



30 DAY DEVOTIONAL



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3 'Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.' Jeremiah 33:3

Core Value: Choice of Mentor

Two Guides

Imagine if you had to choose between two hiking guides. One hiking guide says he can take you through a dusty path with very little plants, a boring desert, and places with very few animal sightings. The other guide says he can bring you through a mountain path where you can see a breathtaking view, lots of eagle sightings, and a sunset. It should be a no-brainer which one you should go with.

Choosing who to follow in life can be tricky, but God's promise in Jeremiah 33:3 gives us a reason to choose him. God promises to be a guide that would show "great and mighty" things. His plan for the life of his children (even when they are stuck in a place they don't want to be) is to provide them with an adventure.

This adventure will force us to trust God when times get tough. We will have to face many uncertain things. Like any good guide, God has a goal for your life and He will make sure you make it to the end.

Think it through: If you let God be the guide for your life what do you imagine He will show you (in school, at home, with your friends)?

Go Deeper: The Story of Joseph following God's plan that would make him the second in command to Pharaoh. Genesis 41

Practice: Ask God to be your guide today and show you the life he wants.



As iron sharpens iron,
So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.
Proverbs 27:17

Core Value: Choice of Mentor

Sharp Like a Laser

In the 2015 movie *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* A Russian and an American spy work together to break into a Soviet base. When they came up against a steel fence, the American spy bragged he had a cutting blade made from diamond that was sharpened by a laser. The Russian spy took out his own laser tool and cut the fence much easier. He used the laser that sharpened the knife.

We want to be sharp in all we do. To be sharp is to think critically, reflect honestly, and apply yourself with excellence. People who are sharp are the best workers and have wisdom to solve problems.

But in order to be sharp we need to be sharpened. In scripture, a mentor who is wise and godly is the best choice to sharpen others. The person you should follow in your life will want you to be the best in your life choices. They will want to bless you with new ways to think about problems and ways to follow God closer.

The Bible's ultimate standard for sharpness is following God's wisdom for your life and respecting His authority. Who in your life wants you to have that?

Think it through: Name three people who want you to be sharp. Go Deeper: Elijah calls Elisha to follow him. 1 Kings 19:19-21

Practice: Find out if your school or neighborhood has a Bible study that you can attend. You will find lots of sharp people.



15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; 1 Peter 3:15

Core Value: Choice of Mentor

What Do You "See?"

In the Marvel Universe, the Daredevil is a blind crime fighter who uses his other senses to "see" things others can't. He has acute hearing, radar navigation, superior senses, and he can even read newspapers just by feeling the ink with his fingertips. The other heroes usually rely on him to find dangers or traps that a normal person cannot see.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we can sense God's presence and understand His instructions for our life. Those who don't have a relationship with Jesus have no idea what that even looks like. They might be relying on us to show them.

When our friends and family have questions about God and following Jesus do you have an answer for them? Peter tells us to always be ready to answer people's questions about faith. They trust us to give them the truth.

This doesn't mean we need to have lightning fast answers for every question. We can tell others that we will research their question and get back to them. The important thing is being open and ready to share our faith with everyone who wants to know more. We see things that others can't see!

Think it through: Which of your friends or family ask you questions about your faith?

Go Deeper: Philip helps an Ethiopian read through Isaiah. Acts 8:26-40 Practice: Ask God to give you people who will be curious about your faith.

HOLY BIBLE

8 But he rejected the advice which the elders had given him, and consulted the young men who had grown up with him, who stood before him. 1 Kings 12:8

Core Value: Choice of Mentor

Don't Open the Door

A wealthy man invited a house sitter to watch over his very luxurious mansion. His only rule was that the house sitter could not open one door that was next to the living room. The house sitter was doing her duty and enjoying the very big house when she got very bored. She decided to go exploring. When she came to the forbidden door, her curiosity grew. One little peek would not hurt, she thought. As soon as she opened the door just a smidgen, a large doberman rushed through, barking loudly. The enormous dog knocked over a priceless vase. The house sitter would need to give up her paycheck to help pay for the vase.

In 1 Kings 12, King Rehoboam asked for advice for leading Israel. The elders advised him to be kind to the people, reduce taxes, and make less strenuous laws. King Rehoboam also went to his young friends for advice. They told him to increase taxes and make harsher laws. The King decided to listen to his friends over the elders.

The people of Israel hated his decisions and rebelled against him. The kingdom of Israel was split into two because the people did not want to be ruled by such a harsh king.

It can be difficult to listen to the advice of people that are older than us, but often times they are giving us years of wisdom and insight. Don't be like King Rehoboam who ignored good advice and turned the people against him.

Think it through: What advice did a wiser person give you lately?

Go Deeper: Read the whole story of King Rehoboam's bad decision. 1 Kings 12

Practice: Ask your parents or grand parents for wise advice for being successful in life.

Core Value: Passion For People and Purpose

Gotta Catch Them All

When the Pokemon Go app came out, thousands of people traveled all over their city to catch rare and special Pokemon. Kids would force their parents to drive to the middle of nowhere just so they could get a rare Mewtwo or a Porygon. Even churches were advertising that they had rare Pokemon to get people to visit.

The Pokemon Go app gave people a purpose. They needed to catch all the monsters that the app could offer. That phone app ate up millions of hours.

Jesus gave Peter a new purpose in life. Peter was a fisherman who made his living selling fish. Jesus came to Peter, performed a miracle that gave him a boat full of fish, and then gave him a job that would define his life. Peter would spend his life introducing friends and strangers to Jesus.

Do you have a purpose like that? Peter transformed his life by following Jesus' directions for him. You might not have Jesus tapping you on the shoulder and performing a big miracle in your life to get your attention, but He does have a purpose for you. Jesus cares deeply about what you do with your time and energy and wants you to use it to share God's love and Jesus' life with others.

Think it through: What sort of activities do you like doing? What sort of conversations do you like to have with others? Can God use those things to reach others?

Go Deeper: Read the whole story of Jesus asking Peter to follow him. Luke 5:1-11

Practice: Make a list of everything you enjoy doing (writing, drawing, music) and ask God to turn it into His purpose.

