



# Large and

# In Charge

**Omniallinfinitude™**  
begin - return - continue

Journey Four  
M.A. Helland

*"**OMNIALINFINITUDE™** builds a bridge on which my head and my heart can shake hands. It combines deep principles with ancient practices, and is a pathway to knowing God in order to love Him. I encourage you to walk the path; cross the bridge."*

*Dr. Jim Altizer  
Azusa Pacific University*



# Large and In Charge

## *journey elements*

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# what comes to your mind?

## Large and In Charge

It seems there's always been someone bigger - telling us what to do -  
Dad or Mom, and older siblings,

Then teachers, playground bullies, coaches, cops and bosses,  
And even self-help gurus, TV commentators, internet bloggers and politicians.

They tell us how to act and vote; where to live; what to eat, buy and think; how much to pay; and who to hang out with.

They have the power to take our money, our children, our jobs, our spirits, and our lives.

We think of Generals, and Tyrants,  
Bouncers and Bodyguards,  
Presidents and CEO's,  
Gang Leaders and King Makers,  
All potential Knights in Shining Armor - the Leaders of the Pack.

We look to them for rescue and protection, provision and inspiration.  
But often all we get is restriction, and intimidation, dependence, and desperation.

Fear breeds suspicion, so we keep our heads down  
Hoping to survive, as we wait for the other shoe to drop - on us.

We pray for somebody, anybody, who will lead from the front,  
Sacrificing themselves, taking ownership and making the tough decisions,

Instead - we get thrown under the bus, while they blame others and make excuses  
We yearn for someone to rise to the occasion, someone good in a crisis,  
Instead - we get "Off with their Heads" and "My Way or the Highway",  
While they cover up and try to be all things to all people - at least for the photo ops.

We don't need the Wizard of Oz,  
We need a real King!

One who looks out for our best interests, who will be the wind beneath our wings,  
One who will fight for us, empower us, believe in us -  
Not use us, chew us up and spit us out, tossing us aside when we serve no further purpose.  
Holding us down, holding us back, keeping us under their thumbs.

Next to Large - we feel small and inadequate, powerless, insignificant.  
If we're not In Charge - we get nervous, fearful, stubborn, and selfish.  
But what if there's One who really is concerned about us,  
What's beneficial for us, what's best for us  
Who knows where we're going and what we'll need to get there?

Who has only goodwill towards us and is oh - so - patient.  
He lets us learn the hard way - that our way.....is not always the right way.  
And then....He gets in the way - in order to show us the way.

He's everything we ever wanted, and needed, and hoped for.  
He has no competition - The Buck Stops with Him.  
He has the Final Word - and presides over the Court of Last Resort.  
He is Large and In Charge. And we're not - and that's a good thing.

# remember

## Jeremiah 29:11

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future." NIV



Use the space below to help you memorize the verse above.

For additional background on the *remember* element, see the [appendix](#).

**Now write out the verses from:**

**Journey 1: Psalm 145:3**

**Journey 2: Exodus 3: 14a**

**Journey 3: Revelation 1:8**

# read

## Psalms 23, 24, 91, 139



Read through each chapter completely on three separate days, the first day in a **modern translation** such as the *NIV* or *NAS*, the second in a **modern paraphrase** such as *The New Living* (NLT) or *The Message*, and then the third **with a pad and pencil** by your side as you record your thoughts and observations. It is also helpful to **read the selections aloud**. As you read, underline words that describe who God is or names He is called.

This element is about **reading what it says** – try to put aside any preconceived ideas about what you think it says, or what you may have concluded based on other studies or classes. We are not saying those ideas are not correct, but for this Element, we just want to read it as if for the first time. **Read for the storyline** – and see if you can then faithfully retell it in your own words.

**First Reading:** Modern Translation – which one did you use?

**Second Reading:** Modern Paraphrase – which one did you use?

**Third Reading:** Reading Notes

Psalm 23:

Psalm 24:

Psalm 91:

Psalm 139:

Descriptions of God:

Names Used for God:

# journal

## 4.1 Collision Course

Let's catch up... **God**, the transcendent One, has **revealed Himself** to us  
He's left **Proof of Life** everywhere – Otherwise known as general revelation.

**We choose What** we believe **and How** we respond to this revelation  
This becomes our **Worldview** – whether we realize it or not.  
Our Worldview impacts all areas of our life.

Because **General Revelation** can only take us as far as **Theism**  
– the belief in One God –  
God provided The Bible – the Word of God.

**The Bible reveals the Rest of the Story** – God's Special Revelation to Us -  
ALL we need to know about the Triune, Almighty, One and Only God of Christianity.

**The Bible is true**, grounded in history, trustworthy, unique and accurate.

The probability that the prophecies it records would come true (which they have) is astronomical.  
It's **inspired by God** and as such it becomes **worthy of study and belief**.

Our journey so far has revealed that the **transcendent One and Only God** – the God of the Bible – is also **infinite, eternal, immutable and omnipresent**.



Or in simpler words, He exists beyond and outside of time and space, there are no limits to any of his attributes.

We live in space traveling through time. He created both and lives beyond them - which allows Him to be everywhere at the same time, in all time. He never changes because change comes within time.

That brings us to this point. Now we start to get personal as **God's attributes and our lives collide**.

### *Your turn:*

In what ways have you experienced or do you believe God impacts your life?

Of the attributes of God we have studied so far, which one has caused your view of God to change the most?

Explain the concept that all the attributes apply to all the other attributes. Can you give a few examples?





Pick a couple of verses from the same Psalm. Ask and answer your own "Do I?" questions. (See examples at the bottom of the page).

Your verses:

Your questions and answers:

Example: Psalms 91: 2 - **I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge, and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."**

Is this true for me?

Do I say this of the Lord?

How is He my refuge and fortress?

How Do I trust in Him?

Example: Psalms 139: 17-18 - **How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you.**

Is this true for me?

Do I even think about God's thoughts?

What do I think about when I first wake in the morning?

# journal

## 4.2 Control Freaks

Ahh.... Freedom. We all yearn for it, demand it, try to control it, fight for it....we protest for it, even die for it. **We are all control freaks**...We were **created with free will** – the ability to choose, to go our own way, to be stubborn, to make the same mistake over and over, to not listen to the benefit of other's wisdom, and to suffer the **logical consequences** of our actions.....

And then there is God – who has the **ultimate freedom to do what He wills**, unhindered. No one can compel Him or stop Him. He does not need permission – all authority is His, it all belongs to Him, He can do what He wants with it. It's His stuff.

