

The Sinai Connection Summer 2011 Edition
"The Vision Beyond These Walls"

Focusing On The Vision

Greater Mt. Sinai Baptist Church

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"Being A Full Time Caring Church That Searches For The Lost"

The focus of this edition of *The Sinai Connection* is centered on the Church Vision—not necessarily the words “Being a Full Time Caring Church That Searches For the Lost”, but where we, as members of the church body should concentrate our efforts as we prepare ourselves to accept the challenge that has been placed at our feet by God. Some of the content included in this edition is intended to allow us to reflect on what attitude adjustments and behavior modifications we need to make in order to facilitate our transition from “Becoming” to “Being A Full Time Caring Church That Searches For The Lost”. Others represent the basic fundamentals of being a Christian that we all need to re-connect with on a periodic basis.

During this period of making preparation for managing through the vision challenge, we should leave no stone unturned and make no assumptions or excuses for the outcome of our efforts. Through prayer and unwavering faith as well as a collective team effort, God will provide us with the guidance, knowledge, substance, and direction to fulfill the vision that He has set forth for us.

For GMSBC to realize the success that God has already ordained for us—we, **collectively** as a church family should do all we can to increase our efforts to demonstrate to Him how much we really do care for each other and those ‘lost souls’ in the world whom we wish to bring to Christ through planned and unplanned acts of kindness, compassion, and fellowship.



“For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry”. -Habakkuk 2:3

Now is the time to roll up our sleeves in order to meet the obligations required to support the church’s mission and vision. Volunteering our time, talents, as well as providing a sacrificial level of financial support will be necessary in order that God’s vision for His children in this community can become a reality. We can no longer assume that someone else is going to do what we are supposed to be doing as individuals while we, instead idle on the sidelines waiting for situations to work themselves out with minimal or no effort on our part. If we, as a church family can be on one accord; the harvest from our efforts will be like nothing we could ever imagine. God could have easily chosen someone else to fulfill this vision, but He chose us. We should consider it an honor and a privilege that He did. **Now is the time** to show our true Christian mettle.

God is waiting for us to make our move. Let’s show Him how eager we are to accept the challenge by doing what we can and the best we can as individuals. As the collective body of Christ we affectionately refer to as “Greater Mt. Sinai Baptist Church”; let us be on one accord and passionately embrace the vision and the obligations associated with it. Let’s not find ourselves standing on the sidelines watching this opportunity pass us by. Let’s stop denying to ourselves that we are the chosen ones and prove to God as well as to ourselves that we are up to the challenge. **The time is NOW!**

The Sinai Connection

Summer Edition 2011

Table of Contents

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Feature Articles

Benevolence	Page 4
Attitude	Pages 5-7
Spiritual Gifts	Pages 18-19
Biblical Stewardship	Pages 20-21
Helping the Homeless—What The Bible Says	Page 23
Fruit of the Spirit-Visible Growth in Jesus Christ	Pages 26-27

General Information

Sunday School Attendance Report	Page 8
Sunday School Curriculum August-October.....	Pages 9-14
Outreach and Mission Schedules	Page 15
Stewardship Report	Page 16

***BENEVOLENCE* - AN ACT OF OR A GENERAL INCLINATION TOWARDS CHARITY**

The Program for Benevolence:

- voluntary not compulsory (2 Cor. 8:3-4)
- priority to household of faith (Gal. 6:10; 1 Jn. 3:17)
- justice (equality) not mere charity (Prov. 29:7; 31:8-9; 2 Cor. 8:13-15)
- inter-church assistance as well as inner-church (2 Cor. 8:1-4; 9:12-15)

We are more likely to follow God's program when we truly understand:

1. **God's Heart:** He is full of compassion and completely just and therefore detests oppression. From the beginning God directed His people toward a more equitable living. The Old Testament reflects specific programs He instituted as a check and balance system to keep the rich from getting too rich at the expense of others -- Year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:8-55), the Sabbatical Year (LEV. 25:1-7), THE LAW OF TITHING (DEUT. 14:28-29) AND GLEANING (DEUT. 24:19-22).
2. **God's Ownership:** All things belong to God so we ought not to hold on too tightly. We should, instead, participate with God in meeting people's needs with resources that in reality belong to Him and not us.

The Process for Benevolence:

- not merely applying quick fixes but assistance to help people do better (Prov. 3:13-14)
- not merely addressing felt needs but getting beyond to the core issues (Matt. 9:1-5)
- not merely providing resources but fulfilling the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20)
- not merely doing out of duty but loving those being helped (1 Cor. 13:3)

According to Luke 4:18-19, Jesus' mission was to **free** the oppressed and **heal** the blind. He wanted to see changed lives as a result of His help. Jesus had a balance between meeting physical and spiritual needs. He met physical needs but He also preached and taught truth. (See Matt. 4:23.)

Meeting physical needs is the easy part. Addressing the spiritual core issues of the heart is another matter. Jesus did both. (See Matt. 9:1-6.) He took care of the physical to authenticate the spiritual. Since we don't have the advantage of Jesus' omniscience to get right to the core, we must go through a process of discerning the real needs. We need a filtering system. Prayer is a major part of the process.

Follow-up is missing in so many benevolence efforts. What are we doing to help people prevent problems in the future? The greatest act of benevolence will go beyond physical assistance to a compassionate investment and commitment of time, energy, and love. Are we willing to come along side of a person and not merely distribute money, food, clothing, or other goods to them? It has been said, "Give a man a fish and he has food for a day. Teach a man to fish and he has food for a lifetime."

