‘Well done!’ the king exclaimed. ‘You are a good servant. You have been faithful with the little I entrusted to you, so you will be governor of ten cities as your reward.’

John 4:34 Then Jesus explained: “My nourishment comes from doing the will of God, who sent me, and from finishing his work.

- **There Is Music (You'll Laugh, Sing, Dance, And Play Instruments)**

Luke 6:21 God blesses you who weep now, for in due time you will laugh.

Revelation 15:2-3 ... and those who have victory over the beast... having harps of God. They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the son of the Lamb...

Revelation 8:7-13 The first angel blew his trumpet... The second angel blew his trumpet...

Isaiah 38:20 Think of it—the Lord is ready to heal me! I will sing his praises with instruments every day of my life in the Temple of the Lord.

- **You'll Eat and Drink**

Luke 24: 41-43 Then he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” ⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he ate it as they watched.

Matthew 8:11 And I tell you this, that many Gentiles will come from all over the world—from east and west—and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the feast in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Revelation 19:9 And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb.

Luke 14:12-15 ¹² Then he turned to his host. “When you put on a luncheon or a banquet,” he said, “don't invite your friends, brothers, relatives, and rich neighbors. For they will invite you back, and that will be your only reward. ¹³ Instead, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. ¹⁴ Then at the resurrection of the righteous, God will reward you for inviting those who could not repay you. ¹⁵ Hearing this, a man sitting at the table with Jesus exclaimed, “What a blessing it will be to attend a banquet in the Kingdom of God!”

Luke 22:18 I will not drink wine again until the Kingdom of God has come.

Revelation 22:2 On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month.

Isaiah 65:21 They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

- **There Will Be Animals**

Revelation 6:2 I looked up and saw a white horse standing there.



Where We're Headed

SESSION 3

(Continued)

2 Kings 2:11 ...suddenly a chariot of fire appeared, drawn by horses of fire. It drove between the two men, separating them, and Elijah was carried by a whirlwind into heaven.

Revelation 19:14 The armies of heaven, dressed in the finest of pure white linen, followed him on white horses.

Isaiah 65:25 The wolf and the lamb will feed together... The lion will eat hay like a cow.

Romans 8:18-22 ¹⁸ Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later. ¹⁹ For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. ²⁰ Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. But with eager hope, ²¹ the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay. ²² For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

Revelation 21:5 Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new."

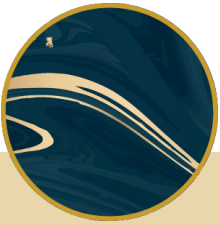
- **Heaven Is God's Final Answer**

"God deserves trust, even when it looks like the world is caving in... In any discussion of disappointment with God, heaven is the last word, the most important word of all. Only heaven will solve the problem of God's hiddenness. For the first time, human beings will be able to look upon God face to face."

- Philip Yancey, *Disappointment With God*

Focusing On Heaven Increases Your Effectiveness On Earth

"A continual looking forward to the eternal world is not (as some modern people think) a form of escapism or wishful thinking, but one of the things a Christian is meant to do. It does not mean that we are to leave the present world as it is. If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. The Apostles themselves, who set on foot the conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English Evangelicals who abolished the Slave Trade, all left their mark on Earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with Heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at Heaven and you will get earth "thrown in": aim at earth and you will get neither." - C.S. Lewis



Where We're Headed

SESSION 3

(Continued)

Application

What is the most surprising thing you learned about heaven? What is the most exciting or hopeful?

"If you read history, you will find that the Christians who did the most for the present world were just those who thought the most of the next... It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at heaven and you will get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you will get neither." What do you think of this C.S. Lewis quote? How can thinking more of heaven change how we live in and impact this world?

In John 14, Jesus promises that He is preparing a forever home, designed specifically for each of us. Does the idea of a forever and perfect home resonate with you?

It is crucial to know where you are going before agreeing to or setting out on any journey. How can the hope of heaven sustain you through the inevitable trials of your epic adventure?



Run To Win

SESSION 4

"Life in time remains without meaning if it does not find its meaning in eternity."

- Nikolai Berdyaev

Our Opportunity To Live A Life Of Significance.

"For all shall be perfectly happy, everyone shall be perfectly satisfied. Every vessel that is cast into this ocean of happiness is full, though there are some vessels far larger than others... There are different degrees of happiness and glory in heaven, as there are degrees among the angels, viz. thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers; so there are degrees among the saints... The glory of the saints above will be in some proportion to their eminency in holiness and good works." - Jonathan Edwards

Hebrews 10:24 For you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven.

Hebrews 11:24-26 By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.