**Yes, He is in control and He has a Plan** – the only plan and He is working it. He governs His creation **like a King** but provides sustenance and love **like a Father**. He establishes rules and laws and rewards and punishments.

**Yet, His Sovereignty is tempered by his grace, love and mercy as well as his wrath and justice.** He is permissive, long suffering, but in the end, His holiness will win out. He is Absolutely Sovereign and this **requires all authority, power, knowledge and wisdom.**

Of all the attributes, we have the most trouble with this one because we want to be in control over our own lives and think we know better. And so the **battle between the Free Will of man and the Sovereignty of God** continues.

Who is really in control?

Are there limits on our free will – the amount of good or evil we can create?

Since we are finite beings there are limits to the havoc we can cause. But as great as our ability is to effect evil, so is our ability to do good. And yet, **we are only free to exercise our free will because God IS in total control.** A God less than sovereign would be afraid to let us do so.

Remember....free will is only **the freedom to choose** which side we will be on, but not the freedom to negotiate the results of that choice. We may repent a wrong choice and alter the consequences by making a new choice. But that is as far as we can go.

**Human choices can never obstruct the purposes of a sovereign God.** Amazingly enough, He uses the free choices of humans to accomplish His purposes.

### *Your turn:*

What kinds of things cause you to doubt whether God is sovereign? Why?

In what ways do we judge God's sovereignty and control? What information or perspective does He have that we don't?

If we really believed God is sovereign, how would our behavior change?





# investigate

## Sovereign and Omnipotent

**Define:** Write a brief definition next to each of the above words using a regular dictionary, not a Bible dictionary. (Click on any word to link to

dictionary.com)

∞ [Sovereign](#)

∞ [Rule](#)

∞ [Providence](#)

∞ [Authority](#)

∞ [Will](#)

∞ [Control](#)

∞ [Almighty](#)

∞ [Omnipotent](#)

∞ [Create](#)

∞ [Power](#)

∞ [Knowledge](#)

∞ [Information](#)

∞ [Omniscience](#)

∞ [Wisdom](#)

∞ [Discretion](#)

∞ [Discernment](#)

Now write your own definition for **Large and In Charge** below:

**Review:**

Read the scriptures below and then make two lists, **What God Knows** and **What God Can Do**, in the columns below.

Deut. 32: 39-41

Job 21: 22

Job 33: 26

Job 42: 2

Psalms 33: 9-10. 13-15

Psalms 94: 11

Psalms 135: 6-12

Psalms 139: 1-4, 13-14

Psalms 147: 5

Proverbs 3: 19-20

Isaiah 42:16

Isaiah 44: 6-8

Isaiah 45: 7, 12-13

Isaiah 46: 9-10

Daniel 2: 21-22

Daniel 4: 35

Amos 5: 8

Nahum 1: 3-5

Mark 10: 27

Luke 1: 37

John 21: 17

Acts 17: 26

I Cor. 2: 11

Ephesians 1: 19-20

Ephesians 3: 10-11

2 Timothy 2:19

Hebrews 1: 3

Hebrews 4:13

**What God Knows**

**What God Can Do**

*Conclude:*

What does God know in general?

What does God know about mankind?

What does God know about you?

What can God do in general?

What can God do with respect to mankind?

What can God do with respect to you?

# 10 things

## Large and In Charge

1. **El Shadday** is the Hebrew name for God translated God Almighty, the one for whom nothing is impossible. The literal translation is "God, the Mountain One" and just like the mountains, God is seen as strong and unchanging. God is not only seen as the creator and maintainer of the universe, but also the One who keeps His promises to his people.<sup>1</sup>
2. **Adonay** is the Hebrew name for God translated Sovereign Lord or Lord God. This is the God of all power and strength, the One who is in charge, who sees the beginning from the end, who watches over us, sustains us, and knows what is best for us.<sup>2</sup>
3. **There are some things God cannot do.** He cannot lie, tempt us to do evil, or deny Himself. He cannot do anything that is inconsistent with His nature and purposes.
4. **J. I. Packer** - "Wisdom without power would be pathetic...power without wisdom would be frightening. God's wisdom is not and never was pledged to keep a fallen world happy, or to make ungodliness comfortable."<sup>3</sup>
5. **A. W. Tozer** - "Because God knows all things perfectly, He knows no thing better than any other but all things equally well. He never discovers anything. He is never surprised, never amazed. He never wonders about anything nor (except when drawing men out for their own good) does He seek information or ask questions."<sup>4</sup>
6. **Stephen Charnock** - "The power of God is that ability and strength whereby He can bring to pass whatsoever He pleases, whatsoever His infinite wisdom may direct....God's power is like Himself: infinite, eternal, incomprehensible; it can neither be checked, restrained or frustrated by man."<sup>5</sup>
7. **Arthur W. Pink** - "Before man can work he must have both his tools and materials, but God began with nothing, and by his word alone out of nothing made all things."<sup>6</sup>
8. **David L. Hocking** - "The circumstances of our lives are all known to Him, not only in terms of the event that is happening, but also in terms of why it happens."<sup>7</sup>
9. **A. W. Tozer** - "Science observes how the power of God operates, discovers a regular pattern somewhere and fixes it as a "law". The trustworthiness of God's behavior in his world is the foundation of all scientific truth...Religion, on the other hand, goes back to the nature of God and is concerned with the One who is the source of all things, the master of every phenomenon."<sup>8</sup>
10. **Wisdom is choosing the right means to the right end for the right reason.** In God's case it involves infinite power, knowledge and all authority. He never needs to ask permission or apologize for making a "mistake". His ultimate Glory and our ultimate Good are His eternal purposes.

### Your turn:

Pick one or two of the above quotes or statements and share any insights or challenges it presents to you.

# journal

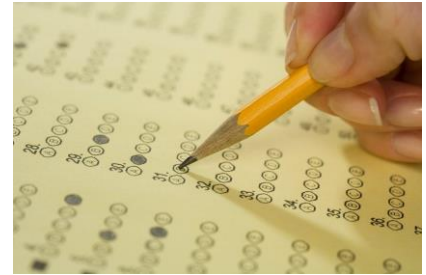
## 4.3 Well, What do you Know?