The Product of Benevolence:

- reap what you sow (Gal. 6:7-10; Prov. 11:24-25; 21:13; 22:9; 28:27; Matt. 5:7)
- greater equality (Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-35)
- God is honored (Prov. 14:31)

"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice, and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter --when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: here am I. ... then your light will rise in the darkness ... You will be like a well-watered garden; like a spring whose waters never fail." (Isa. 58:6-11)

source:mintools.com

A - T - T - I - T - U - D - E

According to the Merriam Webster dictionary, the word "attitude" means "an internal position or feeling with regard to something else." Other words often used as synonyms are: "disposition, feeling, mood, opinion, sentiment, temper, tone, perspective, frame of mind, outlook, view, or morale."

Positive attitude helps to cope more easily with the daily affairs of life. It brings optimism into your life, and makes it easier to avoid worry and negative thinking. If you adopt it as a way of life, it will bring constructive changes into your life, and makes them happier, brighter and more successful. With a positive attitude, you see the bright side of life, become optimistic and expect the best to happen. It is certainly a state of mind that is well worth developing and strengthening.

Our attitude is our inward disposition toward other things, such as people or circumstances. Attitude is applied whenever we must deal with something other than ourselves. According to God's word, when we become a Christian, a part of our new creation is the development of new attitudes — our attitude should become like that of Jesus. The Bible says, "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:" (Philippians 2:5). "You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off the old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds." (Ephesians 4:22 NIV)

- Watch your thoughts; they become words.
- Watch your words; they become actions.
- Watch your actions; they become habits.
- Watch your habits; they become character.
- Watch your character; it becomes your destiny.

Good Attitudes

Scriptural references are provided in parenthesis for your reading and reflection

According to scripture, your attitude toward life, your circumstances, or toward other people should always be like the Lord's — as is defined by scripture. Good attitudes are generally demonstrated in being positive, encouraging, loving, humble, teachable, cooperative, considerate, selfless, loyal, persevering and so forth (Gal. 5:22-23).

To God — Our attitude should be reverence, submission, love, trust, humbleness, obedience, worshipful, and prayerful. (Psa. 111:10, Mark 12:30, John 14:15, Jas. 4:7, 1 Sam. 15:23)

To God's Children — Our attitude should be love, forgiveness, consideration, caring, encouragement, kindness, humility, unselfishness, respectful, and impartial. (John 13:34-35, 15:12, Rom. 12:10, 13:10, 15:7, Jas. 2:9, Eph. 4:2, 4:32, Col. 3:16, 1 Thes. 5:11, Heb. 3:13, 1 Cor. 13:4-8).

To Authority — Our attitude should be respectful, cooperative, accountable, humble, helpful, encouraging, loyal. Not resentful, defiant or disrespectful. (Heb. 13:17, 1 Pet. 2:13-15)

To Hard Circumstances — Our attitude should be patience, thankfulness, persevering, believing. (Rom. 8:28, Gal. 1:9)

To Our Church — Our attitude should be respectful, faithful, cooperative, helpful, willingness, dependable, participating, encouraging. (1 Cor. 10:32, 1 Cor. 14:12, Heb. 2:12)

To Duty — Our attitude should be faithfulness, responsibility, obedience, cooperation, endurance. (Luke 16:10, 1 Cor. 4:2)

To Unfairness — Our attitude should be patience, humility, confident in God's justice. (Rom. 12:19, Luke 18:7)

To Disappointment or Tragedy — Our attitude should be humility, submission to God, prayerful, confidence in God's fairness. (Psa. 62:5, Jer. 17:5, Deut. 32:4, Job 13:15, Rom. 8:28)

To the Lost — Our attitude should be compassionate, forgiving, encouraging, helpful, reconciling them to God. (2 Cor. 5:18, 2 Pet. 3:9, Matt. 18:11-14)

To Sin — Our attitude should be uncompromising, unaccepting, intolerant, unsympathetic, yet compassionate and reconciliatory for the repentant. (Matt. 18:8-9, Gal. 6:1)

To Success — Our attitude should be humble, grateful, God-glorifying, not self-exalting or forgetful to God. (Jas. 4:6, 10, Prov. 16:18)

To Misunderstanding — Our attitude should be peacemaking, reconciliatory, patient, forgiving. (Col. 3:13, Matt. 5:9, Phil. 2:14)

Bad Attitudes

Most of us can easily identify bad attitudes when they are displayed outwardly in our words or actions such as negativity, criticalness, rebellion, defiance, impatience, uncooperative, apathy, discouragement, independence, presumption, arrogance, self-centeredness, rudeness, etc. These are examples of bad attitudes which Christians should reject. However, keep in mind, attitudes are inner dispositions of the heart and thoughts — they are the hidden intentions which will eventually serve as the basis for our actions. "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he." (Prov. 23:7). In reality, no one else really knows the thoughts of your heart, except you and God. Consequently, attitude is something that only you and God can work out — a change which must take place inwardly.

An example of a bad attitude is seen in George Brown. He went to church cheerfully as long as his business continued to prosper — as long as everything went well for him. He sang joyfully in the choir, he rarely missed a service. But when hard times set in George began to drop away. He became resentful toward God, even critical of other Christians. The right attitude to have when difficulty comes is to persevere in faith and draw nearer to God — to fall at the feet of Jesus. The Bible makes it clear that God works all things together for our good when we love Him, and the testing of our faith is for our benefit. Trouble will never defeat the person with a right attitude.