26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over [g]all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." Genesis 1:26

Core Value: Passion For People and Purpose

We Are Scientists

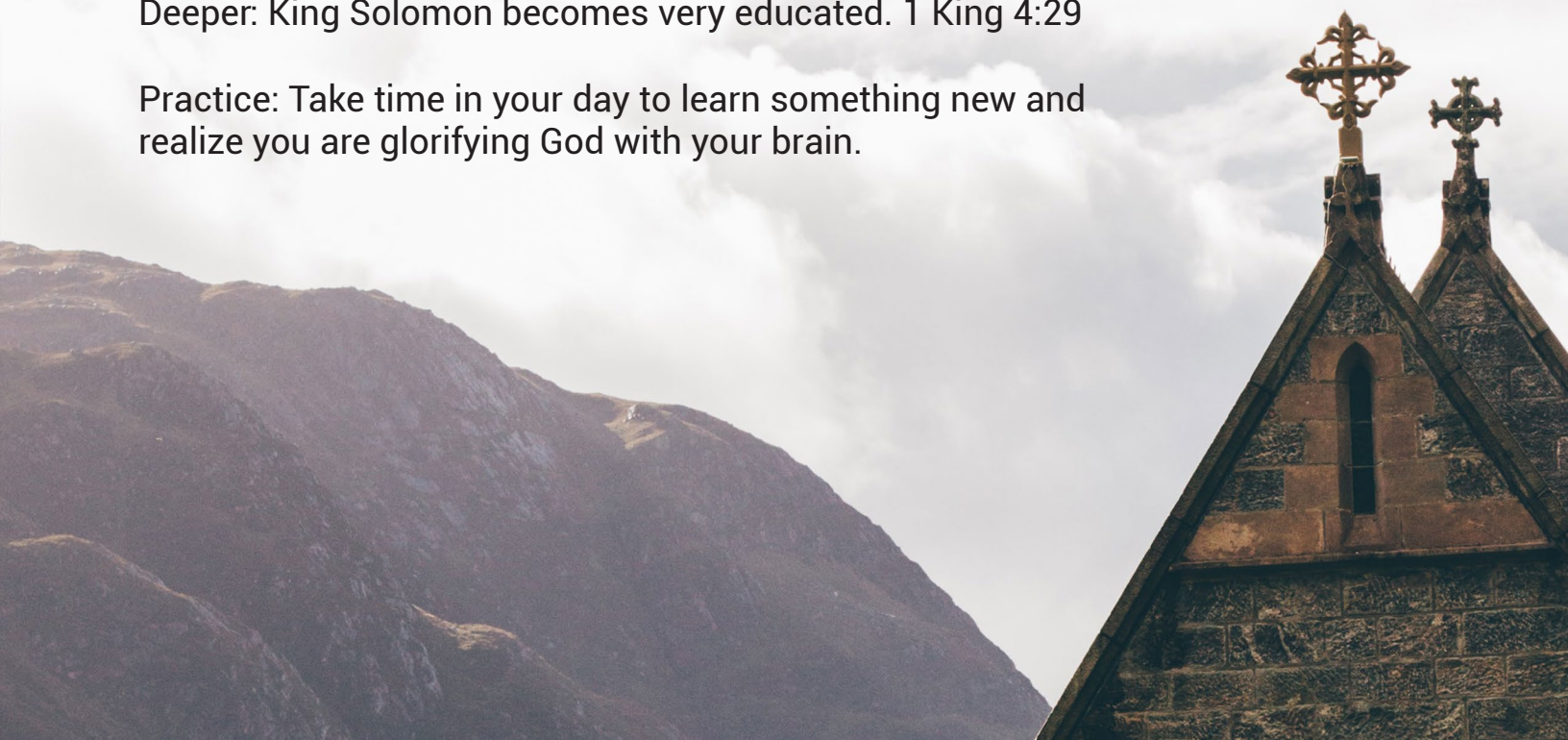
Historians argue who the first scientist was in human history. Some say it was Roger Bacon, a medieval philosopher who urged others to experiment with nature. Others say it was Aristotle, the ancient Greece philosopher who had many different hypotheses on life.

But did you know that God intended us to be scientists while we live on Earth? Adam and Eve were the first two humans to be created and God's first privilege for them was to have rule over the fish, the animals, and the plants. That wasn't just for making dinner. Adam and Eve took great pleasure in discovering new things about nature, experimenting, asking questions, and going on adventures.

It's amazing that God gives us brains that can learn new information. It's a gift that should be used everyday. It's easy to slack off, binge watch, sleep in till noon, or get lost in video games, but our brains need to be challenged. When we grow in knowledge and discover new things we are glorifying God.

Think it through: Which school subject do you like learning about the most? Go Deeper: King Solomon becomes very educated. 1 King 4:29

Practice: Take time in your day to learn something new and realize you are glorifying God with your brain.



13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, Philippians 3:13

Core Value: Passion For People and Purpose

Reaching for the Shore

What is the best way to steer a large boat over the ocean? One would think you need to stare at the water in front of you to navigate it. That would only cause the boat to drift in multiple directions. No, the best way to steer a boat is to pick a focal point in the distance (like mountains or trees) and use it as your reference for direction.

Paul was a church planter for Jesus when he wrote his letters to young churches. He was seen as a role model for how to treat other Christians. You might think that Paul was perfect because so many people looked up to him, but even he did not think that. Paul had a goal in mind for his faith. He was going to imitate Jesus and use Him as his role model. Paul knew he hadn't reached that goal yet, but it was his purpose. He told the Philippians that he had not reached perfection yet, but he was not going to stop until he could get one step closer.

Think it through: What are some goals that you would love to accomplish in your life? How long will these goals take?

Go Deeper: Paul tells the church of Philippi that he is giving up his old life to live for this new goal. Philippians 3:7-16

Practice: Write down one thing you can work on or practice to become a better person (more like Jesus) and pick a day to do it.



3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.
Philippians 2:3

Core Value: Passion For People and Purpose

Our Purpose is Other People

There is an old parable where a man was taken to Hell to see how things were run. In Hell, there was a long banquet table with delicious food. Everyone was seated at the table, but their hands were shackled so they could not reach any of it. These poor souls were forced to be near food they could never have. The man was taken to Heaven soon after. He saw the same long banquet table with delicious food and the people were also seated so they couldn't reach the food for themselves. This perplexed him. He looked closer to see that the people could not feed themselves, but they had enough room to feed each other.

The example of Jesus Christ is our greatest inspiration for serving and loving other people. In Jesus' life, He spent each day taking care of the needs of the sick, the lonely, and the poor. People would line up all over the town to meet him because he was so people-focused.