Incentive

Love, The Ultimate Motivation, But Not The Only Motivation

1 Corinthians 13:3 If I have not love, it profits me nothing.

Objections:

1. **Perfectly good = perfectly equal**

"Those who are not so high in glory as others, will not envy those that are higher, but they will have so great, and strong, and pure love to them, that they will rejoice in their superior happiness." - Jonathan Edwards

Matthew 19:30 But many who are first will be last, and the last first.

2 Corinthians 5:9-10 Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well-pleasing to Him.
¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

2 Timothy 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

See **Matthew 25:14-30** for the Parable of the Talents

2. **"I don't need/care about rewards."**

Matthew 6:19-20 ¹⁹ Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Matthew 5:11-12 ¹¹ Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. ¹² Rejoice and be exceedingly glad,



Run To Win

SESSION 4

(Continued)

for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Matthew 5:19 Whoever, therefore, breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:46 For if you love those who love you, what reward have you?

Matthew 6:1-4 ¹ Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise, you have no reward from your Father in heaven. ² Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. ³ But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you.”

1 Corinthians 9:24-25 ²⁴ Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. ²⁵ And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.

Romans 2:6 will render to each one according to his deeds.

Psalms 62:12 Also to You, O Lord, belongs mercy; For You render to each one according to his work.

Matthew 16:27 For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.

1 Corinthians 2:9 quoting **Isaiah 64:4** “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”

How Will God Judge Us?

- **He Alone Will Set the Standard**

2 Timothy 1:18 The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day.

Hebrews 4:11-13 ¹¹ Let us, therefore, be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. ¹² For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. ¹³ And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”

- **He Is Perfect and Good, Righteous and Fair**

“The true God we read of in the Bible is a perfect judge. He knows the hearts and minds of men. Our God searches the hearts of men—that is, he knows our every thought (Romans 8:27). God tries our hearts and our minds (Psalm 7:9). “The Lord searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought” (1 Chronicles 28:9). God can look past the external distractions that so often mislead, and He looks directly into our hearts (1 Samuel 16:7). Because of God’s ability to know our thoughts, our motives, and the intents of our hearts, He is a perfect judge who will exact perfect judgment. “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Genesis 18:25). “And He shall judge the world in righteousness, He shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness” (Psalm 9:8). Our God will judge us all with precision, bringing together mercy and wrath perfectly. “But with righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth...” (Isaiah 11:4)... When we pray for forgiveness, only God knows if we are truly sincere, sorry, and changed. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7). God is a perfect judge.” - **Kevin Cain**



Run To Win

SESSION 4

(Continued)

- **"He Will Judge Us Individually"**

Luke 12:47-48 (NLT) ⁴⁷ And a servant who knows what the master wants, but isn't prepared and doesn't carry out those instructions, will be severely punished.

⁴⁸ But someone who does not know, and then does something wrong, will be punished only lightly. When someone has been given much, much will be required in return; and when someone has been entrusted with much, even more will be required."

- **We Get to Impact the Standard by Which We Are Judged!**

Matthew 7:2 "For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you." or (NLT) "The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged."

Matthew 6:12, 14-15 ¹² And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors... ¹⁴ For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

Let Us Be Motivated by Love, but Let Us Indeed Be Motivated

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 ¹ Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. ² And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³ And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

Hebrews 12:1-2 ¹ 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.

Run to win!

1 Corinthians 9:24 NLT

Application

Do you understand the difference between what is commonly called "the gift" (John 3:16, Ephesians 2:8,9) and "the prize" (Matthew 6:20,21, Ephesians 2:10)? And does that change your thinking about how you live your life?

Is there an area of your life where you should be more forgiving or lenient toward someone, knowing that "The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged"?

The author of Hebrews instructs us, "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."

Are there sins you can quit practicing because they prevent you from pursuing the ultimate prize?

Are there things you're doing that aren't necessarily sinful but that are "weights" and "distractions" from the real race?

Additional Scriptures:



Don't Settle For Less

SESSION 5

Romans 8:38 *For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Matthew 16:25-27 *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.*

Matthew 25:21 *His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.*

Potential Rewards

1. The Ultimate Praise ("His Lord Said to Him, 'Well Done.'")

John 15:13 *Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.*

2. The Ultimate Position ("I Will Make You Ruler")

"In the purpose of God, the oikoumene (inhabited world) of the future has not been put under the control of angels, but of men."

- G.H. Lang

"To [the] faithful believer, God promises the privilege of ruling and reigning with Him in His kingdom and sharing in His royal splendor. While all believers share the glory of Christ by being glorified with Him, it seems that not all believers will share His royal splendor with the accompanying privilege of reigning with Him."