**God knows it all** – everything, He’s **omniscient**. He knows the future and the purposes of everything in all time and beyond. He knows you and me and Himself perfectly. He has all the answers, all the time. **He knows Why** and the answer to every question you’ve ever asked. He also knows those who belong to Him, the true believers, as well as every sin ever committed, and everything we have ever done or thought or will do or think. He knows what is going on in the spiritual realms and He knows what is going on in Heaven. All knowledge belongs to Him. (1 Cor. 2:11, I John 3:20, Ps. 139:1-4, Acts 1:24, Jer.16:17, 2 Tim. 2:19)

**God can also do anything**, anytime, anywhere. He is **omnipotent**, all powerful. Nothing is too hard for Him. He doesn’t need our help. However, He only acts in ways that are consistent with His nature – He only does what is meaningful and possible. (Matt.4:1-11)

You could say there are some things God does not do - ever:

- Lie – Titus 1:1-3, Heb. 6:18
- Sin - Hebrews 4:15
- Sleep – Ps. 121:1-8
- Deny Himself – 2 Tim. 2:13 (go against His nature)
- Break His promises – Heb. 6:17-18, Romans 4:21
- Become tired or exhausted – Isaiah 40:28-31
- Make mistakes, change His mind – Numbers 23:19



**Wisdom is choosing the right means to the right ends for the right reasons** and requires the ability to see the end from the beginning and everything in proper relation and focus. **No one can do this like God**. An all powerful, all knowing God adds His perfect wisdom, then creates both the means and the ends worthy of Himself. He orders events to obtain the highest goals and purposes with flawless perfection.

**The Goal of His wisdom** is to order the events of our lives for a double purpose:

- **Our Good** –reclaiming the image of God in our being - Rom. 8:28
- **His Glory** – fulfilling our appointed purpose in the lives of people of God - I Cor.10:31

The question then becomes, not so much can He do it, but will He do it? **The “can” is omnipotence, the “will” is wisdom**. Perfect Power used with Perfect Knowledge governed by Perfect Wisdom allows a Sovereign God to rule his creation.....perfectly.

### *Your turn:*

If we really believed God is omnipotent, how would it change our behavior?

Once again, if we really believed God is omniscient, how would it change our behavior?

And finally, if we really believed God was all wise how would it change our behavior?



# practice

## Simplicity and Slowing

### Simplicity – Focusing on the One Thing



Before we discover what Simplicity is, we need to rule out what it isn't.  
 It is not The Simple Life.  
 It is not selling all your possessions and living in a cave somewhere.  
 It is not taking a vow of poverty.  
 It is not asceticism.

#### Seek First:

It is focusing on the Kingdom of God, living out Matt 6: 33, **“Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well.”** It provides perspective, focus and the ability to prioritize between many good things. Nothing comes before the Kingdom of God in a lifestyle of simplicity. We simply cannot serve two masters.

#### Visibility:

Simplicity is one of the most visible practices and as such, becomes open to corruption, temptation, and legalism. We tend to focus more on what others are doing, or not doing outwardly, and make judgments as to motives, when we have no idea what is going on. Just because someone has been blessed by God with wealth or riches, should not cause them any guilt or any condemnation from others. It is the inner attitude that governs the use of the riches that determines whether simplicity is in force.

#### Material Struggle:

Simplicity reveals our struggle with the materialism in our society. If we don't have it, we want it. If we have it, we want more of it, or a newer model. We need to begin to pay attention to why we have things, and try to stop using them to gratify any desire for status, control, or luxury.

#### Trust Issues:

Who or what are we trusting in? Our bank accounts, stocks, retirement plans, jewelry, cars, homes, balance sheets? Or the One who has provided us with all we have?

#### Where do we start?

Simplicity is a lifestyle attitude and will often only be known to you and God. Here are some ways to begin to refocus on the One thing. Give it time.

1. The next time you want to buy something nonessential, stop and pray about it. Ask God to either provide it for you or to take away the desire for it. Then wait and see what happens. What happened?





## Slowing – Obtaining the Unhurried Life

### Learning to Wait:

This is the practice of cultivating patience by deliberately choosing to place ourselves in positions where we have to wait.

We have become slaves to the pace of our culture, which with the advent of time saving technology has allowed us to fill our lives with ever increasing demands to go faster so we can get more done, faster, so we can then do more things, faster.

As a result, we have less free time, we are scheduled to the hilt with no margins or buffers for the unexpected, we are unavailable, distracted, multitasked to death, stressed, frazzled, impatient, angry and afraid.

### Unavailable in More Ways than One:

We would all agree that life is more than just hurrying from one task to another, but in reality we have no idea how to make it work in our own lives.

Hurry is one of the great enemies of spiritual life. We have no time for God, our families, other people, for unexpected emergencies or for unexpected encounters with God.

We aren't looking, listening or paying attention. There is no time to help. We are unavailable. The Do Not Disturb sign is on the door.

### Where do we start?

Here are some suggestions of ways to practice Slowing during this journey unit. Pick a couple and try to do them as often as possible. Record your actions and reactions.

1. Drive in the slow lane for the entire week.
2. Chew each bite of food 15 times before swallowing.
3. Get in the longest line at the grocery store and then let someone go ahead of you.
4. Don't wear your watch for a whole day.
5. Review your calendar or schedule and see if you can plan to leave an entire day or evening with nothing to do. See what God has planned for that time.
6. Plan realistically. Say no if there is no realistic way for you to add something into your schedule. Take into consideration prep time, driving time, time to get ready, etc.
7. Spend an entire day or evening without using any time saving technology such as microwave, dishwasher, cell phone, computer, tv, tablet, email, etc.
8. Do something spur of the moment.

### Personal Reflections on Slowing:

1. What did you notice about your response to participating in any of the activities above?



# why?

## Simplicity and Slowing

**Paul** – “Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”  
Phil. 3: 13-14

**St. Antony** – “...both those who have lived in modest circumstances and those who had wealth and fame, leave this life like an inn, taking with them no worldly comforts or riches, but only what they have done in this life, whether it be good or bad.”<sup>9</sup>

**Dallas Willard** – “Riches are not holy, riches are not evil. They are creations we are to use for God.”<sup>10</sup>

**Richard Foster** – “Simplicity is the only thing that sufficiently reorients our lives so that possessions can be genuinely enjoyed without destroying us. Without simplicity we will either capitulate to the “mammon” spirit of this present evil age, or we will fall into an un-Christian asceticism. Both lead to idolatry. Both are spiritually lethal.”<sup>11</sup>

### Wealth is not for spiritual neophytes.

**John Ortberg** – “We have largely traded wisdom for information, depth for breadth. We want to microwave maturity.”<sup>12</sup>

**Meyer Friedman** - “Hurry sickness is, above all, a continuous struggle and unremitting attempt to accomplish or achieve more and more things or participate in more and more events in less and less time, frequently in the face of opposition, real or imagined from other persons.”<sup>13</sup>

**John Ortberg** – “Hurry is a disordered heart”.<sup>14</sup>

**Busyness boosts our self-esteem.** We think it proves how needed, significant and important we are. We wear it like a badge of honor.