Sometimes it is easy to take care of our own needs first. There is nothing wrong with catering to an immediate need (hunger, thirst, tiredness). Although, you will never know joyful and fulfilling work until you use your energy and strength to serve those around you. Helping with the family chores is more worthwhile than binging Netflix. Buying a coffee for a homeless person is more valuable than getting yourself a meal at McDonald's. Think of others first. You won't regret it.

Think it through: How many people do you see with needs every day?

Go Deeper: Jesus serves four different people and changes their life. Matthew 8:1-16

Practice: Find something in your house that needs to be cleaned and do it without anyone knowing. (wash dishes, empty the dryer, vacuum)

Core Value: Visionary Leadership

The Golfer in Prison

There was a war prisoner in Vietnam who enjoyed golf before he got captured. At first, he got very depressed that he was in a small cell, but then he decided he needed a hobby or he would go crazy. Each day he would visualize himself playing 18 holes of golf. He would imagine the course, what clubs he would use, and even what he was wearing. When he was freed from the prison and sent home his golf game was actually better than before he went to prison.

If your brain is a machine, the vision (or revelation) is what gives it power. Successful people who start tech companies or invent new products start with a vision in their head. They followed that vision and broke it down into steps they could follow.

When people get bored or lazy it sometimes means they do not have a plan for their life. They have nothing to strive for. It's easy to veg when you are not working toward something. This is a very stagnant life and it gets old quick.

A vision could be as simple as a desire to see a school grade go up or as complex as starting a business. The important thing is you start with the goal in mind and break it down into bite size pieces. Even if your vision does not work out the way you wanted it to you are much closer to success than if you did nothing.

Think it through: What is one thing you want to see improve in your life? (Make more friends, start a business, improve a grade?)

Go Deeper: Joseph was given a vision of how God would make him a very successful commander. Genesis 37: 5-8

Practice: Write down a goal for yourself and then come up with five steps for you to get closer to completing your goal.

31 Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand?
Luke 14:31

Core Value: Visionary Leadership

The Beached Whale

There was a small town that woke up to a dead whale on its shore. The whale was an eye sore for the town and smelled awful. The mayor had a great idea. He was going to blow up the whale with dynamite and the scavenger birds would be able to carry away the pieces. Someone should have told the mayor this was a horrible idea (and very gross). When the whale was blown up, the birds got so scared that they never came back and now the beach was covered in pieces of the whale. The problem got worse.

Jesus warns his listeners about the cost of following him. He explains it with a story. If a king wants to go to war with another king, he first has to make sure he has enough troops and weapons. If he doesn't have enough resources, than it would be very foolish for a king to pick a fight he can't win.

Jesus used this same argument when people were considering following Him. If the people did not want to travel from town to town, change their job, or follow Jesus' instructions then they should not follow him. The people needed to think critically before jumping into an opportunity or they would get very discouraged or bitter.

When we have a great plan or a vision for our life, it can seem like we are unstoppable. The teen that wants to become a YouTube celebrity or the college grad that wants to make a new business has to sit down and think about what it will cost. A dream is just a dream if you don't have the resources to complete it.

Think it through: What does it cost (time, money, energy) to start a new business? How about to become a follower of Jesus?

Go Deeper: Jesus explains what it takes to follow Him. Matthew 8:18-22

Practice: Write down the traps that could discourage you in one of your goals. Can you overcome them?

"And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions.
Joel 2:28

Core Value: Visionary Leadership

The Gift of Imagination

In the movie, *Hook*, Peter Pan is an older man who lost the ability to imagine. The Lost Boys, his old crew, invited him to a meal at their hideout. The table had empty plates and serving platters. Peter Pan was confused when the boys started pretending to eat from the empty bowls. He was told to imagine the plates filled with food and it would become real. Sure enough, when he visualized his favorite food, the table became a feast of desserts and hearty meats.

A vision (or an imagination) is a gift from God. God tells the prophet Joel that a time is coming when men and women will receive special visions from Him.

Many scholars agree that Jesus' death and resurrection brought this to us. Jesus left us with a gift where we could receive God's perfect vision for the world and see it in action.

Since the beginning of time, we have been able to use our imaginations to think and to plan our goals. God shares his vision with us and encourages us to live it out. Whenever we think of new ways to feed the poor, promote fairness, and push kindness, we are sharing God's vision. It is a gift from above.

Think it through: What does a perfect world look like to you?

Go Deeper: Read about God's perfect vision for the world. Revelation 21

Practice: How can you use your imagination to help someone (or make life better)? What is the next step to making your vision a reality?

9 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, Revelation 7:9

Core Value: Culturally Relevant Communication

Too Many to Count

My church used to run this youth event called The 40 Hour Fast. We were challenged to not eat any food for 40 hours, while we served the community and raised money for poor countries. At the end of the event we would have a enormous spaghetti dinner. One time, at hour 39, I offered to pray for the meal. I thought it would be hilarious if I made an extra long prayer by including every country that has Christians. The joke was not appreciated.

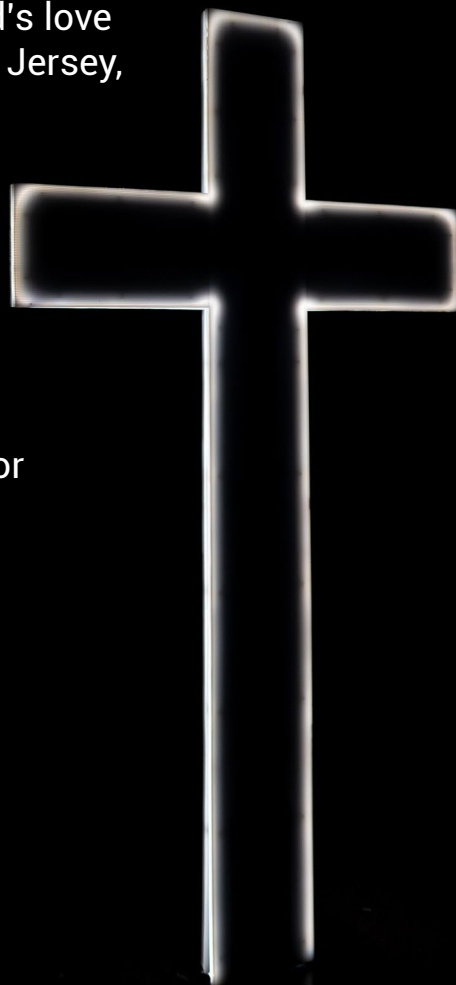
There is something beautiful about how universal Christianity. People from all tribes, nations, and languages can celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. Even if we come from different cultures or have different customs we can all be united over this.

