A Final Word:

I want to thank those of you who've actually read these devotionals over the last eight weeks. It was a challenge for me to write them, and taking this challenge has been a growth process for me!

If you've been helped by anything in these devotionals, or messages or anything else we've done in our SNL campaign, I'd love to hear how it's helped you. As Paul says, *One who is taught the word must share all good things with the one who teaches.* (Gal. 6:6)

You can e-mail me at: gunghoson@gmail.com

Let me know how it went for you - and God bless all of you! Now let's get on mission, Salt 'N Light up, and get moving!

Love in the Lamb

- Louie

Daily Devotional

Vol. 2

Week Five

Written By Louie Marsh
Edited by Liz Kinsey

MON. - JESUS IS THE LIGHT

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12 (NIV)

We live for the One, we die for the One.
- The Ranger Creed, Babylon 5

Say what you will about Him, believe what you want, but one thing's for sure, Jesus never shied away from making bold claims. The one above is one of His boldest!

By claiming He is the light of the world, Jesus is making a dramatic statement about all reality, not just spiritual reality. Probably the most famous equation is $E=MC^2$. Einstein used this formula to tell us that energy, light and matter all really forms of the same thing. They are convertible and interchangeable.

When God called light into existence He was calling for the building blocks from which we are formed. When Jesus said He was the light of the world He was claiming to be the source of the universe. *The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven*. Hebrews 1:3 (NIV)

Wow! This source of all that is, this incredible being who holds everything together by the power of his Word, *this is the one who died on the cross for me!* I am set free and can live eternally because the universes creator lights the way for me through his sacrifice of love. If that doesn't amaze you, then perhaps you need to read what I just wrote again!

Jesus is my creator, my sustainer, my Savior, my Lord, my guide, my healer, my helper, my teacher - in short Jesus is my all! *That's* what this famous statement really means. Jesus shouldn't be first in a large field of competitors. He should stand alone in the center of my soul as the very reason for my existence, the motivation for my ministry and all I do, and real, true, and eternal love of my life.

He is *the one*! We must live and die and live again just for Him. When we do, that's when life truly begins!

REFLECTING ON THE WORD

Take a few moments and reflect on what God is speaking to you from His Word today.

SUN.- CHRISTMAS & EASTER— SNL

When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.
Matthew 2:10-11 (ESV)

Believe it or not, Christmas is all about being on mission as a Salty, Light Giving Christ-follower. Christmas is John 3:16 in action - and *that's the only reason it's important.*

Christmas is about God giving to the world, about Jesus choosing to become a man, to teach and live and be betrayed by the very ones He came to save. It's about the sham trial, His mistreatment, a cruel death on the cross, and His resurrection. Christmas is Light coming into the world & God giving the most incredible gift of all time - salvation through His Son Jesus!

Easter on the other hand is the fulfillment of all the promises of Christmas. It's Jesus rising from the dead, light entering the dark world again, and salvation now being offered by the all powerful risen and living Lord Jesus.

As Santa & the Easter Bunny prove the world will *always* seek to distort the good things of God. It's our job to make sure they stay straight in our own lives. Christmas & Easter are God's call to become Salty, Light Filled Christ-followers and to make a difference in our homes, communities, and world.

Are you up for it?

In the purest terms, Christmas is about God giving His Son so that Jesus could give His life to save ours. It's an exchange though a most uneven one. The pure, perfect, holy God, gives Himself up on the cross so that dirty, stupid, sinful me can find salvation, wholeness, and purpose.

Then comes Easter and he rises from the grave alive and victorious over both death and hell. And he offers us the gift of salvation if we will only believe & receive it. Now that's what I call a deal! That's the starting point for being Salt & Light. If you've taken that step then it's time to take another one into the world & be Salt & Light for Jesus!

REFLECTING ON THE WORD

Who do I really live for? Who would I willingly die for? Am I honestly living for Jesus? Or perhaps someone or something else actually holds the throne of my heart.

Would I willingly, even joyfully, die for Jesus? If so, then I should be dying to self and living for Him every day! Write about it.

SHINING BRIGHT!

Who do I know who needs the light of Jesus in their life? Am I praying for them? Am I doing what I can to be a good witness in both word and deed? How can I shine some light on them this week?

TUE. - SON IS THE SUN TO MY MOON

While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." John 9:5 (NIV)

*"You are the light of the world...*Matthew 5:14a (NIV)

It's the cracked ones who let the light into the world.
-- 1989 indie sci-fi movie SPLIT

I suppose if you were looking for some contradictions in the Bible, you might latch onto the fact that Jesus said He was light and that we are the light.

So do you have two lights or what? Actually we have **one** source of light and many reflectors!

Jesus makes it clear in John 9 that He's the light *as long as He's in the world*! But as you may have noticed, His physical presence is gone now. It left over 2000 years ago when He bodily ascended into heaven in plain view of His Apostles.

So where does that leave us? Not without light, for as Jesus also said His disciples are the light of the world!

The only reason believers can be the light of the world is because of the presence of Jesus in their lives. It's His love and His power and His grace and His truth that shine out of us into the darkness around us. As the sun's light reflects off the moon to light the night, so through us comes the sacrificial love of Christ.

He showed that love through out His entire time on earth, especially on the cross. Now His body is gone, but He remains shining into the world through His church, The Body of Christ!

One look around you, and especially in the mirror might make you wonder about that. How can this motley crew of Christians possibly be the light of the world? Because the cracked people really do let light in, or as Paul said:

But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 1 Corinthians 1:27 (NIV)

REFLECTING ON THE WORD

Take a few moments and reflect on what God is speaking to you from His Word today.

SAT.- BECOMING A GIVER

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. John 3:16-17 (ESV)

Today's thought isn't going to be focused on you giving more money, so you can let go of your wallet now!

What I really want to focus on is being like Christ, which means being like God. And what's a primary characteristic of God in the Bible?