Another bad attitude can be seen in Sally Smith. She had been a Christian for nearly two years. She loved the Lord and was growing as a Christian, but was still battling sins of the flesh — she occasionally fell to the temptation of drunkenness. One evening, the pastor and his family were entering a restaurant when he noticed Sally slouching at the distant bar, obviously intoxicated. The next Sunday after service, the pastor and his wife took Sally aside privately and warned her gently about the sins of drunkenness. He encouraged her to repent of this activity and prayed with her. Sally was offended by the pastor's forthrightness. She immediately changed churches and would often be heard "bad-mouthing" that church and pastor. First, she should have had a humble, submissive attitude toward the pastor's loving correction of sin which was based upon God's Word (2 Tim. 4:2, 1 Cor. 5:11-13, Gal. 5:19-21, Gal. 6:1). As a general rule, persons who have a bad attitude toward authority figures always have a problem with God.

Credits:
Dr. Dale A. Robbins
victorious.org

Sunday School Creed

*“So that we may show ourselves approved,
study each week for Sunday School”*

Motto

“Teachable Moments”

Sunday School Attendance Report

May

Date	Adult Division	Children/Young People Division
May 1st	88	43
May 8th	88	51
May 15th	Joint Sunday School	Joint Sunday School
May 22nd	Joint Sunday School	Joint Sunday School
May 29th	87	34
Monthly Total	-	-

June

Date	Adult Division	Children/Young People Division
June 5th	93	37
June 12th	104	64
June 19th	108	37
June 26th	106	50
Monthly Total	411	188

**Greater Mt. Sinai Baptist Church
Sunday School Curriculum**

**August 7th – Unit 2: Listening for God in Changing Times
August — Unit 3: Case Study in Community**

August 7, 2011

Lesson Title: Walk in God's Path *Judges 13:1-8, 24, 25*

Key Verses:

The woman bare a son, and called his name Samson: and the child grew, and the Lord blessed him. And the Spirit of the Lord began to move him. *Judges 13:24, 25*

Lesson Objectives:

- To be able to identify key points in the Lord's preparation to send Samson as a deliverer.
- To be able to identify some principles in the Lord's instructions to Samson's parents that are reliable childrearing principles for today.
- To be able to make a list of ways that parents and the church can foster spiritual growth in children.

August 14, 2011

Lesson Title: Making A Choice *Ruth 1:8-18*

Key Verse:

Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. *Ruth 1:16*

Lesson Objectives:

- To be able to summarize the exchange between Naomi and her daughter-in-law.
- To be able to explain why Ruth's choice to stay with Naomi was both caring and costly.
- To be able to suggest a series of practical steps on how to minister to someone going through a difficult circumstance.

**Greater Mt. Sinai Baptist Church
Sunday School Curriculum**

August 21, 2011

Lesson Title: Empowering the Needy *Ruth 2:8-18*

Key Verses:

The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust. *Ruth 2:12*

Lesson Objectives:

- To be able to describe the kindness that Boaz showed to Ruth while she was gleaning in his field.
- To be able to compare and contrast the manner in which Ruth was enabled to provide for herself and her mother-in-law with programs by which the government and/or the church help the poor today.
- To suggest a way that the church can empower the poor as Ruth was empowered.

August 28, 2011

Lesson Title: Caring For One Another *Ruth 4:1-10*

Key Verse:

Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance. *Ruth 4:5*

Lesson Objectives:

- To be able to tell how Boaz secures the right to marry Ruth and to become the source of security for her and Naomi.
- To be able to tell why it was important for Boaz to follow the complicated procedure that qualified him to become the kinsman.
- To be able to commit to following procedures more carefully when trying to do something positive in the community.

**Greater Mt. Sinai Baptist Church
Sunday School Curriculum**

September – Unit 1: Teaching and Learning

September 4, 2011

Lesson Title: Pursuing Righteousness *Proverbs 3:1-12*

Key Verse:

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. *Proverbs 3:5*

Lesson Objectives:

- To be able to identify principles that lead to a blessed life.
- To be able to explain why “the fear of the Lord” is foundational to other proverbial principles.
- To be able to identify an area in our lives that can be aligned more closely with the Lord’s will by application of a proverbial principle and make a plan to do so.

September 11, 2011

Lesson Title: Making Right Choices *Proverbs 4:10-15, 20-27*

Key Verse:

Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life.

Proverbs 4:13

Lesson Objectives:

- To be able to identify choices that the writer of Proverbs says one must make.
- To be able compare and contrast Proverbs 4:14 with Psalm 1:1.
- To be able to select three verses from today’s text to make into a prayer of supplication and do so.

**Greater Mt. Sinai Baptist Church
Sunday School Curriculum**

September 18, 2011

Lesson Title: Teaching Values *Proverbs 15:21-33*

Key Verse:

He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul; but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding. *Proverbs 15:32*

Lesson Objectives:

- To be able to summarize the nature of the Lord's relationship to both the righteous and the wicked.
- To be able to relate three proverbs to modern situations.
- To memorize the one proverb that speaks to our most pressing need.

September 25, 2011

Lesson Title: Acting with Discernment *Proverbs 25:1-10*

Key Verse:

Debate thy cause with thy neighbor himself; and discover not a secret to another. *Proverbs 25:9*

Lesson Objectives:

- To be able to restate some principles of behavior that affect relationships.
- To be able to compare and contrast Proverbs 25:6, 7 with Luke 14:7-11.
- To be able to write a paraphrase of one of the proverbs of the text that most helps guard ourselves from the influence of secular culture.