It's important to know that Heaven will be proof that God's love covers the whole earth. Whether it is Africa, Russia, New Jersey, or Greenland we are united under Jesus.

Think it through: Why do you think so many different cultures feel welcome to put their trust in Jesus?

Go Deeper: Read about how Peter shares Jesus with 3000 new believers. Acts 2:14-40

Practice: Celebrate God's diversity today. Find a church or a Bible study that has people that are different from you.



3There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free,
there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
Galatians 3:28

Core Value: Culturally Relevant Communication

The Miracle

Herb Brooks was the USA hockey team coach for the 1980 Winter Olympics. He had a strategy for defeating the Soviet team, but first he needed to get his team united. In the 2004 movie, *Miracle*, Herb had his team do laps around the rink when the team was fighting. He would ask "Who are you?" after each lap. When the team couldn't answer they were forced to do more laps. Finally, the exhausted team wised up and said, "We are the USA."

Each culture and ethnicity is different. It would seem impossible for everyone to reach common ground. Paul's letter to the Galatians gives us a focus we can be united on. When we attach ourselves to Jesus, we are not just different cultures and ethnicities. We are one in Christ. It's a miracle that Jesus can unite us together under one name.

If you think about it, Christians have no reason to bicker and fight with each other. We follow one master and read the same Bible. There will always be differences in opinion over beliefs, but Christ has drawn us together so that we can say, "We are Christians."

Think it through: Why do Christians bicker and fight with each other? Does anything positive come out from arguing?

Go Deeper: Read about Paul's instructions for the church. 1 Timothy 2:1-10

Practice: Become an encourager on social media for other Christians. Make a post or comment on a post that makes another believer feel empowered about their faith.

2My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. James 2:1

Core Value: Culturally Relevant Communication

No Favorites

Here are a few pointers for making sure the team captain picks you on his dodgeball team. Make sure you wear platforms in your shoes so you appear taller. Do 50 situps everyday for a week so you have ab muscles. Stand next to the scrawny kid so that you look stronger by comparison. Don't forget to be overly confident and boastful about your skills. The team captain will most definitely pick you for the team.

Favoritism is embedded in our culture. Sports scouts want to hire the best athletes. Beauty contests want to award the most beautiful people. Colleges want to accept the smartest people. You can't get anywhere in life without being better than someone else.

In the Christian faith we are commanded not to pick favorites. The letter from James tells the church that people who are rich and popular are not any better than the poor. Jesus looks at the rich and the poor with the same respect, honor, and dignity. In fact, Jesus gives special attention to those who need the most help.

If we want to think like Jesus we need to stop assuming that athletes, celebrities, and wealthy people are better than everyone else. In God's eyes, we are all the same: sinners who need a savior.

Think it through: Why does God want to give extra attention to the poor, the unpopular, and the hurt? Why do you think Jesus believes that all people deserve the same dignity and respect?

Go Deeper: Read about how James teaches the church to treat the poor. James 2:1-9

Practice: Find someone in your social media contacts who is not popular and send them an uplifting note.

Core Value: Multiplication of Leaders

A Little Help From My Friends

There is a video game called Dark Souls 3. This is a fantasy game where a player must venture through medieval castles and haunted marshes to slay skeletons, beasts, and all kinds of evil. The game is known for its near-impossible difficulty. Needless to say, it is very easy to get frustrated with the game and rage quit. But there is one option where you can invite an experienced player to join alongside you. When an experienced fighter joins you the game is exponentially easier. Not only that, but the experienced fighter can teach you a few things to make you a better player.

Any project, business idea, or adventure needs to have helpers. You won't find a single tech company that doesn't have multiple leaders helping the company run. The people we allow to help us with our goals make the job so much easier.

We need people to make us smarter with their wisdom. We need people to train us on how to accomplish tasks better. We even need people to warn us when we are doing something wrong. This is all part of the process of making us into better people.

It might seem like starting a project alone gives you more control, but you will never see your true potential without helpers working alongside you.

Think it through: Name a time someone gave you advice that helped you out.

Go Deeper: Read about King Jehoshaphat working with the people to fend off an invading army. 2 Chronicles 20

Practice: Ask for life advice from someone who is wiser than you or ask for help on a project you are trying to complete (at school or home).

Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken. Ecclesiastes 4:12

Core Value: Multiplication of Leaders

Not Easily Broken

At the Four Seasons hotel it takes three departments to deliver a fresh pastry. The first department is the housekeeping that makes sure the room needs a fresh pastry for the morning. The second department is the front desk that relays the message from housekeeping. The third department is the kitchen which delivers it to housekeeping. Such an intricate system ensures that no guest will be left without their fresh pastry.

Teamwork makes the dream work. A lot of coaches tell their team that simple phrase. It is true. A successful person relies on others to help them. In the verse from Ecclesiastes 4:12, one person will get easily defeated by a problem, and two people will stand a better chance against a problem, but three people cannot be broken.

It takes good communication and trust to make a team work. That is why the Bible encourages unity in the church. When we are all getting along and working together we form the body of Christ, which is a power house against sin and tragedy. Imagine what we can do if we were working together under God's power.

If you are a lone wolf who prefers to do projects by yourself there is nothing wrong with that sometimes. But, if you want to solve a problem or finish project with your best ability, you need to rely on others.

Think it through: How much better were school and house work projects when you had help?

Go Deeper: Read about what the new church did to support one another. Acts 2:42-47

Practice: Include someone in a big project (school project, work project) and see if it makes the work easier.

26 But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves.
Luke 22:26

Core Value: Multiplication of Leaders

No Small Leaders

Eddie Gaedel was one of the smallest people to play professional baseball. He was 3 foot 7 inches. When Bill Veeck, the owner of the Browns, hired him as a publicity stunt, he also had a secret plan for Eddie. Eddie was put in as a pinch hitter for game two of the series against the Detroit Lions. The umpire complained about Eddie wasting the player's time and the pitcher thought it was a joke. Bill was the only one not laughing when he told Eddie to not hit a single ball. Since Eddie was so short, his strike zone was impossibly small. That meant that every pitch was over his head and he ended up walking on base. Eddie's jersey hangs in the baseball hall of fame.