**There will be seasons of busyness,** but they should be short lived and the exception rather than the rule.

### The opposite of simplicity is anxiety.

**Jesus** – “Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”  
Luke 10: 41-42

## Your turn:

Pick one or two of the above quotes or statements and share any insights or challenges it presents to you.

# journal

## 4.4 The Big “But”....

Wait for it....It always comes up.....

**The big question...**

“But what about \_\_\_\_\_?”:

- The Holocaust, Stalin, Hiroshima and Nagasaki
- The Killing Fields of Cambodia,
- Bosnia, Rwanda, the Sudan
- Earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, drought, famine
- Katrina and 911, terrorism, pandemics, lockdowns
- Saddam Hussein, Pol Pot, Idi Amin
- Aids, Cancer, Poverty, Hunger, Homelessness, Mental Illness
- Divorce, Infidelity, Lies, Bankruptcy, Debt, Homelessness
- Rape, Child Abuse, Domestic Violence, Murder, Serial Killers
- Crime, Greed, War, Corruption, Slander
- Hatred, Death, Destruction, Addiction, Despair, Suicide???
- Fill in your own example of evil



**What about evil** - if God is Sovereign?

Here are the common questions:

- If God is all-powerful why did he create a world with evil in it?
- Why can't God just stop evil and keep people from suffering?
- What has God done about evil?
- Obviously God is not really in control, or if He is allowing it, He must not be loving or good.
- Who can believe in a God like that?

The answers to these questions begin at the beginning in Genesis. So why didn't God create a world without evil? He did. – **Originally creation was good** – it was paradise. (Gen. 1-2) There are no evil molecules or matter – and that is still true today.



(c) Don Mason/CORBIS

Then He created mankind. And **Mankind** wasn't just good, they were **very good** – Gen. 1:31

Made in God's image, with high intellect and reasoning capacity, mankind was the **crown of His creation** and He gave them something very special that nothing else in creation had. Gen 1:27

He created them with **Free Will** – the ability to choose, to make moral decisions – ultimately offering them the ability to experience the highest good – choosing to love and obey God, living with Him forever in paradise.

But – **one thing, only one thing, were they told Not to do** – eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. If they did this, they would die. They were warned. They already had access to the Tree of Life, which provided them everything they needed for life with God. Gen.2:16-17

You know the story – all was paradise until the serpent approached Eve with his lies and convinced her it was ok to eat of the very tree God had forbidden. The serpent appealed to her desires as well as demeaning God’s true motives. As heaven watched, she took that fateful bite. Gen. 3

And moral evil entered the world. Evil was not God’s choice for them.

**Our Free Will became the beginning of our Free Fall.**

God didn’t create evil - but the potential had to be there. By choosing it, man created it. And what was the result? – spiritual separation from God because of that one sin - for all mankind to come.

Thank God this is not the end of the story.

*Your turn:*

What is your first response when you run up against or become aware of something evil?

How do you determine if something is evil or not?

What are some of the ways evil impacts your life and the world? How does it manifest itself?

Some people are enticed by evil – why do you think that is?

Our free will always allows us to choose and then live with the consequences. Does the devil make us do it? Are there any excuses or extenuating circumstances that would justify evil actions? How could you stand against evil?

Evil masquerades as good. Name some things that used to be considered evil that are now portrayed positively and even championed.



# inventory

## Your Stuff

Take a walk around your room or home. Look in all closets and drawers, your car, your purse or briefcase.

What do you have too much of?



What do you need more of?

What do you need to replace? Why?

Is there something you don't have at all that you need?

Is there anything you could throw away or give away?

List 5 of your most precious things and why

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

List 5 of your most necessary things and why

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Would you rather have less at higher quality or more at lesser quality?

What thing would you struggle the most with giving away to someone who needed it more than you? Any insights as to why?

# journal

## 4.5 Look in the Mirror

Once again you ask:  
So why doesn't God just wipe evil off the face of the earth?

Because **to wipe out evil would be to wipe out free will**. We would cease to be human, the crown of creation.

We would be robots or puppets or cause and effect machines with no control over our actions, only the fittest would survive.

**God wants us to freely choose to be in a loving relationship with Him – the Highest Good, which also opens up the possibility for us to reject Him – the Greatest Evil.**

We all understand you can't force someone to love you. Without the possibility of experiencing the greatest evil we could not have the possibility of experiencing the greatest good.

**Love does not coerce, true love requires free choice.** Free will is the ability to make an unforced decision between two or more alternatives. That decision will actualize the potential for good or evil.

When people reject God's love, they affirm the potential for evil within themselves, which then affects every other relationship they enter.



God created a universe where the greatest good is feasible – but to do this, humans had to be created with the ability to choose or reject it.

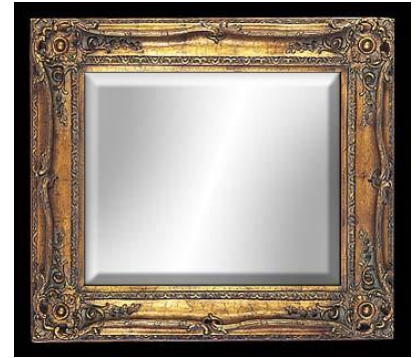
**If we really want God to stop evil, we need to ask Him to begin with us.** It's time to take a good long look in the mirror.

### *Your turn:*

Explain how most of the time we live in denial about evil.

What are some ways you could stand against evil, both inwardly and outwardly?

What are some of the ways societies and governments seek to combat evil?



# adventuring

## Clean Sweep

This week you do not have to leave your home or workplace.

We are going to simplify our lives by cleaning out or straightening up something around us. It could be as big a job as an entire room or garage, or as simple as a desktop or junk drawer. Maybe you need to go through a pile of papers or mail, or organize a sock drawer. Maybe it would be nice to actually park your car in your garage.

Whatever you choose, start by removing everything from the area you are working on.

Then clean the area thoroughly.

Now, only put back into the space what you are keeping or what belongs there.

There should be stuff left over. Make three piles.