- Earl Radmacher

Isaiah 32:1 *Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule with justice.*

Luke 19:17-19 *And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.' And the second came, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned five minas.' Likewise, he said to him, 'You also be over five cities.'*

Luke 22:28-30 *But you are those who have continued with Me in My trials. And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

1 Corinthians 6:2-3 *Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? Do you not know that we shall judge angels?*

2 Timothy 2:12 *If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us (the reign).*

Revelation 2:26 *And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations.*

Mark 10:45 *For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

3. The Ultimate Possessions ("Over Many Things")

Crowns mentioned in the New Testament:

- **Crown of righteousness** – for loving the Lord's appearing. (2 Timothy 4:8)
- **Incorruptible crown** – for remaining qualified in our life's "race." (1 Corinthians 9:25-27)
- **Crown of life** – for loving God, enduring trials and remaining faithful until death. (James 1:12, Revelation 2:10)
- **Crown of glory** – godly leaders who ministered well to those entrusted into their care. (1 Peter 5:2-4)



Don't Settle For Less

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(Continued)

Revelation 3:11 Behold I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

4. The Ultimate Pleasure ("Enter Into the Joy of Your Lord")

Psalms 16:11b In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

John 15:11 These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.

Revelation 3:4 You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.

Revelation 3:12 He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more.

Revelation 3:21 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.

Satan's Counterfeits

1 John 2:16 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.

Pride/Egotism

In place of praise and position, "...I will make you ruler...", Satan offers "the boastful pride of life."

1 Peter 5:6 "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time."

Greed/Materialism

In place of eternal possessions, "...over many things...", Satan offers "the lust of the eyes."

Sensual Pleasures/Hedonism

In place of "...Enter into the joy of your Lord," Satan offers "the lust of the flesh."

• Satan Offered These Three Counterfeits to Eve in the Garden of Eden

Genesis 3:6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food (lust of the flesh), that it was pleasant to the eyes (lust of the eyes), and a tree desirable to make one wise (boastful pride of life), she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

• And Again With Jesus in the Wilderness

Matthew 4:2-10

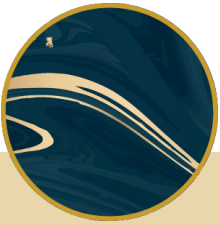
² And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. ³ Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." (lust of the flesh) ⁴ But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

⁵ Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, ⁶ and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" (boastful pride of life) ⁷ Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'"

⁸ Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹ And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me." (lust of the eyes) ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.'"

Jesus Resisted With Scripture

Psalms 119:11 I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.



Don't Settle For Less

SESSION 5

(Continued)

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.*

1 Corinthians 9:24 (NLT) *"Run to win!"*

Romans 8:18 *"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

The hero's role is challenging. It involves a life of service and sacrifice and loving others who aren't always lovable. But the rewards are not only stunningly wonderful beyond all description, but they also last forever.

Application

Of the four rewards categories, we looked at (praise, position, possessions, and pleasure), which earthly one tempts you most? Which heavenly reward motivates you most?

When someone achieves all earthly rewards in abundance, i.e., becomes exceedingly rich, powerful, and famous, what typically happens? Why do you think this is?

By God's standards, position and praise are not earned by self-promotion but by sacrificial service. "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve." (Mark 10:45). Is there an area of your life where you could give up your "rights" and embrace service?



Your Character Counts

(Well Done, **Good** and Faithful Servant!)

SESSION 6

Matthew 25:21 His lord said to him, 'Well done, **good** and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

"We are the work of His hands, you and I. Which is to say, we are the roughly quarried stone on our way to becoming the magnum opus of God, the "great work" of His life.... We are a masterpiece in the making. His masterpiece. More magnificent than the Pieta."

- Ken Gire

"Oh, what I owe to the file, to the hammer, to the furnace of my Lord Jesus!"

- Samuel Rutherford

What God Seeks To Reward

2 Corinthians 5:10 (NIV) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

"Good" = the Greek word agathos, primarily referring to internal goodness or goodness of character and heart.

Romans 8:28-29 ²⁸ And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. ²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.

Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

How Do We Pursue Goodness

2 Peter 1:5-11 ⁵ But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, **add** to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, ⁶ to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, ⁷ to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. ⁸ For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.

¹⁰ Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; ¹¹ for so an entrance will be **supplied** to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The Staircase of Christlikeness or Staircase of Character

Love

Brotherly Kindness

Perseverance

Self-Control

Knowledge

Virtue

F A I T H

Encouragement - A Compassionate and Generous Rewarder

Psalms 56:8 "You number my wanderings; Put my tears into Your bottle; Are they not in Your book?"