Leaders come with different strengths and weaknesses. In Eddie's case he had the perfect gift to get on base. It would have been a mistake to disqualify him because of his size.

Jesus challenges us to look at those who are weak or powerless and consider them as leaders. He flipped the way we see servants and leaders. Anyone who acts influential and important should live like a lowly servant, while those who have no influence should be treated like a manager. Jesus was stressing the fact that His father sees things differently. Where we see a weakness, God sees a person He can help succeed.

Eddie could have been just a publicity stunt, but instead he will be remembered for his gift.

Think it through: What are the qualities of a good leader? Does a leader need to be athletic, college educated, and rich?

Go Deeper: Read about how a small shepherd boy slayed the giant Goliath. 1 Samuel 17

Practice: Pray for your friends to realize their gifts and how God can use them for His purposes.

12 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:12

Core Value: Multiplication of Leaders

Many Members, One Body

Power Rangers and Voltron are two Japanese shows from my childhood that had the same way to solve a problem. When the monster got to be too much of a hassle, the heroes would unite together to form a giant robot. Each robot part completed the colossal giant. There was no doubt who was going to win the fight when the heroes united. In another Japanese cartoon, Dragon Ball Z, Goku is the main hero who always goes into the fight alone. The enemy aliens that threaten his friends are too powerful and yet he faces them without any help. In the series, Goku has died at the hand of some of his deadly foes. Ironically, his friends had to team up to bring him back from the dead.

A leader inspires others to work together and tackle a major issue because a leader knows that we all have a special gift or offering to give. When all of our gifts combine together we can do extraordinary accomplishments.

When Christ made the church He intended for us to be working together with different gifts. Some of us have keen social skills that are great with people while others have an eye for detail and work with their hands. When you have a gift, you have a purpose in God's kingdom. That gift can work with others to eliminate a major obstacle.

Think it through: What gifts has God given you to share with others? How do your gifts work with other people?

Go Deeper: Read about how Moses needed leaders by his side to help Israel survive in the desert. Exodus 18:7-21

Practice: Find a ministry in your church where you can work with others who have different strengths.

18 And when He got into the boat, he who had been demon-possessed begged Him that he might be with Him. 19 However, Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, "Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you." Mark 5:18-19

Core Value: Family as Priority

Go Home and Be Present

Kevin McCallister got his wish when his parents accidentally left him home alone, while they went on vacation. He was living the free life of late nights, ice cream parties, and no curfews. After a few days of lonely independence and fending off house burglars with homemade traps, he really missed his family. The moral of the Home Alone movies is that we all need our family.

Jesus healed a man whose family and friends really needed him. While visiting a gentile area, a demon possessed man was set free by the traveling Messiah. The newly freed man was ready to follow Jesus wherever He would go. Jesus instead, told him to go home and serve his friends (and family). His new purpose was to spread the message of Jesus in his home town. It was more important for the man to serve his friends and family than travel around the country with Jesus.

Our family is the first people God gives us to love and serve. They can also be the most difficult people to deal with. With the message of Jesus' transformative power and the good news of accepting Christ in our lives, we have an important goal. We can't love others fully without first learning how to love our families.

Think it through: How hard is it to be kind and loving to your family?

Go Deeper: Read about how Jesus served Peter's mother-in-law. Luke 4:38-40

Practice: Pray for your family right now. You can't love them without God's help.

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 “Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise: 3 “that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.”
Ephesians 6:1-3

Core Value: Family as Priority

How to Live Longer With Your Parents

The Bible says that honoring your father and mother comes with long life. I often joke that the long life comes from your parents not ending your life out of their frustration. I am reminded of the 90s sitcom *Malcolm in the Middle*. Malcolm was worried that his older brother was going to be severely grounded by his mother so he hatched a plan to take the anger off his brother. He took a can of paint and catapulted it on his mother's wedding dress. As planned, she was no longer angry at the older brother, but Malcolm probably should have laid low for a couple days.

That is just a TV show. We know that listening to our parents and respecting their authority is much more complicated. God was not mistaken when He gave you the parents He did. He put them in charge over your life and wants to use them as an example of how to be a mature and wise person.

That process gets very muddy when we realize we have very imperfect parents. They can make mistakes that hurt or disappoint us. In some ways, we admire our parents as great role models, but in other ways, we don't want to make the same mistakes they made. The Bible is sure that we honor them regardless. Does honor mean you have to love their mistakes? No, but it does mean you need to pray for them and recognize that you are their responsibility. The long life comes from knowing that we are healthier when we honor our parents instead of being bitter against them.

Think it through: In what ways can you relate to your parents? In what ways are you different?

Go Deeper: Read about Hannah, the mother of Samuel. Exodus 1 Samuel 1:1-18

Practice: Tell your parents something encouraging or uplifting. Send them a love note or tell them in person.

2 a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always. Acts 10:2

Core Value: Family as Priority

Play What You Practice

Here's a wild idea for a first date. Instead of going to a movie or eating at a restaurant you should both serve at a homeless shelter. Does that sound too crazy? Who would do something so weird on a romantic outing with their date?

That might be a bit extreme for you, but here is something to consider. The good habits you have as a single person will transfer to your spouse and kids. You play what you practice.

Acts chapter 10 talks about a man, Cornelius, who involved his whole family in giving money to the poor and prayer. Cornelius most likely did not wait to have a wife and kids to start doing this, but it was a reflection of his life. The spectacular thing is that this man did not even have a relationship with Jesus yet, but still wanted to live a life that feared and honored God.

What sort of good habits are you going to bring into a relationship? Will it be prayer times with the family? You need to start talking to God on a regular basis to build this relationship. Will you be a family that serves others? You need to start making time in your schedule to serve now.

No one wants to impart sloppy and neglectful habits to their kids. We all want our kids to be shining examples of righteousness and excellence. What are you doing today to help make that a reality?

Think it through: What sort of good habits are you going to bring into a relationship?

Go Deeper: Read about how Jesus served Peter's mother-in-law. Luke 4:38-40

Practice: Make time in your schedule for prayer and Bible reading. Look for a service opportunity once a month.