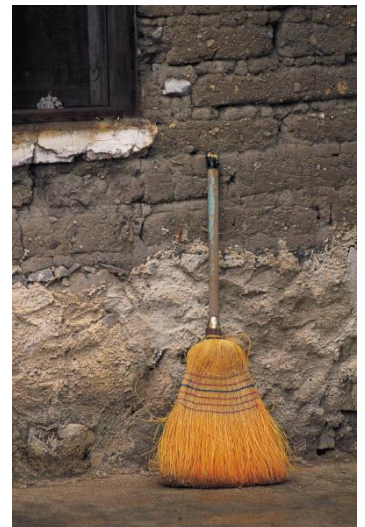
1. Things you want to keep but belong somewhere else (Put them where they belong)
2. Things to give away or sell
3. Things to throw away – do it now before you change your mind.

So, how does it look?

How do you feel?

What did you learn?

What will you do differently in the future?



# journal

## 4.6 It's Not Over - 'til it's Over

To be  
continued...

What does God know about evil that we don't?

In the Bible God shows us that **evil will be a fact of life** in this world. We will have trials and tribulations. (John 16:33) We should not be surprised, but prepared. He also promises to Deliver Us from Evil. He knows it is **only a temporary situation**. (Matt. 6:13) This world is not all there is – He knows how the story ends.

So, what is He waiting for?

God also knew that **someone had to pay the penalty** for that first wrong choice so it could be reversed. He hasn't completely dealt with evil in the world yet because **He is not done** extending grace to humanity.

Remember He is outside of Time and sees things from a perspective we do not have. He is patiently waiting for us.

2 Peter 3:8-9 says "**But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.**" NIV

**His answer to suffering** is not an answer.  
It's **a person**.

The Answerer, someone able to make the payment for sin and be the example on how to handle suffering. His solution is forgiveness and he models it for us. (John 8:1-11, Matt 22:15-22)

To love evil is to succumb to it, but to hate evil is also to succumb to it. Our natural response is to get payback, seek revenge, plot, set boundaries so it doesn't happen again, make rules, condemn and control, and then self-righteousness and legalism seep in.

Our hearts become hardened, and evil ends up winning momentarily – but not forever.

**Forgiveness neither condemns nor condones.**

It admits evil is evil and sets the sinner free. Action is required on our side. We must repent, turn around and go the other way – back to God and away from evil. Everyone needs to do this.  
**Not one of us can survive evil without God.**

And so He waits.....as our hourglasses slowly empty.

*Your turn:*

Why is it so hard for some people to turn around and go the other way?

What are some of the "good" things that evil and trials and tribulations can produce in our lives?



# lyrics

You might wonder why lyrics are included in a study like this.

I believe lyrics, or poetry put to music, as well as the accompanying music, have always been used by the Most High to impact our hearts and minds –  
 either by **our part in its creative process** –  
 or through **our participation in its expression** –  
 or through **our pleasure as a recipient** of its sensory benefits.



Please try to listen to the musical versions on your own - **iTunes** and **youtube** are great online resources. If you are using the PDF version of this study and are connected to the internet, clicking on the song title will bring up a youtube video of each song. The lyrics presented will not always be spiritual in their original context – but much can still be gained from applying them to how they describe and point to the Most High God.

## Bridge Over Troubled Water

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UVDg8fVC4EQ>

Words and Music by Paul Simon, 1969

When you're weary, feeling small,  
 When tears are in your eyes, I will dry them all;  
 I'm on your side. When times get rough  
 And friends just can't be found,  
 Like a bridge over troubled water  
 I will lay me down.  
 Like a bridge over troubled water  
 I will lay me down.

When you're down and out, when you're on the street,  
 When evening falls so hard  
 I will comfort you. I'll take your part.  
 When darkness comes, and pain is all around,  
 Like a bridge over troubled water  
 I will lay me down.  
 Like a bridge over troubled water  
 I will lay me down.

Sail on silver girl, sail on by.  
 Your time has come to shine.  
 All your dreams are on their way.  
 See how they shine.  
 If you need a friend, I'm sailing right behind.  
 Like a bridge over troubled water  
 I will ease your mind.  
 Like a bridge over troubled water  
 I will ease your mind. <sup>15</sup>

## Your turn:

Living in a world where God has yet to completely deal with evil (at least from our perspective) brings all of us to journeys through troubled waters. At this point people either look to God or blame Him. How does this song express the comforts only a mighty sovereign God could provide?

## Orphans of God

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wu3b4RPwQPw>

Performed by Avalon  
Lyrics and Music by Twila LaBar and Joel Lindsey  
© 2006

Who here among us has not been broken  
Who here among us is without guilt or pain  
So oft abandoned by our transgressions  
If such a thing as grace exists  
Then grace was made for lives like this

There are no strangers  
There are no outcasts  
There are no orphans of God  
So many fallen, but hallelujah  
There are no orphans of God

Come ye unwanted and find affection  
Come all ye weary, come and lay down your head  
Come ye unworthy, you are my brother  
If such a thing as grace exists  
Then grace was made for lives like this

O blessed Father, look down upon us  
We are Your children, we need Your love  
We run before Your throne of mercy  
And seek Your face to rise above<sup>16</sup>

### *Your turn:*

"As an adoptee myself, it was our prayer that God would use this song to minister to hurting people and let them know that we are never abandoned by our Heavenly Father, no matter what our circumstances in life may be." Twila LaBar

How or why are children orphaned?

Why are there no orphans of God?

What attribute of God is necessary for there to be no strangers or outcasts?

## The Winner Takes It All

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iyIOI-s7JTU>

Performed by ABBA

Lyrics by Bjorn Ulvaeus, and Benny Andersson

© 1980, EMI Waterford Music Inc.; Union Songs

I don't wanna talk about the things we've gone through  
Though it's hurting me, now it's history  
I've played all my cards and that's what you've done too  
Nothing more to say, no more ace to play

The winner takes it all  
The loser standing small  
Beside the victory  
That's her destiny

I was in your arms thinking I belonged there  
I figured it made sense building me a fence  
Building me a home, thinking I'd be strong there  
But I was a fool, playing by the rules

The gods may throw a dice, their minds as cold as ice  
And someone way down here loses someone dear  
The winner takes it, all the loser has to fall  
It's simple and it's plain, why should I complain.

But tell me does she kiss like I used to kiss you?  
Does it feel the same when she calls your name?  
Somewhere deep inside you must know I miss you  
But what can I say, rules must be obeyed

The judges will decide the likes of me abide  
Spectators of the show always staying low  
The game is on again, a lover or a friend  
A big thing or a small, the winner takes it all

I don't wanna talk if it makes you feel sad  
And I understand you've come to shake my hand  
I apologize if it makes you feel bad  
Seeing me so tense, no self-confidence  
But, you see, the winner takes it all  
The winner takes it all.....<sup>17</sup>

### *Your turn:*

This song was written to express the emotions of a fictional divorce. What kind of pictures do these lyrics paint of God, rules, authority, fate?