**Greater Mt. Sinai Baptist Church
Sunday School Curriculum**

**October – Unit 1: Teaching and Learning
October 30th — Unit 2: Jesus Teaches Wisdom**

October 2, 2011

Lesson Title: Living an Ordered Life *Proverbs 29:16-27*

Key Verse:

The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe. *Proverbs 29:25*

Lesson Objectives:

- To be able to identify the connections between discipline, correction, and restraint.
- To be able to summarize the principles that promote an ordered life.
- To be able to identify one area in our lives that needs to be reordered and explain how today's lesson will help bring that about.

October 9, 2011

Lesson Title: Valuing True Wisdom *Ecclesiastes 9:13-18; 10:1-4*

Key Verse:

Wisdom is better than strength: nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard. *Ecclesiastes 9:16*

Lesson Objectives:

- To be able to list one foolish behavior and one wise behavior.
- To be able to describe how wisdom and folly are contrasted in today's lesson.
- To be able to identify a life choice we are currently facing and describe why one path is wiser than another.

**Greater Mt. Sinai Baptist Church
Sunday School Curriculum**

October 16, 2011

Lesson Title: Growing Old With Wisdom *Ecclesiastes 11:9-12:7, 13*

Key Verse:

Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

Ecclesiastes 12:13

Lesson Objectives:

- To be able to list some of Solomon's contrasts between youth and old age.
- To be able to describe some challenges and blessings that accompany seeking to obey God in both youth and old age.
- To be able to recite Ecclesiastes 12:13 from memory.

October 23, 2011

Lesson Title: Finding True Love *Song of Solomon 4:8-5:1a*

Key Verse:

How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices! *Song of Solomon 4:10*

Lesson Objectives:

- To be able to describe how love is expressed in today's text.
- To explain how the Song of Solomon helps us appreciate God's perspective on the love between a husband and wife.
- To write a prayer of commitment to accept the biblical perspective on love and reject the secular perspective.

October 30, 2011

Lesson Title: Seeking True Happiness *Matthew 5:1-12*

Key Verse:

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. *Matthew 5:6*

Lesson Objectives:

- To be able to identify key emphases of Jesus' teaching on blessedness.
- To be able to contrast the idea of "being blessed" with "being happy."
- To be able to identify one area where we have pursued "being happy" rather than "being blessed" and make a plan for change.

Church Outreach and Mission Project Schedules

Prayer Meeting Schedule

August—October 2011
Wednesday 7:45pm

August 3rd	T. F. Fraylon Missionary
August 10th	Pastor's Aide
August 17th	Nurse's Guild
August 24th	Sunday School Department
August 31st	Usher Board
Sept. 7th	Youth Department
Sept. 14th	No Prayer Meeting—Revival
Sept. 21st	Athletic Department
Sept. 28th	Storehouse
October 5th	Deacon Board
October 12th	Young At Hearts
October 19th	Women's Prayer Partners
October 26th	Marriage Ministry



*Teachers Meeting each
Wednesday Night at 7:00 p.m. in
the Education Building*

*Prayer Meeting each Wednesday Night
at 7:45 p.m.*

*Bible Study each Thursday Night at
7:00 p.m.—Resuming in September*



**2011 Meal Service
Men's Uptown Shelter**

October 13, 2011

*Thank You
for volunteering and all that you do!*

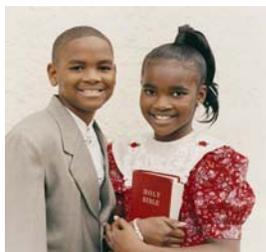
Now Give God Some Glory!!!

Stewardship and Attendance Report

Please join us in welcoming the following
New Members who joined January 1, 2011 through July 17, 2011:

Cheron Farley, Alan Bradley, Daniel Williams, Asyria Jacobs, Kyra Spaulding, Chelsea Austin, Zenia Woodley, Chauncey Hardrick, Terry Barber, Albert Huntley, David T. Ray, Equanda Whitley, Carolyn Brooks, Deborah Skinner, Julia Williams, Camilla Draffin, Emmanuel Joel Simpson, Kevin Pittman, Patricia McNeill, Willis Joyner, Hubert Flim, Shayla Williams, Jimmy Johnson, Kisha Hill, Terry Brewer, Elon Horton, Brian L. Franaklin, Rogina Franklin, Michael Wright, Sarah N. Wright, Tiffany Horton, Lewis Worrell, Kyndell Wilkins, and Toriana Bates

We are elated that you are here!!



Date	8:00am	11:00am
May 1st	237	294
May 8th	287	227
May 15th	265	304
May 22nd	282	449
May 29th	212	206
May Average	257	296
June 5th	274	301
June 12th	319	397
June 19th	192	298
June 26th	239	346
June Average	256	336



	Jan - Mar	Apr - June	July - Sept	Oct - Dec
Baptism	5	5	1	
Christian Experience	7	11	-	
Letter	-	-	-	
Restored	2	2	-	
Watch Care	-	-	1	
Total 2011	14	18	2	

Are You Coming or Going . . . Get a Grip on Life

Our lives are filled with so many activities, each one demanding our undivided attention. Work, school, church, friends, social activities, Twitter updates, Facebook... you get the picture. We often find ourselves so busy, we don't know if we are coming or going.