13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.
Colossians 3:13

Core Value: Family as Priority

No Room for Resentment

In the horror movie, *Devil* by M. Night Shymalan, A soldier, Tony, is stuck in an elevator with a group of people. The elevator becomes possessed by the devil and people start dying every time the lights flicker. Tony realizes that the devil is trying to torture him for a past sin. His only way to save himself is to confess the sin to the detective. His sin: he killed the detective's family in a hit-and-run accident years ago. The detective ends up arresting Tony, but also forgiving him.

Guilt and sin can be lethal. It weighs on you like a heavy boulder. The only thing worse is refusing to forgive someone who wronged you. Families break up and kids become estranged over contempt. Nothing rots a healthy future like living with the inability to let someone's abuse go.

Jesus demands His followers forgive everyone who sins against them. There is absolutely no room for bitterness and resentment in a healthy walk with God. When we hold anger over someone's sin we are drinking poison.

The cross of Jesus Christ is the perfect example of forgiveness over all sins. When we realize that our sin held Jesus to the cross and He stayed on it for the purpose of forgiving us, it is impossible to hold anyone's sin against us.

Think it through: Why do you think Jesus wanted to forgive all our sins against us. What motivated Him?

Go Deeper: Read about the parable of the unforgiving servant. Matthew 18:21-35

Practice: Have an open and honest talk with God about who you need to forgive. Even if you don't want to forgive them ask God to open you to the possibility.

Core Value: Good Stewardship

Giving in Secret

In 2008, during the great housing collapse, the Seattle Food Bank received \$50,000 from an anonymous donor. Years later the people found out that the donor was the late comedian, Robin Williams, and he did not want any recognition.

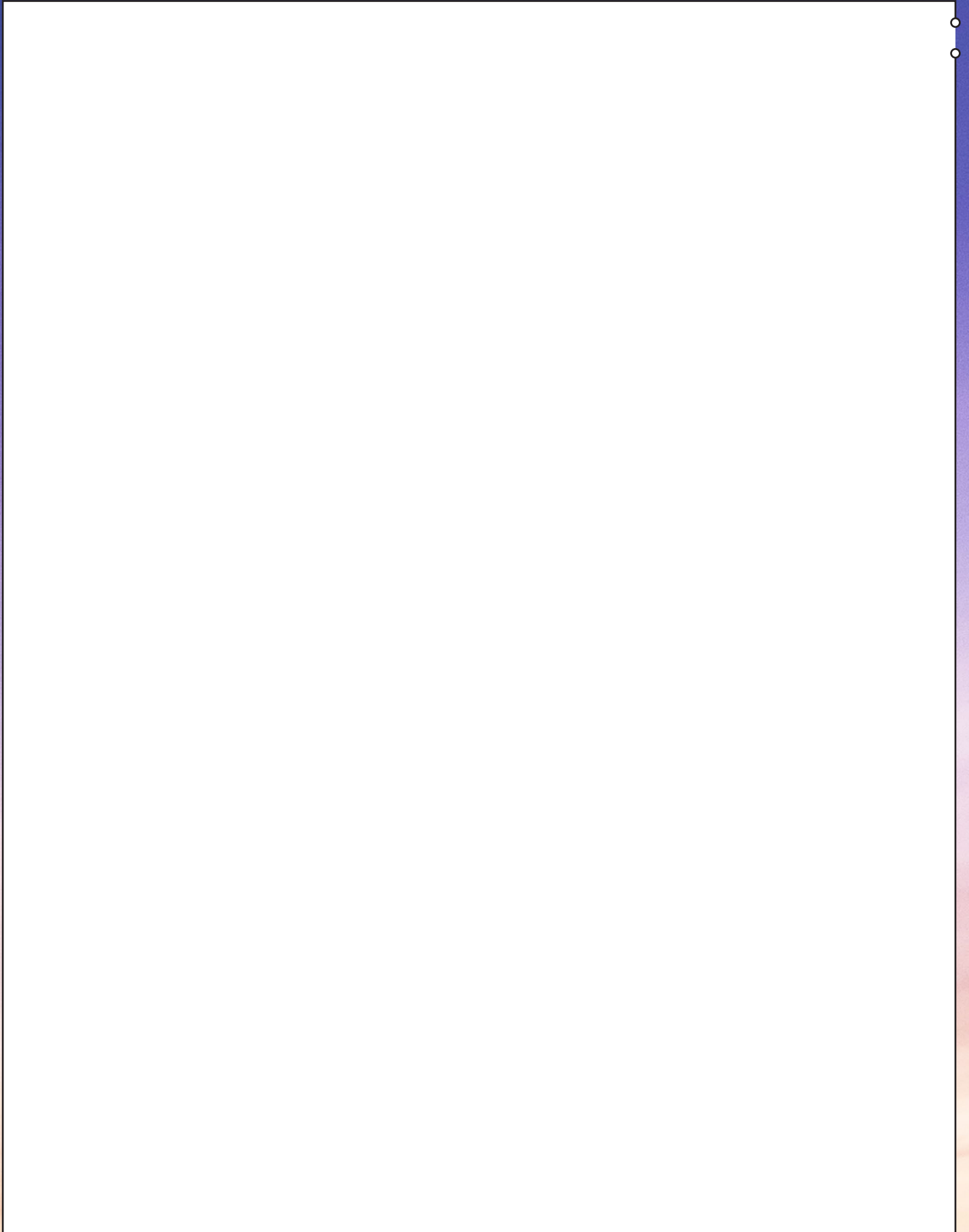
There are things in life that are worth more than money– like recognition and fame. We are encouraged to have giving spirits with our resources and generosity makes us like Jesus. The problem with giving is that it can puff us up to feel more important or special. A person who posts on Instagram about their generosity can get a lot of “likes.” Once we start thinking we are better than other people because of our generosity than we have the problem of pride.

A lot of celebrities make a big deal that they are giving money to charity. Jesus would tell them to give in secret. A secret donation is one where God can affirm and congratulate you. If God is the only one who knows you are being charitable then that is the greatest compliment of all.

Think it through: How often do you see posts on social media about people giving to charity?

Go Deeper: Read about how Jesus wants us to give and pray. Matthew 6:1-8

Practice: Try serving someone in secret. Give an anonymous note of encouragement, clean something up without taking credit, give anonymously to charity.



