

Journey Into God's Word



II Kings 18-25

Ezekiel 1-11

I Corinthians 1-16

Dear Friend,

God has special things in store for you. Discover what they are by studying His Word. Do you feel insignificant, incapable? Then know that “God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things – the things that are not – to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before Him. It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God – that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.” (I Cor. 1:27-30) Ezekiel’s dynamic calling is an example of how God can do extraordinary things through ordinary people. (Ezekiel 2,3) Hezekiah, facing impossible odds, prayed and God delivered him and his nation. (II Kings 19) There are so many great things that God has in store for you if only you will dare to believe what He has to say to you as you study His Word.

“I always thank God for you because of His grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in Him you have been enriched in every way – in all your speaking and in all your knowledge – because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you. Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, who has called you into fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ our Lord is faithful.” (I Cor. 1:4-9) As you think about these verses, what do they mean to you personally?

As we proceed to experience God’s mighty Word and work within us, it is critical that we understand this important appeal that Paul makes to each of us when he says. “I appeal to you, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.” (I Cor. 1:10) Working in unity is absolutely essential if we are going to be the dynamic, productive, effective people

God has called us to be. In **I Cor. 12** we have the different parts of the human body given as the example of how we as members of the body of Christ are to function. Please read this chapter carefully and describe in detail how we are supposed to act as members of this body?

If we are going to be all that God is calling us to be, it is essential that we get our priorities straight. In response to the world's emphasis on human wisdom, **I Cor. 1:25** declares, "the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength." Desiring to have God at work in his life, Paul went on and declared, "For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power." (I Cor. 2:2-5) What a contrast to so much of the arrogance and human pride that is portrayed as spiritual power today! Josiah, King of Judah, heard the Word of God, humbled himself and sought the Lord. As a result God tells him, "Because your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before the Lord when you heard what I have spoken against this place and its people, that they would become accursed and laid waste, and because you tore your robes and wept in My presence, I have heard you, declares the Lord." (II Kings 22:19)

Are you ready for the mighty work that God desires to do in your life? "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him." (I Cor. 2:9) Please examine I Cor. 3:1-4 and note how jealousy and quarreling can prevent God's work from taking place in your life? You are also reminded that "you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you. If anyone destroy God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple." (I Cor. 3:16, 17) Our bodies are a gift of God and must not be destroyed as a result of sin. "Therefore as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, because you have defiled my sanctuary with your vile images and detestable practices, I Myself will withdraw My favor;" (Ezekiel 5:11) "Repent! Turn away from all your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall. Rid yourself of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit." (Ezekiel 18:30-31) The Word of God brings conviction. When this conviction is acted upon under the work of the Holy Spirit, conversion is the result followed by a newfound commitment to serving Jesus Christ. How we need God to remove the idols from our hearts and mind. An idol is anything that set itself up in importance above God and His will for our lives. "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Do not be deceived:

Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the Kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” (I Cor. 6:9) “Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.” (I Cor. 6:18,19) What are the above two verses saying to you about your personal life? What changes do you think need to be made? True conversion results in changes in our lives. What was the result of Josiah’s conversion as described in II Kings 23:1-25?

What instructions are given for Christian marriage in I Cor.7? However, instructions and knowledge are not enough. It is action resulting in love that really counts. “We know that we all possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.” (I Cor. 8:1) Please read carefully I Cor.13 and write out what love is according to that chapter. Love involves a passion to see the lost receive eternal life through Jesus Christ. “Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me. What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make use of my rights in preaching it. Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible.”(I Cor. 9:16 –19) Talk about love! Paul goes on and says. “To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men, so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.” (I Cor. 9:22,23) What example do verses 24-27 of this chapter give, illustrating the fact that we can’t afford to give up in this labor of love? “So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall! No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can stand up under it. Therefore, my dear friends flee from idolatry.” (I Cor. 10:11-14) The idolatry many are engaging in today does not involve bowing down before wood or stone idols. Today’s idols take the form of green paper bills. Plastic credit cards, new houses, cars etc. Modern idols are those symbols of power, prestige, and pleasure. It involves recognition, notoriety and position. Idols can involve addictions to everything from excessive eating, to drinking, etc. That is why we are told to “flee from idolatry.”

The decisions we make today will directly influence our future. That is why we need God's Word to direct us. Scripture, over and over, calls for us to return to the Living God as we remove all "vile images and detestable idols" in our lives. As this happens God declares, "I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh." (Ezekiel 11:18,19) People with hearts of stone fill our churches, giving Jesus lip service as they live lives that are totally indifferent to the needs of the hurting and homeless. They have eyes to see but do not see and ears to hear but do not hear." (Eze. 12:1) "These people have set up idols in their hearts and put wicked stumbling blocks before their faces." (Ezekiel 14:3) To such God declares, "Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom. She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before Me. Therefore I did away with them as you have seen." (Eze. 16:49,50) These are times in which the love of many is growing cold when it comes to helping those in need. Prayer warriors of caring, courageous people are needed at this time. Such individuals through their prayers stand in the gap between the indifferent people and the wrath of God. They intercede like Moses did as they directly confront the powerful and indifferent of their sins against the poor. How does Ezekiel describe this conspiracy in Ezekiel 22:25,26? How relevant these words are today as the rich developers, in cooperation with the politicians, which their money has put in power, gobble up the housing of the poor. "Her officials within her are like wolves tearing their prey; they shed blood and kill people to make unjust gain. Her prophets whitewash these deeds for them by false visions and lying divinations." (Ezekiel 22:27, 28) Where are the people of God? Where are the believers who will courageously come forth at such a time like this? "The people of the land practice extortion and commit robbery; they oppress the poor and needy and mistreat the alien (homeless), denying them justice. I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before Me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none, So I will pour out my wrath on them and consume them with My fiery anger, bringing down on their own heads all they have done, declares the Sovereign Lord." (Ezekiel 22:29-31)

Remember when I stated earlier that God has special things in store for you? As we study the scriptures, we have seen how He desires for you to be a prayer warrior, a soul winner, and one who stands for justice and morality. There are so many things the Lord desires to do in us and through us if we will only trust in Him. As you read I Cor.14, please note the spiritual gifts God desires to give you. Remember the greatest gift of all is our Resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. Because of Jesus "death has been swallowed up in victory. 'Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain." (I Cor. 15:54-58) Christ is Risen. He desires to work in you and through you. Do you know that your "labor in the Lord is not in vain"?

God is working in you and through you. Therefore "be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be people of courage; be strong. Do everything in love." (I Cor. 16:13,14) Please join me this week as we read I Chronicles 1-9, Ezekiel 25-32 and II Corinthians 1-13. As we study this wonderful living Word of God, please pay careful attention to II Cor. 5:17 which has been a key verse in the work of New Life Evangelistic Center now for over 33 years. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come." Let us now go forth in this newness of life provided through our Resurrected Lord Jesus Christ, sharing in Word and Deed that there is hope in every situation for Christ is Risen.

Your brother in Christ

Larry Rice