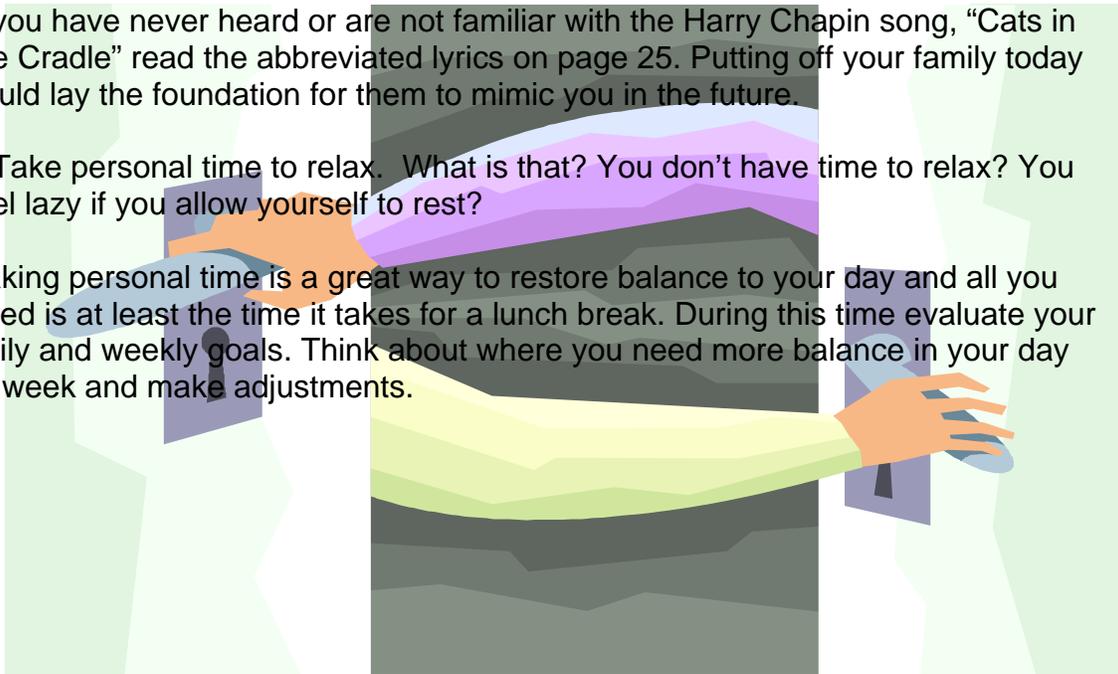
In the midst of these activities, how much time do you make for family, children, and/or significant others? If you are feeling overwhelmed and wish you could clone yourself several times to accomplish everything, consider the following:

1. Set boundaries that you can stick to! If work ends at 5pm but people are still calling you 24/7 when do you need to stop answering work calls? (Hint the answer is not 10pm but maybe it's 5pm or 6pm).
2. Consider your family goals. Is your goal to provide for your family? There are many ways to provide, other than financial. How are you providing when it comes to emotional and intellectual needs? How often do you just sit and listen to the members of the family share their day, play a game, watch a movie, go for a walk, read your Bible, or just laugh?

If you have never heard or are not familiar with the Harry Chapin song, "Cats in the Cradle" read the abbreviated lyrics on page 25. Putting off your family today could lay the foundation for them to mimic you in the future.

3. Take personal time to relax. What is that? You don't have time to relax? You feel lazy if you allow yourself to rest?

Taking personal time is a great way to restore balance to your day and all you need is at least the time it takes for a lunch break. During this time evaluate your daily and weekly goals. Think about where you need more balance in your day or week and make adjustments.



SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Discovering Spiritual Gifts - What Are They?

Discovering spiritual gifts is not a hunt for lost treasure. 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12:3-8 make it clear that every believer is given spiritual gifts according to the Holy Spirit's choice or direction-for the purpose of edifying other believers (1 Corinthians 12:7; 14:12). The exact timing of when these gifts are given is not specifically mentioned. I had always assumed that they were like "spiritual genetics," meaning you received your spiritual gifts at the moment of salvation and then had to develop them. However, there are some Scriptures that seem to indicate that God may bless us with spiritual gifts later in our Christian life as well. Both 1 Timothy 4:14 and 2 Timothy 1:6 refer to a "gift" that Timothy had received at the time of his ordination. Most Bible teachers interpret this to mean that one of the elders at Timothy's ordination proclaimed-under God's influence-of a spiritual gift that Timothy would have as an enablement for his future ministry. These two verses indicate that Timothy had a responsibility to stir up, develop, and use this gift.

Discovering Spiritual Gifts - Which Gifts Do I Have?

Discovering spiritual gifts is accomplished through serving God. We are taught in 1 Corinthians 12:28-31 and 1 Corinthians 14:12-13, that it is the Holy Spirit who chooses the gifts. Not everyone will have a particular gift. Paul tells the Corinthian believers that if they are going to covet after certain spiritual gifts, they should set aside their fascination with the "spectacular" or "showy" gifts and instead strive after the more edifying gifts such as prophesying (speaking forth the Word of God for the building up of others).

Why would Paul tell them to strongly desire the "best" gifts if they had already been given their gifts and there was no further chance of them gaining these "best" gifts? This may lead one to believe that even as Solomon sought wisdom from God in order to be a good ruler over God's people, so God will grant to us those gifts that we need in order to be of greatest benefit to His church (other believers). Having said this, it still remains that these gifts are distributed according to the Holy Spirit's will, not our own. It could be that Paul simply wanted the Corinthians to "stop being fascinated with those gifts that they thought were 'neat' and start being fascinated with those gifts that are truly useful to the church! If every Corinthian strongly desired a particular gift, I cannot imagine God giving everyone that gift simply because they strongly desired it. Then the body of Christ would suffer from a lack of people serving in other roles (1 Corinthians 12:12-27).