Most people today would rush to say, *"Love!"* That's true, as far as it goes, but in our culture and church today, it doesn't go far enough. When you say love, most people don't understand what love is. We've been given a warped view of love from our culture – and, of course, that view is *selfish!*

The Bible has just the opposite view. Biblical love is *giving love!* God is a giver, and if I'm going to follow Him, I have to become a giver, too. Jesus was a giver - He gave His life so that we could all be saved. You can't give any more than that.

So you know what that means, don't you? To be a Christ-follower I must become a giver as well. (*Ah, ah, aaah, take your hand off the wallet!)* That means my life must become what Jesus' life was - a nearly continuous act of giving.

He gave to His Father, to His followers, to His enemies, to the sick and even to the dead. He gave when He taught, when He walked from place to place, when He healed, and even when He rested - He still often gave.

For the on mission Salty Christian, giving must become like breathing - a natural and habitual part of life. As we begin to scale those heights, we will know that we really are becoming like Christ in a meaningful way.

Just remember, giving doesn't mean the recipients will always *like* the gift! Look at how they reacted to what Jesus taught! Giving isn't people-pleasing, it's *God-pleasing*, and it's giving what's needed which isn't always what's wanted! *God, make us givers today!*

REFLECTING ON THE WORD

I may be a cracked pot, but I'm one that called and used by Jesus! That's an amazing deal, and I'll gladly take it! Do you see yourself as being a reflector of God's love to the world around you? How bright of a reflector do you think you are?

Write about it below:

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SHINING BRIGHT!

How can I light up the darkness around me a little bit more this week? What is God calling me to do? What unused opportunities are available that I can seize and use to light up the night with the love of Jesus Christ?

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WED. - LIGHT'S FRUIT: GOODNESS

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) Ephesians 5:8-9 (NIV)

Light is but the shadow of God. - Sir Thomas Browne

It's interesting to see how beautiful the Bible is. The idea that God is light, that we are light, and that light can bear fruit, is incredible. When you stop to think about it for a moment it's also right on target.

Every plant that bears fruit depends in light to do so, with no light you'd have no physical fruit anywhere! We'd all end up starving because light is necessary for things to grow.

As is often true the physical is an echo of the spiritual. We are incapable of growing spiritually, and cannot bear any spiritual fruit without being filled with and guided by the Light of World, Jesus.

Once we start following Him we find that the light begins to bear fruit in our lives. Paul lists three of those fruit with the first one being goodness. The word Paul used is *agathos*. According to Vines it describes that which, being "good" in its character or constitution, is beneficial in its effect.

So one of the first impacts the light has on my life to help grow some goodness in my life. This isn't the kind of goodness the world talks about. Today we are constantly told that what we believe about God and morality is a private thing and should be kept that way.

Not according to God! His Word tells us that goodness *cannot be kept within ourselves!* If I have goodness in my heart then it *has* to impact those around me in a beneficial way. If I'm living as a disciple of light then that light cannot help but spread around whatever place I find myself.

That's true of physical light, it wants to go everywhere, and so does the light of the presence of Christ in our lives as well. The fruit of light is part of the character of Jesus. The more Jesus we have in our hearts, the more we'll help others simply by being in their presence! They'll feel the love and grace of Jesus, and we'll be able to minister to them in a new way, all because we're children of the Light!

REFLECTING ON THE WORD

Take a few moments and reflect on what God is speaking to you from His Word today.

FRIDAY - FINDING MY COURAGE

Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go.
Joshua 1:6-7 (ESV)

It takes guts to be a Christ-follower!

We don't' say that nearly often enough. The truth is very plainly expressed in the New Testament, but somehow we seem to shy away from sharing it today.

The reason is simple: *we're afraid of scaring people off!* We think that if we make it seem easy to follow Jesus, why, then lots of people will do it. So we water down the demands of Christ and present a tame Jesus and a safe God to the world. We have a lukewarm Savior and a namby-pamby God, and we wonder why no one wants to follow Him!

Jesus was and is many things - *but safe isn't one of them!* The biggest challenge you'll every take on in life is to follow Jesus. Nothing could ever be more counter-cultural, more rebellious, or demanding than to live your life following Jesus.

Jesus demands first place in our lives, that we give Him *everything*, and that we scorn our cultural ways and follow His instead. Doing this will upset people in any and every culture world-wide!

To do this requires **courage!** Like Joshua, who suddenly found himself leading hundreds of thousands of people and facing an impossible military situation, we have to be strong and courageous, too. Our battle isn't visible, but it's even more real than Joshua's. We're fighting for the souls of men and women, we're fighting to over come sin and find healing, we're fighting to follow Jesus.

It's a daunting task at the best of times, but there's no better way to live! So if you want to be on mission for God, to be a true Salty Christian, you'd better find your courage because you are going to need it when you face pain from your past or fortresses in your present - just remember, Jesus will *never* forsake you, so be strong and courageous.

REFLECTING ON THE WORD

Jesus said, "No one is good - except God alone." (Mark 10:18) Therefore any good in me must come from God, not me. Reflect on if and how the goodness of God is growing in your life. Is it growing? Where is it growing? How is that happening? And where do you think it's taking you?

SHINING BRIGHT!

Can you see an area where the goodness of God needs to increase in your life? Are you aware of people around you who need to be touched and changed by that goodness flowing from God through you and into their lives?

THUR.- LIGHT'S FRUIT: RIGHTEOUSNESS

Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) Ephesians 5:8b-9 (NIV)

filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ--to the glory and praise of God. Philippians 1:11 (NIV)

Do you think you could accurately define righteousness if your life depended on it? If you are an average American Christian - probably not. Here's a brief definition: "A righteous stand before God, resulting from being clothed in Christ's righteousness." In other words, I'm right with God, not because of anything I've done, but because of what Jesus did on the cross and through His resurrection.