How does this differ from what you've learned about the One True God?

# more cool stuff

## Evil FAQ's



The problem of evil in society and the world has been used from the beginning of time to both draw people to God as well as turn them away from Him. Evil can scare us into submission, yet we often use it as an excuse for all kinds of behavior, including denying the existence of God altogether. Many do not believe evil exists and many others see it behind every bush.

The following is just the tip of the iceberg. Study on your own is always encouraged.

### What is evil?

- Evil is not subjective, it is **real**. It is not a being, a thing, a substance or entity. It is not created and things are not evil in themselves.
- Evil is a corruption of good – the **lack of good**. It is as darkness is to light. Darkness is nothing in itself, simply the lack of light.
- It is **misused freedom**, good things in a wrong relationship. Evil appears when good is not where it is supposed to be.
- **Things left to themselves do not improve**. In fact they run down, fall apart, become corrupted. Everything literally goes to hell if left alone or on its own.
- Like tarnish on a silver pitcher, **someone must intervene** to bring back proper order. It needs to be polished. Weeds need to be pulled, mildew in the shower cleaned, cars tuned, bridges repainted, streets repaved, carpets cleaned, clutter put away.
- But even the most diligent care or concern on our part won't keep evil away or the process from continuing on and on. **We need some help...**
- Listen to what Jesus said in Luke 11:23-26

**"He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters. When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first." NIV**

- **Someone good needs to move into** our clean house. We cannot leave it vacant.



## There are three kinds of evil

Each one is a corruption of its original intent.

### Demonic or Spiritual Evil: the serpent in the garden

- This **preceded human sin** because Satan and his demons were originally angels in Heaven serving God. Once they were good, the most beautiful creations, but now are corrupted and ugly.
- Satan is a **real and personal being**. He was the real cause behind Job's suffering – but he still had to get permission from God first. Read the actual account below.

*The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?"*

*Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it."*

*Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil."*

*"Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face."*

*The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger."*

*Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD. Job 1:6-12 NIV*

**And he did** strike everything Job had.

- Listen again to what Jesus says in Luke 22:31-34 to Peter

**"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." But Peter replied, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death." Jesus answered, "I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me." NIV**

**And he did.**

- Satan's modus operandi is **deception and lies**. He appeals to our natural selfish desires to **be in charge** – to be the boss of ourselves, all the while using sinister and sustained personal attacks and temptation to encourage sin and sideline us from the greater battle.
- This greater battle is his **epic struggle with God** in the heavenlies – that started way before the incident in the garden. Satan's **downfall was pride. He wanted to be God**, not a servant of God and the battle continues to this day. (See Isaiah 14: 12-15 and Ezekiel 28:12-18)
- His **ultimate desire** is that we **believe he does not exist** at all.

### Moral Evil: the evil we do or sin

- This results from our **current state of alienation from God** and is **universal** to all mankind. We are **born into it**.
- It exists because **long ago one man and woman betrayed a trust** by believing the very clever lies of Satan over the truth of God. Adam and Eve **misplaced their allegiance**, misused their free will and sin entered the world.
- Sin can be blatant and obvious, but also very subtle, manifesting itself through **pride, sensuality, fear, self pity, envy and greed**. These are common to all men and women and if not properly dealt with **will result in guilt, bondage, death, and hell**.
- **We cannot overcome it** by our own efforts – **someone needs to move in**.

### Physical Evil: the impact of moral sin on creation

This is the result of the **winding down of creation** and the **effects of moral sin** on creation, mankind, culture and society. It will manifest itself in **natural disasters, disease, accidents**, and the groaning of creation resulting in **individual or mass physical suffering**.

While we may think we are evolving into a better, modern, healthier, safer and saner society - evil is taking its toll in the underbelly of our world, distracting us from God and encouraging us to believe only in ourselves – hoping we won't bother to look under the covers, or do anything about it.



Not only do we need someone to move in – we need someone to recreate us and our world.

### Does evil disprove God?

Well, this is the big question isn't it? Somehow many claim to believe that the existence of evil proves that God can't exist because if He really was a God worth believing in He would certainly do something about evil, keep bad things from happening, save all those starving children, keep our loved ones from dying, make our lives free and easy all the time.....

But there we go again, making ourselves the judge of the Transcendent God, like we are His moral equal. Let's consider the following.

- **The fact that we are upset** and concerned about outrageous evil **presupposes there is a difference between good and evil**.
- **Where did that standard come from?** From the moral law we received from God when we were made in His image. It's still within us even though we are separated from Him, our conscience knows what is right and wrong.
- **If you don't believe** any moral code or law exists, **then anything goes** – feeding the poor is no different than burning down an orphanage or blowing an airplane full of people out of the sky.
- **And who decides?** What one person thinks is ok may be the opposite of what another believes. Eventually our moral codes will rub up against each other and innocent people will be caught in the crossfire. What about them?



- It is **self defeating** to acknowledge evil and then claim there is no God.
- **You can't know a line is crooked unless you put it next to a straight line.**

## Why do we ask why?

How does the world respond to evil?  
Why do we expect better?

It is really **only the horrible, monstrous cases** without any extenuating circumstances that **make us ask why?**. One murder is not shocking - But a schoolroom of children, or an entire building blown up gets our attention.

**Some evils we accept as necessary** because they have extenuating circumstances.

Maybe there was a **good reason for it**, it's understandable.

We can see ourselves in the same situation doing the same thing

Or, perhaps we think the people **must have deserved it**, had it coming, were **asking for trouble**.

We pretty much **live in Denial** - We focus on the good in the world and **rationalize the bad**. If we **did acknowledge** our evil potential, then we **would have to change**. We really don't want to change, we just want to escape the consequences.

We think it would be wonderful if we would all try to make a difference. But, in a voyeuristic way **we are drawn to evil**, excited by it, entertained by it, and yet seem surprised when it becomes a reality.

We marvel at the readiness of normal decent people to harm or allow harm to others if the conditions are right, seeking to realize goals of security, ego gratification or satisfaction of bodily desires.

Most of **us know we need to change** from within and most of us want to, but only if we **could still be in charge**.

Instead we try to **produce justice, peace and prosperity** by **restraining ourselves and others** - by putting restraints upon what would harm us.

We make laws, we regulate, we judge.

Personal responsibility is no longer good enough.  
We know ourselves and we are not to be trusted.

We need **no training to sin**.

We blame others, **we blame God**.