SPIRITUAL GIFTS—continued

Discovering Spiritual Gifts - Why are they important?

Discovering spiritual gifts is crucially important! There is one thing that is especially clear "God's command is God's enablement." That is, if God commanded us to do something (such as witness, love the unlovely, disciple the nations, etc.) then He will enable us to do it. I may not be as "gifted" at evangelism as another, but God commands all Christians to share the Gospel and help others to grow spiritually (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). Therefore, I need to prepare for witnessing (1 Peter 3:15) and actually do it, whether I feel that I have the gift of evangelism or not. Secondly, I have seen people who have less of a natural gift with music become better musicians than those who were naturally gifted, simply because of determination. So, I believe that a determined Christian who strives after learning God's Word and develops his teaching ability by accepting opportunities to teach can most definitely become a better teacher than a person who has the spiritual gift of teaching, but neglects it.

Discovering Spiritual Gifts - The Heart of the Matter

In the process of discovering spiritual gifts, 1 Corinthians 12:31 says to "earnestly desire the best gifts." You can seek a spiritual gift from God and be zealous after it by seeking to develop that area. God may give you that as a spiritual gift, but He may also feel that you are better fit to serve Christ with a different gift. No matter how much we have been gifted with one gift, we are all called upon to develop a number of areas mentioned in the lists of spiritual gifts. We are all to be hospitable, to show acts of mercy, to serve one another, to evangelize, etc., whether we have these spiritual gifts or not. As we seek to serve Him-for the purpose of building up others for His glory out of love-he will bring glory to His name, grow His church, and reward us (1 Corinthians 3:5-8; 12:31-14:1). God promises us that as we make Him our delight, He will give us the desires of our heart (Psalm 37:4-5) and this will include preparing us to serve Him in a way that will bring us purpose and satisfaction

Biblical Stewardship

Biblical Stewardship: The Truth About Money

Biblical stewardship requires that a Christian view money differently from the way the secular world views it. The secular world equates affluence with success and happiness. Therefore, society constantly struggles to acquire as much wealth as possible. The Bible, however, exposes the worthlessness of such a struggle by revealing the truth about money. The Psalms proclaim, "But man, despite his riches, does not endure; he is like the beasts that perish" (Psalm 49:12). No matter how much one struggles for wealth, death still awaits because money cannot add anything to one's life.

One could argue that, although money does not keep death away, it is still worth pursuing because it brings happiness and satisfaction in life. Solomon, a wise and rich man, argues, "Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This, too, is meaningless. As goods increase, so do those who consume them. And what benefit are they to the owner except to feast his eyes on them....the abundance of a rich man permits him no sleep" (Ecclesiastes 5:10-12). Money is meaningless. It can never satisfy those who love it and, instead, offers frivolous goods and anxiety. The struggle for wealth brings with it dissatisfaction, not a better life.

Biblical Stewardship: That Which is of True Value

Biblical stewardship does not require that a Christian despise money or to discontinue earning it. Money is a necessity for basic living. The Bible does warn, however, that the love of money creates evil (1 Timothy 6:10). It is important not to allow money to become the center of one's life. When money is not the object of one's love and devotion, one is free to focus on higher things.

Good stewardship encourages a Christian to find true value in life. If money does not offer much to life, what does? The Bible states, "Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf" (Proverbs 11:28). The righteous, not the rich, thrive. But how do the righteous thrive without riches? They thrive because they understand and possess what holds a higher value.

The righteous have character. Proverbs 22:1 states, "A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold." A pure reputation should be one's goal in life rather than the accumulation of wealth. Character lasts. Money cannot.

Believing in God offers the righteous a lifetime of wealth (Romans 11:33). Knowing God and understanding his love are the true eternal riches. The author of Hebrews writes, "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you'" (Hebrews 13:5).

Biblical Stewardship—continued

Money does not love and it does not linger. It is God who stands by and blesses his children in immeasurable amounts; this promise, not money, truly satisfies.

Biblical Stewardship: It's About Heart

Biblical stewardship calls a Christian to give back to God through tithing. The word "tithe" merely means "a tenth." A Christian, therefore, ought to set aside a tenth of his or her income for God.

For God, tithing is not only about a percentage. Tithing has more to do with one's heart during the act of giving than the actual amount given to God. The Bible offers this story: "As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. 'I tell you the truth,' he said, 'this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out her poverty put in all she had to live on'" (Luke 21:1-4). The woman gave two copper coins-what amounted to a fraction of a penny. This seems a trivial amount. However, God viewed her trivial amount with more regard than the large offerings of the rich. Why? By giving all she had, the woman showed utter devotion to God. She was willing to offer everything she possessed to show love to God.

Biblical stewardship is a giving out of devotion rather than duty. It's about the heart of the giver-the Christian willing to give out of poverty, not wealth.

Biblical Stewardship: Giving to Others and Making a Stand

Biblical stewardship provides help for the less fortunate. The Bible states, "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world" (James 1:27). Giving does not end with tithing. God asks that the giving heart be extended to those who need it most-widows, orphans, and the poor. As a Christian, one must reach out to those in need, sharing the blessings one has received from God. Even after understanding that money does not satisfy, a Christian may find it difficult to let go of more money by giving to those in need. However, the Bible promises, "A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor" (Proverbs 22:9). The generous person -- the one with the heart of a giver -- finds blessings in giving. When one offers money to others, one receives wealth in many other ways. As a Christian, it is time to make a stand for God. Matthew 6:24 states, "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."