Honor the Lord with your possessions, And with the firstfruits of all your increase; Proverbs 3:9

Core Value: Good Stewardship

Wise Money

I once knew a father that told his daughter that if she memorized the book of Proverbs in the Bible then he would buy her a car. Sure enough, she did it. She got a sweet car out of the deal, but she also got some life changing wisdom.

The book of Proverbs has some very wise things to say about money, wealth, and lending. You can sum up the wisdom in three instructions: don't borrow money you can't pay back, remember the poor, and honor the Lord. Those rules seem simple enough.

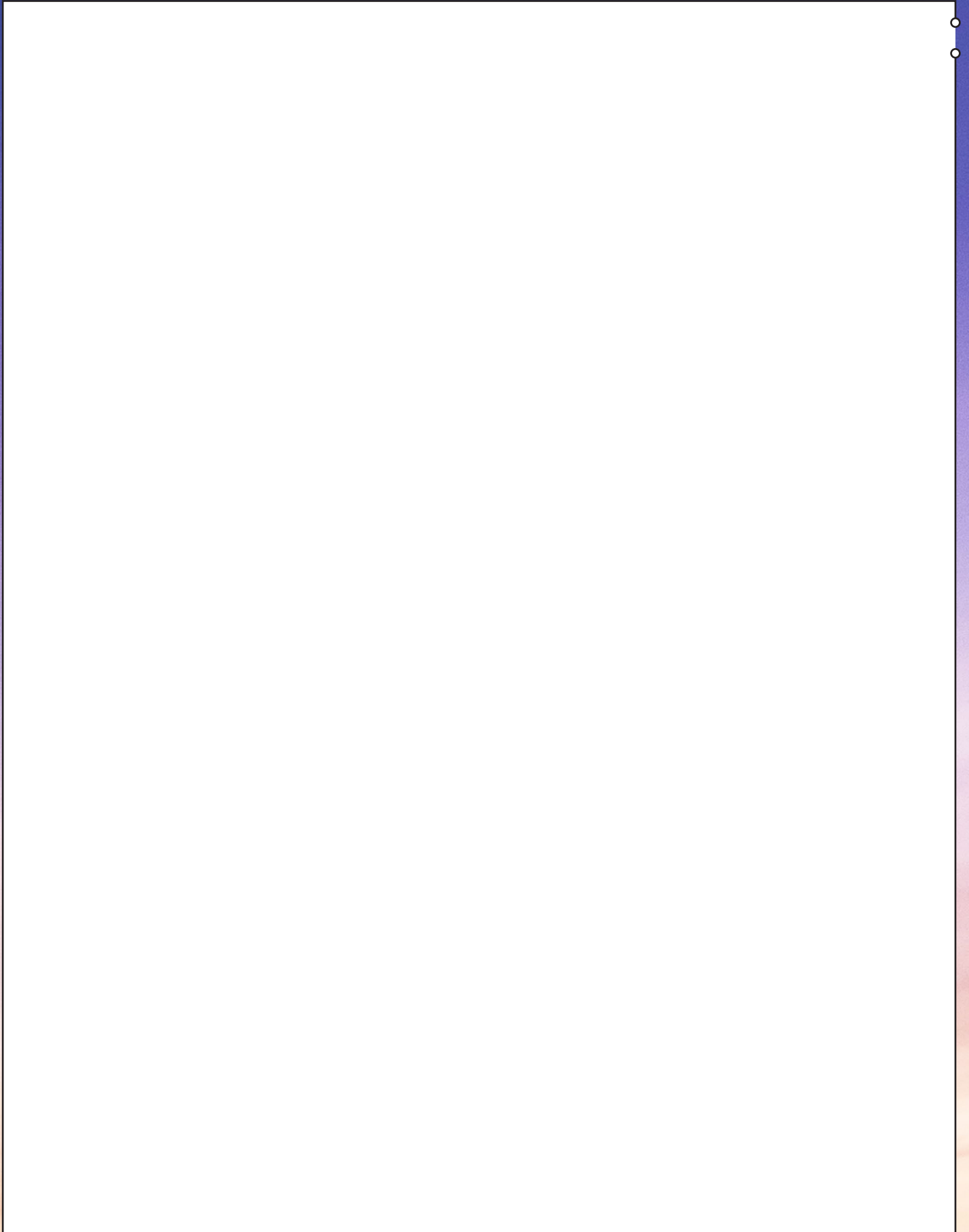
When we follow the wisdom of Proverbs with our money we are showing ultimate respect to God who gave us this money. God is the richest person in the universe and he shares His wealth with us. It is fitting to listen to His wisdom and show gratitude with what He has entrusted to you.

Our supreme example is Jesus Christ who used all His energy, talent, and time to serve people and share eternal life with them. That is our source for being grateful.

Think it through: How can honoring God with our money be the smartest way to manage it?

Go Deeper: Read God's wisdom toward wealth, righteousness, and good stewardship. Proverbs 22:1-7

Practice: Make a list of all the things God has given you (health, money, a job, a family).



Better is the poor who walks in his integrity
Than one perverse in his ways, though he be rich.
Proverbs 28:6

Core Value: Integrity

Your Money or Your Respect

Ask anyone the hypothetical question “If you found one hundred dollars on the floor would you pocket it or give it back to its owner?” and you will get a bunch of different answers. Some people will give the excuse that it’s impossible to find the right person’s owner so you might as well keep it. Other people will go out of their way to return it. Two different attitudes.

Integrity is the ability to be honest and considerate to others even when it means we don’t benefit. A small lie to get ahead or a dishonest number on your tax returns reveals that you don’t have integrity. Without integrity people will not trust you with.