Then we decide there must not be a God, because if there was - He would never allow these things to happen.

**But we still ask Why?**



**Can evil be redeemed?  
How do we respond to evil?  
Can any Good come of it?**

As Job was going through his numerous trials, he asked the age old and often asked question, **“Why is this happening to me?”**

His wife’s answer was to “Curse God and Die” – she had stopped believing in God but was still blaming Him.

His friends encouraged him by proclaiming it must have been his fault and he was only getting what he deserved.

**What was God’s answer?**

He just showed him Himself and that was enough for Job. Job’s suffering had brought him face to face with God. It had hollowed out a big space inside him that only God could fill.

As Corrie Ten Boom said following her sufferings in the Nazi prison camps of WWII, “No matter how deep our darkness, He is deeper still.”

**God can create Good from the sufferings caused by Evil.**

- It brings us **closer to God** as we share in His sufferings – we don’t usually seek Him when all is well. We need to get to a place where we are not capable of controlling the outcome to give the control to Him. Rom.8:17, I Cor. 10:13, 2 Cor. 4:17-18
- It provides **correction** – hopefully we learn from our mistakes and develop experience and wisdom to help others. We learn right and wrong – even as we suffer the logical consequences. Ps. 119:71
- It develops, refines and **purifies our character** – James 1: 2-4, John 15:1-2
- It **produces courage**, wisdom, temperance and justice – Rom 5: 3-4
- It protects us in the sense that it **warns us** of impending danger – Acts 20:30-32
- It will **change our direction** by scaring us to death – we run the other way. Prov. 20:30
- It provides that well needed **wake up call** - For many of us pain and suffering are the means by which we finally become motivated to deal with our sinfulness – we realize the limits of our control.
- It **perfects our faith** - Only in a world where faith is difficult can faith exist. It allows us to see the promises of God in action. Heb. 2:18, John 16:33, 2 Thes. 1:6, 2 Cor. 11:23-31, 12:9, I Peter 5:6-9, 2 Tim. 1:8-12
- If we have absolute proof then faith is unnecessary.
- It **prepares us for ministry** as we learn from experience how to comfort, aid, advise, train, and walk beside others as they experience evil’s impact. 2 Cor. 1:3-7, 2 Tim. 3:10-17

As others watch God work to overcome evil in our lives, they are moved to action, inspired, and become interested, engaged, and empowered to join the battle against it by teaming up with God. The world is watching. God is at work and He is using us.

Sdrawkcab delleps evil si live. (Evil is live spelled backwards.)

# journal

## 4.7 Nitty Gritty

1. **God is in control and has a plan** - the only plan and He is working it.
2. **Free will is only the freedom to choose** which side we will be on, but not the freedom to negotiate the results of that choice.
3. **Perfect Power used with** Perfect Knowledge governed by Perfect Wisdom allows a Sovereign God to rule his creation perfectly.
4. **The goal of His wisdom** is to order the events of our lives for a double purpose: **Our Good and His Glory**.
5. **Our Free Will** became the beginning of our Free Fall.
6. **God wants us to freely choose** to be in a loving relationship with Him – the Highest Good, which also opens up the possibility for us to reject Him – the Greatest Evil.
7. **God's answer to evil and suffering** is not an answer – It's a person – The Answerer.
8. **God hasn't completely dealt with evil** in the world yet because He's not done extending grace to humanity.
9. **Extra Credit Reading Recommendation:** [Case for Faith](#) by Lee Strobel.



*Any final thoughts?*

# closure

## Because it matters what we think about God

We have come to the end of **Large and In Charge**, the fourth of the 12 OmniInfinity™ Journeys. This journey has caused us to **Remember** *"For I know the plans I have for you", declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future."* (Jeremiah 29:11) and **Read** Psalms 23, 24, 91, and 139.

We **Analyzed** by Making It Personal and **Investigated** the Sovereign and Omnipotent One, as well as **Practiced** Simplicity and Slowing. We took **Inventory** of our Stuff and went on an **Adventuring** Clean Sweep. We were challenged by Evil FAQ's in **More Cool Stuff**. And finally, **Lyrics** spoke to our hearts and souls as we pondered the impact of God's Sovereignty and Power on our lives through music.

The **Journal** guided us through discovering that eventually God's attributes and our lives collide. He created us with free will and we want to be in control of our lives, to be free. Yet God alone is in control so the battle continues between the Free Will of man and the Sovereignty of God.

**God also knows it all.** He's omniscient **and can do anything**, He's omnipotent. And as a result of these, **He is all wise**. This perfect wisdom allows Him to order events to obtain the highest goals and purposes; **His own Glory** and for **our greatest Good**.

But the question always comes up: **What about evil if God is sovereign? Where did it come from and why can't God do something about it?** We discovered that all creation was deemed Good by God and mankind was deemed, Very Good. Because He gave Mankind **free will** to make moral decisions, the potential for the **highest good**, there was also the potential to choose the not good, **or evil**. **Our Free Will** became the beginning of our **Free Fall**.

We realized that for God to wipe out evil He would also wipe out free will. His ultimate goal for Mankind is for us to choose to be in a loving relationship with Him, the **Highest Good**, which opens up the possibility for us to reject Him, **the Greatest Evil**. Love does not coerce and **true love requires free choice**. The best way to restrain evil is to ask God to begin with us.

We begin to understand that **evil**, although a **temporary** situation, will be a **fact of life** in our world. Because God is not done **extending grace to humanity**, evil continues to exist and cause great suffering. Yet, **God's answer to suffering** is not an answer, **it is a person, The Answerer**. Someone able to make the payment for sin and be an example on how to handle suffering. **Jesus is the Answer**. His solution is **Forgiveness**. God has done something about the problem of evil. We need to ask Him to begin with us.

Now it's time to **think back** over this part of your journey and **reflect** on what you have discovered and learned. The categories below may help jog your memory. **Describe** the details of any areas that **apply** to you.

*New Things I Learned*

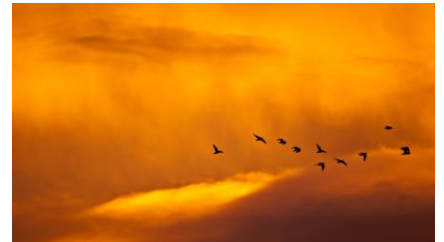
*Old Things I was reminded of*



*Questions I have*

*Areas I was challenged in*

*First steps I took*



*Areas I would like to study more*

*“AHA!” moments*

*Dreams and visions*



# appendix

- [About the Journeys](#)
- [About Remembering](#)
- [About the Practices](#)

## about the journeys...

Welcome to **OmniInfinity™**.. a series of guided journeys leading to greater knowledge and understanding of the attributes of God and the Spiritual Practices necessary to gain this knowledge.