Between God and money, which will you choose to love?

A Case of Mistaken Identity

The light turned yellow, just in front of him. He did the right thing, stopping at the crosswalk, even though he could have beaten the red light by accelerating through the intersection.

The tailgating woman was furious and honked her horn, screaming in frustration, as she missed her chance to get through the intersection, dropping her cell phone and makeup.

As she was still in mid
her window and
of a very serious po-
ordered her to exit her



-rant, she heard a tap on
looked up into the face
lice officer. The officer
car with her hands up.

He took her to the police station where she was searched, fingerprinted, photographed, and placed in a holding cell.

After a couple of hours, a policeman approached the cell and opened the door. She was escorted back to the booking desk where the arresting officer was waiting with her personal effects.

He said, "I'm very sorry for this mistake. You see, I pulled up behind your car while you were blowing your horn, flipping off the guy in front of you and cussing a blue streak at him. I noticed the 'What Would Jesus Do' bumper sticker, the 'Choose Life' license plate holder, the 'Follow Me to Sunday School' bumper sticker, and the chrome-plated Christian fish emblem on the trunk, so naturally...*I assumed you had stolen the car.*"

Helping the Homeless - What the Bible Says

The Bible speaks plainly about homelessness: "If any of your Israelite relatives fall into poverty and cannot support themselves, support them as you would a resident foreigner and allow them to live with you. Do not demand an advance or charge interest on the money you lend them. Instead, show your fear of God by letting them live with you as your relatives" (Leviticus 25:35-36).

"No, the kind of fasting I want calls you to free those who are wrongly imprisoned and to stop oppressing those who work for you. Treat them fairly and give them what they earn. I want you to share your food with the hungry and to welcome poor wanderers into your homes. Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help. If you do these things, your salvation will come like the dawn. Yes, your healing will come quickly. Your godliness will lead you forward, and the glory of the LORD will protect you from behind" (Isaiah 58:6-8).

"Then the King will say to those on the right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.' Then these righteous ones will reply, 'Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? When did we ever see you sick or in prison, and visit you?' And the King will tell them, 'I assure you, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!'" (Matthew 25:34-40).

So many people ignore the homeless, partly because they believe there is little they can do to "fix" them. And they are absolutely right. In fact, it is not God's intention that we "fix" them any more than it is His intention that they "fix" us.

Jesus tells us that we are one body in Christ. Everyone -- rich, poor, every race, every age -- has a legitimate role to play in that body. We may go to a homeless camp or an orphanage or a rest home with the intention of helping someone else, but ultimately, we will be helping each other grow together into the body Christ envisioned from the beginning of time.

Our commonalities become striking when we knock down the false boundaries we have thrown up around our love. Think about it: every Christian is spiritually homeless. We live in temporary shelters, however modest or grandiose, waiting to take our places in the Lord's mansion.

The "Shoe" Man

I showered and shaved..... I adjusted my tie.
I got there and sat..... In a pew just in time.
Bowling my head in prayer..... As I closed my eyes.
I saw the shoe of the man next to me..... Touching my own. I sighed.
With plenty of room on either side..... I thought, 'Why must our soles touch?'
It bothered me, his shoe touching mine.. But it didn't bother him much.
A prayer began: 'Our Father'..... I thought, 'This man with the shoes, has no pride.
They're dusty, worn, and scratched. Even worse, there are holes on the side!'
'Thank You for blessings,' the prayer went on.
The shoe man said..... A quiet 'Amen.'
I tried to focus on the prayer..... But my thoughts were on his shoes again.
Aren't we supposed to look our best when walking through that door?
'Well, this certainly isn't it,' I thought, Glancing toward the floor.
Then the prayer was ended..... And the songs of praise began.
The shoe man was certainly loud..... Sounding proud as he sang.
His voice lifted the rafters..... His hands were raised high.
The Lord could surely hear.. The shoe man's voice from the sky.
It was time for the offering..... And what I threw in was steep.
I watched as the shoe man reached.... Into his pockets so deep.
I saw what was pulled out..... What the shoe man put in.
Then I heard a soft 'clink' . As when silver hits tin.
The sermon really bored me..... To tears, and that's no lie.
It was the same for the shoe man... For tears fell from his eyes.
At the end of the service..... As is the custom here.
We must greet new visitors, And show them all good cheer.
But I felt moved somehow..... And wanted to meet the shoe man.
So after the closing prayer..... I reached over and shook his hand.
He was old and his skin was dark.... And his hair was truly a mess.....
But I thanked him for coming..... For being our guest..
He said, 'My name is Charlie..... I'm glad to meet you, my friend.'
There were tears in his eyes..... But he had a large, wide grin..
'Let me explain,' he said..... Wiping tears from his eyes.
'I've been coming here for months..... And you're the first to say 'Hi.'
'I know that my appearance.....'Is not like all the rest.
'But I really do try.....'To always look my best.'
'I always clean and polish my shoes...'Before my very long walk.
'But by the time I get here.....'They're dirty and dusty, like chalk.'
My heart filled with pain..... And I swallowed to hide my tears.
As he continued to apologize..... For daring to sit so near
He said, 'When I get here.....'I know I must look a sight.
'But I thought if I could touch you....'Then maybe our souls might unite.'
I was silent for a moment..... Knowing whatever was said
Would pale in comparison.... I spoke from my heart, not my head.
'Oh, you've touched me,' I said.....'And taught me, in part;
'That the best of any man.....'Is what is found in his heart.'
The rest, I thought,..... This shoe man will never know.
Like just how thankful I really am.... That his dirty old shoe touched my soul
You are special to me and you have made a difference in my life. I respect you, and truly cherish you.