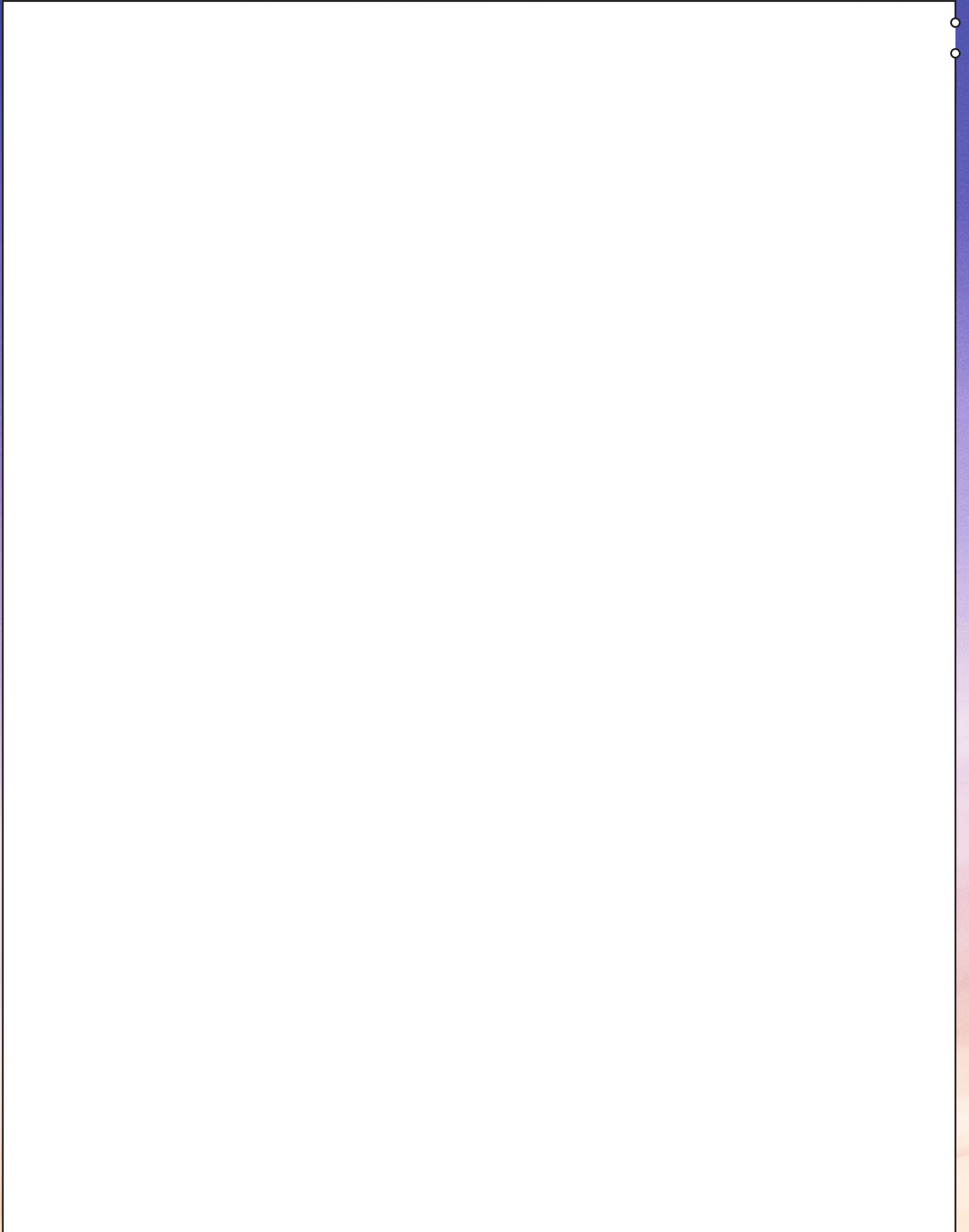
Integrity means more to God than riches and wealth. It means God can trust you with bigger and better things. A homeless person who has never lied to his friends deserves more respect than a billionaire who gets rich off of half-truths and fudging numbers.

In our modern age, it is so easy to lie to get ahead. We can cheat the system to make a few extra dollars. The question remains, is it worth having God and your friends never trust you?

Think it through: Why do you think lies (even tiny ones) are so damaging to a relationship?

Go Deeper: Read God’s gift of wisdom to Solomon. 1 Kings 3:1-15

Practice: Commit to spend your week performing your job (or school work) without telling any lies to your boss (or teacher).



9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.
Galatians 6:9

Core Value: Integrity

Half Way to the Finish Line

I knew a volunteer youth leader who loved riding his bike. He signed himself up for a bike marathon where he would have to travel several miles of road to get to the finish line. When the marathon started, he had amazing energy and stride, but halfway through it he was absolutely depleted. He thought about quitting, worried about falling over with weakness. One of the marathon volunteers gave him great advice. The volunteer said, "you are half way there. You could bike back to the starting line or you could finish the race. The choice is yours."

People start complaining and whining when they get tired. Even the nicest and most considerate people are grumpy if they over exert themselves. The temptation is for them to stop trying to do good for others and retreat. There is nothing wrong with taking a rest and recuperating, but there is danger in wanting to quit.

Quitting a life of considerate living and loving others is always a reality. We might argue that being good is a waste of time and no one appreciates it. Paul's letter to the church in Galatians says we shouldn't give up because our service to God is always growing and building up the community. Your actions are being used.

Do you pray for others in your community? Do you volunteer at a non-profit? Are you a servant to your friends? Don't give up. Jesus will use this to grow some wonderful things in their lives.

Think it through: What are some helpful ways to keep ourselves from giving up?

Go Deeper: Read and memorize God's command to Joshua to not give up.
Joshua 1:9

Practice: Make a list of the ways you serve others and then commit to them this week knowing that God is using them to reach people.

5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.
Proverbs 3:5-6

Core Value: Integrity

Trusting Whales

In the movie Finding Nemo, Marlin and Dory are fish looking for Nemo, Marlin's son. When the two rescuers get stuck inside a whale, Marlin starts to freak out that he is going to die. In this famous movie scene, Dory is able to speak the whale's language and learn that the whale has plans not to harm them, but to help them.

How do we know that God is trustworthy and wants the best for us? The book of Proverbs is confident that we can have lean heavily on God's path and assurance that God's wisdom is good. We can even ditch our own faulty understanding to fully rely on His.

God has unchanging integrity. That means He will always be good, honest, and trustworthy to His followers. He invites us to put our full trust in Him. If you are having trust issues with God and need more proof look no further than God's son, Jesus. His death on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins is the sign we need that God can be trusted.

If you are lost, confused, or exhausted you can put your full weight on God's care and wisdom. God's love can be trusted with our whole hearts.

Think it through: Why does the Bible believe that God's wisdom and understanding is so much better than ours?

Go Deeper: Read about how Jesus is the shepherd looking over His sheep.
John 10:1-30

Practice: Take a moment and rest in the good news that God is fully reliable, trustworthy, and loves you more than anyone.



HOLY BIBLE