Paul says that's part of having the light in our lives, and that it results in praise and glory of God! Righteousness is not just *being* right, but *living* right before both God and man. If I'm really allowing the Light to permeate my life, then it has to show in what I do and say, and how I do and say it.

Please note this is **fruit**. Fruit is naturally produced, it's not the result of toil or struggle. It's the Holy Spirit's job to gradually, and usually slowly, increase all these characteristics in my life.

You see the analogy of fruit all over the New Testament. It's not there as a call to work harder or to do a better job of following a set of rules. Rather it's a reflection that *Jesus is alive - and life always produces fruit!*

Always.

God designed the universe in such a way that life always produces more life. If that's not happening in me it's a sign that something's wrong. Healthy people, plants and animals always reproduce themselves. That's true spiritually too.

Too much of Christianity seems to be forced and even artificial, instead of natural and fruitful. Living as Light and Shining Bright ought to be a natural response to the presence, power and person of Jesus in our lives. Which is not to say we don't need discipline, we do. But that discipline ought to flow out of our love for Jesus, Who is the Light of the World!

REFLECTING ON THE WORD

Take a few moments and reflect on what God is speaking to you from His Word today.

THUR.- THE TRIPLE T'S

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:1-2 (ESV)

At some point in our journey to being on mission, we need to have some practical guidelines that will help us define some of the issues we're facing. Guidelines are also very helpful as measures of our progress - or lack thereof.

Enter the Triple T's! You've heard of them before, and they are a part of everyone's life. These are three areas where I can clearly see if I'm serving Jesus or self.

Time - How am I using my time? Who or what comes first? Am I happy to sacrifice my time to serve God and others, or am I so busy I don't have time for either?

Treasure - What am I expending my treasure on? Where's the money going? Is Jesus first here? Am I wasting money on silly, selfish things?

Talent - Everyone has many gifts and talents, but we often either waste or hide them. Am I faithfully discovering and maturing my talents? Am I using them for God or for self?

If I've really put all of myself on the altar, it will be reflected in each of these three areas. Take a good, long look to see where and how you are spending most of your time, treasure, and talent. If Jesus isn't *clearly first*, then as we like to say now days - ***you've got issues!***

What we want to see is a clear alignment in each of these areas with God's will as expressed in God's Word. Many of us are stressed out, hurried, and harried most of the time. But if you'll put Jesus first in all of the Triple T's, you'll find a growing sense of peace, order, and *meaning* flowing into your life.

You can control your life - when you give it away to God! So take some time this week to do a check up on your Triple T's.

REFLECTING ON THE WORD

Right on! Are you old enough to remember that one? Well are you? We are called to let our light shine and to pour Jesus righteous presence into the world around us.

So how are you doing in this area? Are you bearing the fruit of righteousness?

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SHINING BRIGHT!

Journal for a moment on where you think God wants your light to shine today. Who makes it hard for me to treat them in a righteous manner? How can I respond to them in a more Christ-like manner?

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FRIDAY - LIGHT'S FRUIT: TRUTH

Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) Ephesians 5:8b-9 (NIV)

Fear grows in darkness; if you think there's a bogeyman around, turn on the light. - Dorothy Thompson

I love reading history, at least when it's well written. If you look back through history you see patterns of behavior and beliefs repeated over and over again. One thing you see throughout history is that people talk about truth and laud the value of truth. They also tend to live in such a way as to deny the very truth they say is so important.

If there's one thing true about human beings and truth, it's that we hate and repress the truth as much as we seek and obey it.

Jesus said He is the truth and the fruit of His presence in our lives is the truth. That has a lot of implications in our lives. Here's just a couple:

1) Children of Light must be people of truth. We must seek the truth, love the truth, obey the truth, live the truth and spread the truth. To do all that we can't be keeping secrets, hiding sins and faults, telling lies or half truths in the name of convenience.

2) Children of Light love and cherish the truth. If we love the truth that means it becomes the driving passion of my life. I work hard to find it, and then make sure I don't lose it or confuse it with something else. If I love the truth I'm also going to be excited about telling those around me about it, because love is something that just can't be kept to yourself.

3) Children of Light honestly admit their own denial. *Everyone* lives in denial in some areas of their lives. Everyone. If I'm going to be truthful and honest, then I have to admit this is true. I don't have to like it of course, and will seek to get rid of as much of it as I can. But the bottom line is that this side of heaven, I'm always going to have untruth and error in my life.

I'll also deny it at least some of the time without God's help. That's why fellowship; is so important, it helps keep me honest, and lets me help others as well. We all need that. Lord, help me seek Your truth today!

REFLECTING ON THE WORD

Take a few moments and reflect on what God is speaking to you from His Word today.

WED. - BEING A SERVANT

For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Mark 10:45 (ESV)

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."
Luke 19:10 (ESV)

You gotta serve somebody. - Bob Dylan

Bob Dylan isn't a great theologian, but he's right that everyone serves someone. Of course, the big question is *who or what am I serving?*

Most of us spend most of our time serving ourselves. I suppose that's a nice, tidy arrangement because I don't have to go far to get to work. But of course, it's sub-Christian behavior and completely unacceptable in the life of any true Christ-follower.

I believe that the things we serve, like money or drugs or success, is a form of self service. So is serving others by seeking their approval or love or acceptance. Doing drugs, or drinking, or being co-dependent are all forms of serving myself because I'm the one who chooses to serve and worship these false gods.

So the real challenge of the Christian journey is not to be a servant but to *be a servant of others!*

It starts when I choose to surrender my life to Christ and to serve Him as Lord of my life. But it doesn't end there. If it does, it only proves you never truly made Him Lord in the first place.

Becoming a servant of God and others is extremely difficult because it's *unnatural.* Our natural, fallen state always defaults to self and whatever self decides is important. Obedience to God and serving others cuts right across those natural impulses, and causes our old nature to fight back as hard as it can.