Cat's in the Cradle (edited)

My child arrived just the other day
He came to the world in the usual way
But there were planes to catch and bills to pay
He learned to walk while I was away
And he was talkin' 'fore I knew it, and as he grew
He'd say "I'm gonna be like you dad
You know I'm gonna be like you"

When you comin' home dad?
I don't know when, but we'll get together then son
You know we'll have a good time then

My son turned ten just the other day
He said, "Thanks for the ball, Dad, come on let's play
Can you teach me to throw", I said "Not today
I got a lot to do", he said, "That's ok"
And he walked away but his smile never dimmed
And said, "I'm gonna be like him, yeah
You know I'm gonna be like him"

When you comin' home son?
I don't know when, but we'll get together then son
You know we'll have a good time then

Well, he came home from college just the other day
So much like a man I just had to say
"Son, I'm proud of you, can you sit for a while?"
He shook his head and said with a smile
"What I'd really like, Dad, is to borrow the car keys
See you later, can I have them please?"

When you comin' home son?
I don't know when, but we'll get together then son
You know we'll have a good time then

I've long since retired, my son's moved away
I called him up just the other day
I said, "I'd like to see you if you don't mind"
He said, "I'd love to, Dad, if I can find the time
You see my new job's a hassle and kids have the flu
But it's sure nice talking to you, Dad
It's been sure nice talking to you"

And as I hung up the phone it occurred to me
He'd grown up just like me
My boy was just like me

When you comin' home son?
I don't know when, but we'll get together then son
You know we'll have a good time then

Harry Chapin

Fruit of the Spirit - Visible Growth in Jesus Christ

"Fruit of the Spirit" is a biblical term that sums up the nine visible attributes of a true Christian life. Using the King James Version of Galatians 5:22-23, these attributes are: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance. We learn from scripture that these are not individual "fruits" from which we pick and choose. Rather, the fruit of the Spirit is one nine fold "fruit" that characterizes all who truly walk in the Holy Spirit. Collectively, these are the fruits that all Christians should be producing in their lives with Jesus Christ.

Fruit of the Spirit - The Nine Biblical Attributes

The fruit of the Spirit is a physical manifestation of a Christian's transformed life. In order to mature as believers, we should study and understand the attributes of the nine-fold fruit:

Love - "And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him" (1 John 4:16). Through Jesus Christ, our greatest goal is to do all things in love. "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails" (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).

Joy - "The joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10). "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2).

Peace - "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:13).

Longsuffering (patience) -- We are "strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness" (Colossians 1:11). "With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love" (Ephesians 4:2).

Fruit of the Spirit—continued

Gentleness (kindness) -- We should live "in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left" (2 Corinthians 6:6-7).

Goodness - "Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power" (2 Thessalonians 1:11). "For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth" (Ephesians 5:9).

Faith (faithfulness) - "O Lord, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth" (Isaiah 25:1). "I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" (Ephesians 3:16-17).

Meekness - "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1). "With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love" (Ephesians 4:2).

Temperance (self-control) - "But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love" (2 Peter 1:5-7).



As A Seed Becomes A Vision

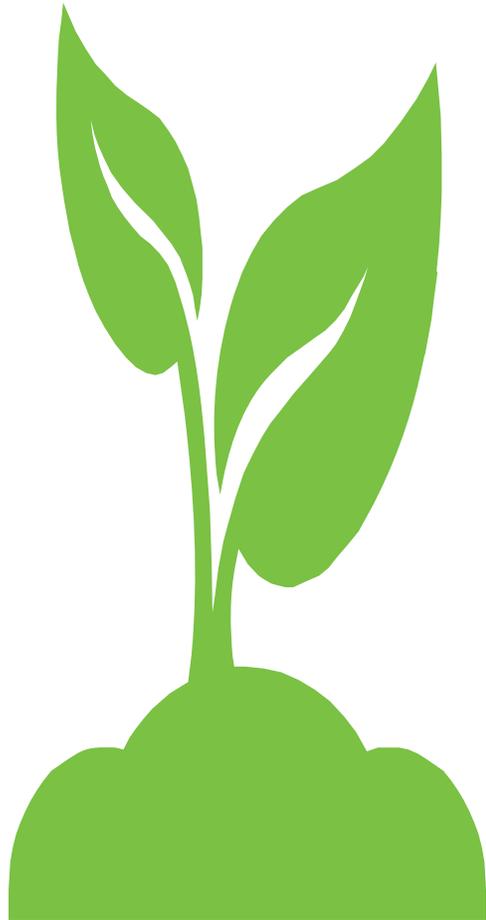
God has planted a precious seed
Deep within our hearts
The seed of a future vision
That He wants to impart

As we are quietly being prepared
To fulfill that which He's given
We must gently nurture the seed
Until the full grown vision

God then begins to open doors
Little by little as we are led
So each opportunity we have in Him
Is leading to what lies ahead

Then just at the time God chooses
We walk into what He has called
So we can be a blessing to others
Sharing the love of the Lord

- M.S.Lowndes



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