(The Message) "You've kept track of my every toss and turn through the sleepless nights, each tear entered in your ledger, each ache written in your book."

Luke 12:32 "Do not fear little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."



Your Character Counts

(Well Done, **Good** and Faithful Servant!)

SESSION 6

(Continued)

Don't be afraid, dear saint; God is on the lookout to reward.

Ephesians 2:10 (NLT) "For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago."

Application

We see in Romans 8:28 - 29 that God's purpose for our lives is to be conformed to the image of His Son. Sometimes that conforming is painful. Does knowing that there is a purpose to your suffering and knowing that there is a reward for faithfully enduring your suffering make a difference?

Christians often quote Romans 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for our good." Good in this verse comes from the Greek *agathos*, which means internal good, goodness of character, and heart. Does that change your perception of this verse?

Peter encourages us to diligently build these traits into our character: virtue (moral excellence), knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. Is there one character trait that stands out to you because it could use some work? How could we go about building these traits into our character?

In Psalm 56:8, we learn, "You number my wanderings, and put my tears into Your bottle." Doesn't it comfort you to know that every twist and turn, every stumble along life's journey, every tear you shed is not only noticed but recorded by your Savior, so He can, one day, give you a commensurate reward?



Works That Win

(Well Done, Good and Faithful Servant!)

SESSION 7

Matthew 25:21 His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and **faithful** servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

What God Seeks to Reward

- **Good Is What We Become. Faithful Is What We Do.**

Ephesians 2:10 "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

"No man is without a divinely-appointed task and a divinely-bestowed strength adequate for its fulfillment."

- John Ruskin, Philosopher / Art Critic

"We are not here to figure out good things to do for God. We are here to follow the script that has already been written for us to complete our assigned tasks, which He determined from the beginning of time would be our unique splash in human history. We are made for these good works, and they are made for us."

- Tim Dunn

We see this attitude in Jesus, as He lived here on earth. His first recorded words:

Luke 2:49 And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"

His last recorded words:

John 19:30 "It is finished."

And in between:

John 4:34 Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.'

John 9:4 I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work.

The Question of Success and the Story of John Huss

Finding the Works He Has for Us

Be Faithful to...

- Stay close to Christ.
- Love our brothers and sisters in the ways Christ empowers us.
- Spotlight Christ whenever possible.
- Reach out to unbelievers in our natural spheres of influence in authentic, winsome ways.
- Exercise the spiritual gift and talents God has entrusted to us.
- Use our resources (your money, your stuff, and the most valuable thing you have, your time) in God-honoring, generous ways.
- Rightly divide the word of truth.
- Intentionally seek to make disciples.

What Energizes You and Brings You Joy? What Can Only You Do?

Matthew 25:34-36 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'

James 1:27 Pure and undefiled religion... is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble.

A Review: Their Stories and Yours

Sam and Frodo, Luke Skywalker, James and John, the Prodigal Father, Moses, the believers in Hebrews, Atalanta, Michaelangelo's slab, and John Huss.



Works That Win

(Well Done, Good and **Faithful** Servant!)

SESSION 7

(Continued)

Here are a few things to remember as you follow God in writing your story. Your desires—to be secure, to be fulfilled, to be respected, to be loved, to be part of something significant, something bigger than yourself—aren't wrong.

They are implanted deep in your soul by your very loving Creator, who made you in His image. What matters is whether you attempt to fulfill those longings in the way the world suggests or the way God suggests.

Once you have eternal security because you've believed in Jesus—you've looked to Jesus as the answer for your sin problem—then go live boldly and bravely from that position of security.

Make the most of every moment to do the works He has prepared for you—never relying on or expecting those works to save you, instead of doing them because it's the best use of your life. Trust Him to judge what's important and successful. Build a life of significance, not just here but for eternity.

Application

What is one foremost thing from this study you would like to make a part of your life going forward?

OUR VISION

Developing spiritual leaders in every nation who can teach others about the love of Christ – a love that cannot be earned and cannot be lost.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Tracy Marshall is the founder and Executive Director of **Transparency USA**. Tracy received both her bachelor's and law degrees from Duke University and practiced employment law with two firms in Dallas. She and her husband Billy helped found the Grammar School at Midland Classical Academy, where she served for many years in various roles, including Chairman of the Executive Committee.

Tracy actively supports Grace and its vision as one of the heads for the **Women's Institute at the Grace Center for Spiritual Development** and as a member of the **Grace School of Theology** Board of Trustees. Any free time she can find is spent with her husband and four adult children, exercising, and dreaming up ways to share the message of God's love and grace.

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