So the choice is simple, if not clear - I either serve God and, through Him, others, or I serve myself in whatever self-serving disguise my ego is wearing at the moment. Because self is so pervasive in my life, I find it hard to recognize. But as I grow spiritually, I gradually learn to discern self in all it's disguises. Only then can I forsake myself, turn to Jesus, and get on mission - to see and save those who are lost.

REFLECTING ON THE WORD

What is truth? Pilate asked Jesus that question, and it's a good one. How do you answer it? What part does truth play in your life? Are you running away from it or towards it?

Remember, Jesus is the truth, so if I want to grow in Him, I've got to move towards the truth and live in the light.

SHINING BRIGHT!

Where have I been lying in my life? Who have I been lying too or hiding from? How can I be a more honest, truthful follower of Jesus today?

SAT.- EXPOSING DARK DEEDS

Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, ***but rather expose them****. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible,* Ephesians 5:11-13 (NIV)

Just how are we supposed to expose the dark deeds that surround us? Is God calling us to become investigative reporters, snooping around and preparing some big expose on the secret lives of our friends or family? Am I some sort of spiritual spy? Agent 777 or something? Or, if you are more of an action sort of person, perhaps I'm supposed to be a Divine Detective, swooping through the night to find and punish evil doers?

Let's hope not!

The truth is much simpler. Light by it's very nature exposes darkness and whatever is hiding in it. If you want to discover what's in a dark place, you don't have to drive away the darkness, you only have to bring in the light. The darkness vanishes and all becomes clear automatically as the light appears.

That's what should happen as we live our lives. Just the presence of Jesus in our lives should shine out so powerfully that it bring some clarity to those around us.

Jesus certainly did that. As you read the Gospels you find people reacting to Him in ways they didn't react to anyone else. That's the type of response we should be eliciting from those around us. Certainly we wont have anywhere near as great an impact as Jesus did. After all He's Jesus - and I'm me!

But we ought to be having *some sort of impact!* The fact that I can often touch the lives of others and leave little or no trace of my having been there isn't a good sign. Actually it's a sign that something's not quite right in my heart and soul.

Remember the old movie, *It's a Wonderful Life*? Our lives should have the sort of impact George's life did, but in an eternal fashion and not just temporal.

Living as Children of Light really does make life wonderful!

REFLECTING ON THE WORD

Take a few moments and reflect on what God is speaking to you from His Word today.

TUE. - REMEMBER THE MISSION

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."
Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV)

You can't really be outward bound if you don't know what your mission really is. I'm afraid that many of us have forgotten the mission - and even those of us who know what it is, tend to lose track of it in the rush of everyday life.

Jesus gave us the mission - and He did so as a *command, not a suggestion!* Yet we will forget or obscure this holy mission from God constantly unless we are very careful. Such is the habit of the fallen soul.

Survey after survey of churches and leaders prove how often we forget our mission. When surveyed, over 80% of average church members think the church exists to help them with their problems, meet their needs, etc. Yet 80% or more of their Pastors believe the church is on a mission to reach outside itself to others.

Much of the conflict we see in the churches around us stems straight from this divide. When some of us forget why we're here, and others don't, conflict is just around the corner. But He, knowing their thoughts, said to them, "*Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls*. Luke 11:17 (ESV)

Our divisions often stem from the fact that we've forgotten our mission. Oh, most church members can *tell you* about the great commission, but somehow it always ends up being *somebody else's job to do it!*

But that, too, is a lie, and perhaps stems from our chronic forgetfulness.

So today, let's spend a few minutes in prayer, asking God to burn the reality of our God-given mission deeply into our hearts. If I'm not doing the mission, if I'm not on the journey, then even if I do remember, it's a hollow, fading memory rather than the bright, burning, reality that Jesus wants it to be for each and every one of us. *Lord, awaken our hearts to the reality of the reason for our journey - and do it today!*

REFLECTING ON THE WORD

Has God used you to expose dark deeds in your life or the lives of others? How do you handle it when they are exposed? Do you keep your cool, freak out or what? How did Jesus respond when dark, sinful secrets were exposed in the lives of those He dealt with?

SHINING BRIGHT!

Am I ready for the resentment that often flows from others when their darkness is exposed? Am I ready to handle rejection or scorn from those I love and am trying to bring to Christ?

SUNDAY - LET JESUS SHINE ON ME!

for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."
Ephesians 5:14 (ESV)

The new pope knows that his task is to make the light of Christ shine before men and women of world - not his own light, but that of Christ. - Pope Benedict XVI

We've spent the week emphasizing how we need to let the light of Jesus shine and though our lives. I hope you've benefited from it.

But today is Sunday, and so it's the perfect day to remind all of us that unless Jesus shines powerfully upon us, we won't have anything to shine on anyone else!

As you prepare to worship today, prepare your heart to be touch and moved by the Light of Christ's grace and Spirit as you draw near to Him today! This is a day to focus on Him, center on Him and rejoice in all He has done for us!

It reminds me of a favorite chorus of mine, Shine Jesus Shine. Here's a few of the words you can use as a prayer to God as you worship Him this morning.

Lord, I come to your awesome presence
From the shadows into your radiance
By the blood I may enter your brightness
Search me, try me, consume all my darkness
Shine on me, shine on me

Shine, Jesus, shine
Fill this land with the Father's glory
Blaze, Spirit, blaze
Set our hearts on fire
Flow, river, flow
Flood the nations with grace and mercy
Send forth your word
Lord, and let there be light

Amen Lord! Shine on us, awaken us, renew us, commission us to reach out once again in this coming week, all for the glory of God!

REFLECTING ON THE WORD

Take a few moments and reflect on what God is speaking to you from His Word today.

MON. - OUTWARD BOUND!

Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Philippians 3:13-14 (ESV)

Faith in God is a journey. It's a journey from our fallen, sinful, self-centeredness into the grace and the Gospel of God. It always has been a journey, and as long as we're on earth, it always will be.

Noah, Abraham, David, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, Peter, Paul, and yes, even Jesus, all took that journey. They ended up in places that were often strange to them, but at last their faith journey took them home to be with their Father in Heaven.

This journey takes us in many directions, and they often seem contradictory, but they are not. For example, our journey takes us deep within ourselves and our past to find the help and healing we need. This is a dark, frightening journey and, for most of us, it takes all the faith and courage we can muster up.

At the same time, however, the Lord leads us out of ourselves and into the lives of others. We are called to forsake ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Jesus. The Christian faith unfailingly leads us into becoming servants of both God and man and into reaching out beyond ourselves to minister to all around us.

The final command of Jesus was to take the Gospel into all the world (Matt. 28:19-20). You don't get more outward bound than that!

Here's the truth - these two journeys are not separate ones at all. They are, in fact, two legs of the same road, for the inward journey, when taken correctly, always leads us out of ourselves and into the service of others.

In fact, if you don't find the healing *everyone needs*, you will be a poor servant of others. Using your outward "service" to mask and hide from your inner pain, renders your "service" invalid, hollow, and hypocritical.

You may be facing some dark, inner regions today, or you might be looking at a daunting challenge outside yourself. Take heart, the inner inevitably leads to the outer - this is the truth you see throughout all of Scripture.

In truth, God wants us all to be outward bound - enjoy your journey!

REFLECTING ON THE WORD

Write out your prayer requests and Praises to God below, and then spend some time taking all of them before the Throne of Grace.

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SHINING BRIGHT!

Are you ready to have Jesus reveal Himself to you in a new way as you worship Him today? Are you ready to be used by Him to encourage a brother or sister at church this morning? *Well get ready and then get going!*

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Week Eight

Week

Six

MON. - HOPELESSLY LOST

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." Matthew 9:36-38 (ESV)

We talk of the Second Coming; half the world has never heard of the first. -- Oswald J. Smith

When Jesus looked at the people around Him, He didn't see them the same way most of us do. We tend to observe people and notice their race or tribe or economic status, Jesus never seemed to mind much about that. We often look at how they are dressed and then assign them a place either below us or equal to us based on that. Again, Jesus never did that either. So what did Jesus see when He looked at the world?

He saw lost sheep.

The lostness of the world was always before our Savior's eyes. He never lost sight of it, even for a moment. Because of His great love for everyone, He was constantly aware of just how hopeless and helpless everyone was to help themselves.

He knew they had no hope of finding God on their own. Jesus was painfully aware that left to our own devices we will always reject God in ways both great and small. Our rejection could be subtle or obvious, but it will always be there.

We just can't help it because we are fallen creatures, and at least some of the time, we love the darkness more than the light.

Jesus knew all this about us, and He still does. It was His great passion to rescue us that drove Him willingly to the cross. He died in both physical and spiritual agony because He knew we were hopelessly lost without Him.

How about you and me? When we look at the world do we see lost people? Do our hearts ache over just how lost they are, and the danger of damnation that hangs over them as they face a Christ-less eternity? Let us ask the Lord of the Harvest to sharpen our vision today.

REFLECTING ON THE WORD

Take a few moments and reflect on what God is speaking to you from His Word today.

SUNDAY - PASSING THE TEST

"One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? Luke 16:10-12 (ESV)

Context is king. I said that last week, and it's oh, so true! When you study the Bible, you always have to keep things in context. The context of the Shrewd Manager is important, and the verses above that follow directly after it help us understand the Shrewd Manager.

Jesus tells us that we have to be good managers of our Heavenly Father's riches. If we aren't faithful with the few things we receive in this life, then we've failed a very important test. If we have an attitude and despise small beginnings, we'll fail and never know the greatness that God could be calling us towards.

Why is that? It's often said that character is who we are when no one is looking. Jesus adds that you can tell the true character and dedication of someone by how they handle the small seemingly inconsequential things in life. God watches carefully how we treat these things. Do we care for them? Do we seize the small moments He presents us with to further our stewardship of these small things?

If we do, He'll reward us with larger things and greater ministries. We'll find our influence upon others growing both larger and deeper. Most people say they want this, but often aren't willing to pay the price necessary to get or stay there.

So, don't be dismayed by how small your influence or ministry is. Remember the words of the Scriptures:

Do not despise these small beginnings, for the LORD rejoices to see the work begin, to see the plumb line in Zerubbabel's hand. For these seven lamps represent the eyes of the LORD that search all around the world." Zechariah 4:10 (NLT)

If we remain faithful, regardless of the circumstances, and continue to serve God and move forward in the face of all opposition, God will both bless and reward you! Being faithful will help all of us pass the test!

REFLECTING ON THE WORD

Take a few moments and reflect on what God is speaking to you from His Word today.

TUE. - TRUTH CHALLENGED

O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. John 17:25 (ESV)

Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. Ephesians 4:17-18 (ESV)

Two things are infinite: the universe and human stupidity; and I'm not sure about the universe. - Albert Einstein

In our Politically Correct culture it's frowned upon to call someone ignorant; far better just to say they are Knowledge Challenged. Well, for all you PC people out there, let it be known that the world is **Truth Challenged**, or as the Bible says, **Ignorant of God!**

This comes as a natural partner to our lostness, of course. If I get lost in the woods, it's because I'm ignorant of the way out. So it has ever been in the world. People are ignorant of God and His ways, and quite often that ignorance is a consciously chosen one.

The Bible makes it clear that there's plenty of evidence in the natural world and our hearts that God exists and cares for us. But we choose to ignore all that and go our own way.

As people get older they often find many of their parents traits in themselves. They find themselves saying things *just like their Dad did*, or doing things *that Mom would have done.* It's not always a comforting discovery either!