The only requirement is a willingness to learn and discover through a variety of activities. Some elements you may naturally be drawn to, some will challenge you, and some may be way out of the box for you. It is important to do them all, in order, completing one journey before moving on to the next.

There are twelve journeys or units, **each designed to be completed in two months** - either by yourself, with a friend or in a small group setting. It is important to remember we all start from different places, we start with what we know and move on from there, but we are all traveling together.

## journey elements

The following elements make up each journey and should be completed in order. Some of the elements require some advance planning, so you might want to review the entire contents of each journey before you begin. Use the Table of Contents to check off your progress.

**Remember:** One or more Bible verses to memorize for each journey unit.

**Read:** Throughout the twelve journey units you will read some of the most profound and well loved chapters in the Bible.

**Analyze:** A variety of Bible Study methods will be offered to help you analyze in greater depth a section of the Reading above. The goal of this section is to familiarize you with various ways to greater understand God's Word.

**Investigate and 10 things:** Each journey unit focuses on a group of God's attributes, defining terms, and completing a directed investigation page.

**Practice and Why?:** Part of growing in our relationship with God is the intentional practice of skills that have helped Christians from the beginning. Each journey unit will focus on one or more of these with instructions for developing each discipline skill. Some Practices involve doing a specific activity, while others require we stop doing certain things.

**Inventory:** A personal inventory will be completed regarding areas related to the attributes and skills studied in each unit, reviewing your personal history and evaluating your current practices and beliefs.

**Adventuring:** This section guides you to venture out into the world with a specific assignment to observe, interact with or impact your surroundings and neighborhoods. The intent is to allow God to reveal Himself through nature, media and other people.



**Lyrics:** You are encouraged to read the included song lyrics as poetry for your inspiration, go online and listen to the actual recordings and then reflect on the questions that follow.

**Journal and More Cool Stuff:** The author has included some musings and further information pertaining to the subject of each journey unit for your consideration, personal response and reflection.

**Closure:** At the conclusion of each journey there is a place to recap where you've been, what you learned, new thoughts, challenges, growing pains.....

*enjoy the adventure ...*

## about remembering...



Think of this exercise as a necessary foundation for future excellence – like practicing scales on the piano or doing wind sprints or swimming laps, taking your vitamins, or eating your vegetables.

We actually recall or remember all kinds of things we've memorized without really even trying. Can you think of any?

How about your phone number, email address, street address, zip code, social security number, birthday, names of your family, how to get to work, how to drive a car, that secret recipe....or how to spell or multiply, song lyrics, movie scenes, jokes, what someone was wearing, what car they drove, sports statistics, what chocolate tastes like, what the ocean smells like, and on and on.

### Why do we remember what we remember?

Recollection is just the tip of the memory iceberg. Within our marvelous and mysterious brain the memory works in collaboration with us and the world – it uses all our senses and emotions. We associate smells, colors, places, rituals, symbols, landmarks, even people, with memories and when we sense the trigger, we remember.

There are tremendous spiritual benefits from Remembering Bible verses:

- Strengthens our faith
- Shapes how we view the world
- Makes God's Word immediately accessible
- Guards our minds.....and that's just for starters.

Experts say that we will forget more in the first hour after our memory event than in one day, and more in the first day than the first month...What we remember for one month, will probably stay with us.....so the idea is to remember regularly for one month and we've got it.

Here are some suggestions to help you get started. We all learn differently – so don't be afraid to try some of the more unusual methods. Not only do we need to remember the verse, **we need to remember to work on remembering the verse.**

- Write the verse on several post it notes or index cards and put them where you will see them such as the car, the bathroom mirror, the kitchen sink, a bulletin board, your computer screen saver, your cell phone, by your bed....
- Make plans to spend five minutes, twice a day (usually as you get up and before bed) to review.
- Say it slowly, 15 times in a row, emphasizing each word.
- If you have already learned it in another translation, review that one. Once you know it in one, look it up in a couple of other translations to see what is different.
- Review it when you are waiting in line, or on hold on the phone.
- Sing it – make up a tune to go with it
- For extra credit, add the verse before and the verse after.

## about the practices...

The Spiritual Practices put us in a place where we are better able to interact with our environment and God. God can then reach inside our spirits and transform them.

Just as our body needs to eat, breathe, exercise, drink, sleep, etc., so our spiritual self needs to make sure it is being sustained, cared for, and trained.

The results include spiritual growth, a life controlled by the Holy Spirit, evidence of the fruit of the spirit, and the ultimate goal, living life like Jesus did.

### The Spiritual Practices are not:

- Meritorious laws that earn favor with God
- A way to show how spiritually mature we are
- Unpleasant or difficult

### Instead, they are:

- Intentional
- Activities we do that when practiced allow us to do activities we cannot now do.
- Adaptable to work with our temperaments and gifts
- Adjustable according to the rhythm and seasons of our lives

## There are two kinds

**Practices of Abstinence** - when we stop doing something that is perfectly normal to allow ourselves to focus more on God, His Word, and growing in godliness. These also help us resist our tendency toward sins of commission (when we do something we shouldn't do). We withdraw to breathe in all that God can provide to us, breaking the hold that the world has on our lives. Practices of Abstinence help ready us and create room for the Practices of Engagement.

**Practices of Engagement** - when we do certain activities that help us grow in Christ and obey his commandments. The Practices of Abstinence have opened up the time and broken up the preoccupations so we are now free to learn of, focus on, and practice those things that God commands us to do. These assist in keeping us from our tendency toward sins of omission (not doing the things we should do). We engage to breathe out all that God commands us. <sup>11</sup>

As their name implies, the Spiritual Practices are not one-time events, but skills to be learned and developed over time. So don't be discouraged in the beginning if you struggle with them or find them difficult. Make them a regular part of your life. In our Journeys we would rather **emphasize the actual practicing of the Practices** and not so much the reading about them.....and let you discover the benefits as they appear in your life.

## credits

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5. Stephen Charnock, The Existence and Attributes of God, Volume 2, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996, originally published in 1853, page 13.
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12. John Ortberg, The Life You've Always Wanted, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002, page 81. A very user friendly book with personal, practical modern interpretations and applications of the spiritual practices.
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All scripture references noted by NIV are taken from The Holy Bible, The New International Version, by International Bible Society, 1984, Zondervan Publishers, Grand Rapids.

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## *so what now?*

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