Spiritually we are the same, taking after our first parents, Adam and Eve and deliberately ignoring the truth when we think it'll cramp our style!

Today the world possesses more information than ever before, and the amount of knowledge continues to increase at a staggering rate. Our ignorance of God, however, stays the same. . .until we make a choice to open our eyes and our hearts and invite the Son of God to become our Lord and Savior.

Lord, use me today to bring some true knowledge of You into the lives of my lost friends!

REFLECTING ON THE WORD

Take a few moments and reflect on what God is speaking to you from His Word today.

SAT.- HEAVEN IS THE GOAL

And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings. Luke 16:9 (ESV)

Here, Jesus takes the time to remind us of what serving Him is all about. Beyond having peace and joy, way past solving our little earthly problems and hang ups, it's standing for something far more important and lasting.

Eternity, heaven, forever abiding in the presence of God.

That's what service is all about in the final analysis. If you read much church history and the writings of our spiritual forefathers, you'll discover that they were very well aware of this. If you travel to the Third World today, you'll also discover most believers there are looking forward to the next life.

That's not so true of most American Christians today, however.

It's hard to think about the next world when this one has so much to offer. With so many cool things, new inventions, and doo-hickeys constantly dangled before our eyes, it's very hard to keep them focused on Jesus and heaven.

Never-the-less, that's the true goal. Jesus says that if we use our opportunities shrewdly, the people who find eternal life through our efforts will welcome us home to glory with great joy!

Personally, I think this is much of what the "rewards" in heaven actually are. Obviously, we won't need any physical things in heaven, and we're told all sorrow and tears will be wiped away, so what's left?

The souls who've been blessed by our shrewd service to our Lord will be the greatest reward possible or imaginable. Lives that have been saved and changed for *all eternity* will be waiting to welcome us into heaven. God will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." We'll see the results of our service as we are ushered through the very gates of heaven itself! What an unbelievable experience that will be!

So the next time you're discouraged, just remember heaven is the goal, and only there will we know the true fruits of our ministry – 'til then, don't give up!

REFLECTING ON THE WORD

Take a few moments and reflect on what God is speaking to you from His Word today.

WED. - A DARK KINGDOM

In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 2 Corinthians 4:4 (ESV)

"The devil is a better theologian than any of us and is a devil still."
- A. W. Tozer

If calling someone ignorant isn't PC, then I'm way over the line here! But the truth is that when Jesus looked at the world, He saw a place that is under the sway of Satan and wasn't shy about saying so either! *I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me,* John 14:30 (ESV)

So does this mean all non-Christians are demon-possessed, devil-worshipping, heathens who ought to be whipped into conversion or killed?

Uh, *no!* The church tried that for a few hundred years and found it was neither successful nor in the will of God.

What did Jesus do? He came into the world to save it because He loved it! He was fearless in confronting this dark kingdom, and had no illusions about it either! *"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.* John 15:18 (ESV)

So we ought not be surprised when the world opposes and assaults us. Instead we should do what Jesus and the early church did, seek all the more to win them to Christ!

Over the last 20 years or so many Bible-believing Christians have tried to change the world through political action and have failed miserably. Anyone who knows their Bible should have known this would be the end result.

Instead of being light in the world today, we are a part of it, another interest group politicians seek to win over and placate. The early church did none of this. Instead they used their suffering as a platform to confront their culture with the claims of Christ!

The fact we're here proves they were successful. So let's dump the anger and pick up our crosses and become light in our dark world by telling them about Jesus! That's the only way to defeat the Kingdom of Darkness and bring people into the Kingdom of Light!

REFLECTING ON THE WORD

Take a few moments and reflect on what God is speaking to you from His Word today.

FRIDAY - USE IT WISELY

The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. Luke 16:8 (ESV)

Jesus gets right down to brass tacks now, and what He says is pretty painful to a lot of us. We don't like to admit this, but it's fairly obvious that what He said is true. If you don't believe me, just consider the following questions:

Who's more successful at getting people in their doors - the local church or Starbucks? Who's does a better job in promotion - Microsoft or the local church?

Who's more successful in promoting their vision of what morality and acceptable lifestyles ought to be - the local church or MTV?

Clearly the church loses all three of those questions, and I could go on and on if I had the space. Granted we aren't selling the Gospel, but we are trying to promote a vision of Jesus, culture, and morality. Just as clearly, we are failing to do so.

We must be shrewd – wise - in how we communicate to our culture! Like we said last week, it's not about how you feel. It 's about how you are perceived and understood by those with whom you are trying to communicate. We have to learn how to speak the language of the unchurched and unsaved if we are going to reach them.

"Christianese" isn't cutting it anymore, if it ever did. We have to put the Gospel into modern language in such a way that people can both understand it and will, hopefully, find it appealing.

Like missionaries who translate the Bible into the language of the people they are trying to reach, we must do the same. We have to wisely seize the opportunities presented us, and then wisely present the historic, biblical Gospel to our culture today.

We've been very unwise, choosing things that make us comfortable rather than choosing what would best communicate to our lost and dying world. Let us pray that we'll both choose and use the opportunities God gives us today in a wise, shrewd manner.

REFLECTING ON THE WORD

Take a few moments and reflect on what God is speaking to you from His Word today.

THUR.- DON'T GET CAUGHT!

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16 (ESV)

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world.
1 John 2:15-16 (ESV)

Words mean things, but not always what the dictionary says they do! The two passages above both use the same word for love - *agape*. So what's the deal? God can love the world but we can't? This sounds like a huge contradiction, doesn't it?

Not when you realize that words are defined by their context more than by the dictionary. So while *agape* has a certain meaning in the New Testament, **context is king in understanding what it means!**

Clearly, the kind of love that God has for the world is completely different from the kind of love John warns us against. Interesting that the same man uses the same word to mean two completely different things isn't it?

God's love for the world is selfless and led Him to seek and save those that were lost. My love for the world tends to be very selfish, and leads me to get lost in fleshly desires, possessions, pride, and achievement, rather than the things of God.

In short, what John is saying in 1st John is that we must avoid getting all caught up in the things and the spirit or attitude of the world. You'll note that Jesus had no problem avoiding that kind of "love" for the world when He was on earth! He was too busy confronting the world and offending the world and teaching the world and dying to save it to be sucked into it's deceptions.

Not so with most of us! There's more gadgets and goodies than ever before today, and one or more of them has your or my name on it! The physical things of the world lure us into spiritual disaster if we aren't careful because we adopt the attitude of the world, and then we start living to please ourselves instead of living to please God alone!

We can't be light in the darkness if we are embracing and chasing that very darkness ourselves. We must choose to not get caught up in it!

REFLECTING ON THE WORD

Take a few moments and reflect on what God is speaking to you from His Word today.

THUR.- SHREWD IS GOOD

The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. Luke 16:8 (ESV)

The word that Jesus used to describe the manager is translated in various ways. (We aren't told what words others used to describe him, but no doubt they were colorful!). He called "shrewd" (ESV), "clever" (GW), and "prudent" (Darby). The most common word chosen by the translators is shrewd, but what does it mean?

Jesus used the exact same word in several other places. Looking at them can help me understand what it is that Lord wants me to have more of in my life.

"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. Matthew 7:24 (ESV)
"Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Matthew 10:16 (ESV)

The Greek word refers to the skillful adaptation of a means to an end. Or in other words, skillfully using what's available to help you achieve a goal that you have in mind.

That's why shrewd is good! We all have limited resources, whether it's time, money, talent, or knowledge. CCR has very limited financial resources to do all the things we want to do as a church.

So then, to accomplish God's will for our church, we need to be shrewd in how, when, where, and why we spend our money. The same must be true of how we use the talents of our people, etc.

It's *not unspiritual* to educate yourself on how to use your money wisely. It's smart - and was commended by none other than *Jesus Himself!* You don't get any more spiritual than that.

So being decisive is good, and being wise in how you use your resources is even better. When you put the two together, you've really got something! James tells us that wisdom comes from God (James 1:5). So let us ask God for this shrewd kind of wisdom to use the resources He gives us in the very best way possible to accomplish His will!

REFLECTING ON THE WORD

Take a few moments and reflect on what God is speaking to you from His Word today.

FRIDAY - LIGHT IT UP!

"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:14-16 (NIV)

Light, whether it be material or moral, is the best reformer.
- Charles Caleb Colton

How does God respond to the darkness of the world? He doesn't rail against it, even though He is prepared to judge it in the end. Instead of complaining about it like we love to do, God does something radical! He turned on the light!

In fact, He sent His Son into the world as the light, and through His death, burial, and resurrection He gives us the opportunity to become lights ourselves. So rather than one huge light, thanks to Jesus there are now millions of smaller lights scattered across the face of the globe.

That's the entire Christian mission in two words - be light. Jesus said we are the light, and we ought not to hide it, either. No one would hide a candle under a bowl - that makes no sense at all!

Yet most of us hide our light almost every day in ways both great and small.

I think for most of us Christ followers, it's not so much that we're running around being evil! No, we try to live lives that honor God. Yet every day, we hide our light when a door opens, a chance comes along to say or do something that would carry a little bit of light into a dark place, and we fail to do so.

When I choose fear over faith and don't step through those open doors God presents to me, I'm hiding my light under a bowl. I become what I like to call a CC - Chicken Christian - and that's pretty dumb because I know better!

The whole idea behind the SNL Campaign is for us to *be salt and light in the Parker community!* Both as individuals and small groups, to get outside of the church and *shine the light of Jesus' love into the darkness!* How are you doing on that score today?

REFLECTING ON THE WORD

Take a few moments and reflect on what God is speaking to you from His Word today.

WED. - SEIZING THE MOMENT

I have decided what to do, so that when I am removed from management, people may receive me into their houses.'
Luke 16:4 (ESV)

Having sized up his situation, and also having taken a good, long look at himself, the manager now takes decisive action to achieve his long term goal.

That's a good thing!

Here's another commendable thing that the manager does, and is, in large part, why Jesus uses him as an example for all of us to follow.

He seizes the moment and takes action. He's decisive and determined. These are qualities people often lack. But he goes beyond simply being decisive - *he's also far-sighted.*

He has a long term goal in mind and does what he does in order to achieve it. What's his goal? To find another cushy, indoor, management type of job - because he's adverse to manual labor!

Again, his motives aren't that good, but *what* he does is excellent and *we should all learn from it!*

Churches and individual Christians are famous (or infamous really!) for not seizing anything but their fears and confusion! If you want to see the least decisive organization in your town, just go check out your average church, and you'll find it.

We tend to be risk adverse, and so dedicated to making sure nothing bad happens that *nothing happens at all!* It's an odd thing, but in our mania to keep from failing, we often end up not doing any good either. I see believers do that all the time. They spend so much time debating whether or not they ought to do something that they end up doing nothing at all.

Jesus never commended those who played it safe and accomplished nothing! Living by faith is dangerous and full of failed attempts, but that didn't stop anyone in the Bible, and it shouldn't stop us either!

So seize your opportunity today - and step out in faith for Jesus!

REFLECTING ON THE WORD

Take a few moments and reflect on what God is speaking to you from His Word today.

SAT.- SHOW IT UP!

Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible,
Ephesians 5:11-13 (NIV)

Light itself is a great corrective. A thousand wrongs and abuses that are grown in darkness disappear, like owls and bats, before the light of day.
- James Abram Garfield

I've talked about this verse before in this series of devotionals, and it's time to visit it again! Because you can't avoid this whole concept if you are going to take being light in the world seriously. Paul clearly says we are to expose deeds of darkness, and that everything exposed by the light becomes visible.

The big question is, exactly what does that call upon me to do? Am I supposed to be some sort of private eye for God? Is part of being the light of the world being some sort of tattle-tale? Squealing on everyone who does anything wrong?

If you want the short answer to all that, it's simple: **No!**

How do I know this? Because Jesus was the one, perfect light of the world, and He didn't do any of that. He didn't need too - His mere presence seemed to disturb people enough that they would reveal their true selves. And if that wasn't enough, certainly His teachings upset people to the point that they were provoked into showing the darkness that lay hiding in their hearts.

That's the kind of exposing we're talking about here! We should reflect Jesus love, power, presence, and holiness so strongly that our mere presence causes the darkness to withdraw, thus exposing what had been hidden before.

Being a Pastor is a strange experience. Many people avoid me because they see me as "God's Representative" on earth - I'm the original member of the Church Police! Yet very often those same people will eventually come to me and confess all sorts of dark secrets that no one else knows.

It's the light of Christ that both repels and attracts them. It puts them on the spot and makes them choose. That's *our* mission in the world, to light it up, and then welcome those who flee the darkness for the light!

REFLECTING ON THE WORD

Take a few moments and reflect on what God is speaking to you from His Word today.

TUE. - KNOWING MYSELF & MY SITUATION

And the manager said to himself, 'What shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. Luke 16:3 (ESV)

"A man's got to know his limitations." - Dirty Harry!

This guy may have been a scoundrel, but he was a *smart one!* Did you notice how he reacted to his impending unemployment?

He was honest about his situation.

He doesn't deny it, he takes a good look at himself and accepts it!

He was honest with himself about himself!

The manager was not, as we would say today, in denial. He had a clear view of his liabilities. He was also wise enough not to lie to himself about them.

"I am not strong enough to dig." He might have looked in the mirror and realized, "Hey, I'm fat and lazy and out of shape! No way I'm going to cut it as a manual laborer!"

He was wise enough to accept his physical limitations. Everyone has them, and as we age we get more of them! We need to remember Dirty Harry's wisdom. "I am ashamed to beg." The manager also admitted he was a proud man, and didn't want to end up on the street, living under a bridge somewhere!

This frank evaluation of himself is refreshing to read, and I believe it is one of the reasons he's commended by Jesus. The fact he has such a firm grip on his strengths and weaknesses is a good thing. All of us ought to be able to do the same, but ,sadly, most of us either can't or won't.

Christians delude themselves about their own selves and their situation regularly. Trust me, as a Pastor, *I know!* Today, ask God to help you see yourself as you are - then ask someone else you know and trust to given you an honest evaluation of yourself. *But don't ask if you don't really want to know - and aren't prepared for a little pain!*

REFLECTING ON THE WORD

Take a few moments and reflect on what God is speaking to you from His Word today.

SUNDAY - STEP IT UP!

For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world— our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? 1 John 5:4-5 (ESV)

"*You need to overcome the tug of people against you as you reach for high goals."* - General George S. Patton

What does it mean to overcome? It means to win! That ought to appeal to most Americans! As the above quoted Patton famously said, "Americans hate to lose." Good news - in Christ, we have victory in our spiritual battles!

The victory over the world *was*, potentially, won when we believed in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. —Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament

John reinforced this line of thinking when he said*, Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.* 1 John 4:4 (ESV)

Stepping it up means I've got to put together everything we've talked about all week! I have to have a clear, Biblical view of the world, and of my place in it. I have to know I'm a light, and start living like it!

I overcome the world when I put my faith in Christ, cling to Him and the victory He won over death and hell on the cross, and never, ever let go!

Jesus is calling all of us to step it up! A new year is coming, and we need to decide now that we're going to live larger for God in this new year than we've ever done before!

Lord, I'll take that step of faith You've set before me, I'll trust You to take that fear that's been tearing me down, I'll get real about that hidden sin, and get the help I need to deal with it. I'll do whatever it takes to step up my game for You Lord.

Why? Because living for Jesus is the only game worth playing! That's because it's not a game at all, it's a glorious reality, a painful struggle, a desperate need in my soul, and, finally, it's just the truth! The call to step it up has been issued - how will I respond today?

REFLECTING ON THE WORD

Take a few moments and reflect on what God is speaking to you from His Word today.

MON. - A VERY ODD EXAMPLE

He also said to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his possessions. And he called him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be manager.' Luke 16:1-2 (ESV)

We're going to spend this week looking at one of Jesus's oddest parables. Oh yes, it's odd alright! Any time you have a parable of Jesus titled something like "The parable of the dishonest (or shrewd) manager," you know you've got something!

Because it's at odds with what we expect Jesus to say, we don't really pay much attention to it. This parable isn't very well known at all. But when people find it, boy do they have questions! What's going on in this story, what did the guy do, and why did he do it?

But there are two main questions people tend to ask:

Why would Jesus use a dishonest man as an example of how we should act?

This isn't the kind of story that Jesus should have told; it can give people the wrong ideas!

Interesting how we just love to tell God what He ought to be doing and saying, isn't it?

Jesus was not a "goodie two shoes!" He wasn't unaware of evil in the world, or of how dishonest and underhanded people can be! He knew - and knows - all about it!

The point that we miss is it's really true that God never wastes *anything,* and, if we are wise, we will learn from *everything* going on around us! That's why I'm such a big believer in reading biographies, and not just Christian ones either. Read about the lives of historically important men and women, and learn both from their successes and their mistakes as well.

There is much we can learn from the lives and acts of everyone around us, if we refuse to give into our fears or to retreat into a monastic type of faith. To be the light of the world we must *shine!* So let's take advantage of *everything around us* to become more like Jesus!

REFLECTING ON THE WORD

Take a few moments and reflect on what God is speaking to you from His Word today.

Week

Seven