

## **Sunday Morning Starters:**

### **Start Your Week Right.**

**Look up.** “The heavens are telling the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands” (Psalm 19:1).

**Reach in.** “Give me understanding according to Thy word” (Psalm 119:169).

**Give out.** “And I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls” (2 Cor. 12:15).

## O Master, Let Me Walk With Thee

There is more to being a disciple of Jesus than just saying it. You have to want to walk with Him.

**The true disciple will be hungry to hear.** This hunger is not merely a “Frito-snack,” mind you, but the kind of hunger one has to stay alive. The spirit of a man must be nourished just like his body. And the true disciple is always famished for more food.

**He will show mercy.** Mercy is part of who the Master is. He is the personification of mercy. The disciple has to show a sincere regard for others, whether they care or not, else they are not like their Master.

**He will have a pure heart.** A pure heart is one devoid of prejudices, preconceptions, selfishness, and a host of other impurities. It is a heart set on things above, one consecrated to higher thinking.

**He will be a peacemaker.** Peacemakers are rare today, but if one is to follow Christ he must be such. I think this beatitude is included because God knew there would be a lot of wars. But if it’s not possible to live in peace—

**He will live with persecution.** Be forewarned – if you live for the Master, you will suffer for it. Persecution is the lot of the disciple. It is a given.

The true disciple is not just a learner, one who hears the Master, but one who is determined to follow Him no matter what it takes.

- Dee Bowman

## Reasons To Keep Preaching

The episode of Paul’s preaching in Antioch of Pisidia began with such hope but ends rather sadly. But despite this pessimistic ending, we find here compelling reasons to keep preaching.

**The devil hates nothing worse than an evangelistic people.** The stubbornness of the Jews was only an indication that the gospel was working. When we’re confronted with obstacles, it’s because we’ve invaded the devil’s territory. He’s on the defensive. It’s not time to quit, but to press on.

**The Lord can turn dead ends into open doors.** Finding the Jews unreceptive, Paul turned to the Gentiles who “were glad and glorified the word of the Lord” (vs. 48). If the Lord could turn Calvary, the dead of all dead ends, into an open tomb that bore witness to victory, then can He not make a way for the gospel? He did for Paul.

**The preached word is always effective.** It always does what it was intended to do. It convicts some. It persuades some of those convicted. But it renders all who hear it accountable whether they are convicted or persuaded. All we can do is let men hear. The word will do the rest.

**The reproach of the cross is the Lord’s greatest strategy.** Paul’s stripes told the world that his message was worth hurting for. When we are rejected but keep preaching, we say to the world that this gospel is worth hurting for. The world can’t ignore such dedication. That’s precisely the point.

In season. Out of season. Keep preaching.

- Jason Moore

## Overcoming Yourself

I've been to a lot of funerals and heard quite a few eulogies, but I doubt I'll ever listen to anything more powerful than what was said after Moses died. “Since then no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.”

What makes that tribute so remarkable is that this is a man who first asked, “who am I, that I should go” (Ex. 3:11)? But he was able to put himself at the disposal of God who can quickly turn fear into faith. He'll change a “who am I” into a “here am I, send me.”

This is also a man who said, “I have never been eloquent...for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue” (Ex. 4:10). Yet, by the time God was through with him, Stephen testified that he was powerful in “words and deeds” (Acts 7:22). He was molded and made into a great orator because he got into the hands of the Molder and Maker.

Just because you come up with some excuse does not mean that you're excused. If the Lord has blessed you with some opportunity, He's going to bless you with some ability to get the job done. You'll have to work at it, but trust Him to see you through. He can make your weakest disability your greatest ability.

Moses is revealed as a man of faith and doubt, anger and restraint, patience and impulsiveness. But more than all, as a “man of God” (Josh. 14:6). How else would you want to be remembered?

- Bubba Garner

## God’s Crowning Jewel

God never made anything more beautiful, more wonderful, more needed than a good woman. She is a crowning jewel in His creation. Solomon is well within the mark when he describes her as a “virtuous woman.” What is she like?

**She is trustworthy.** You can count on her.

**She will do good to her husband.** You need not doubt her faithfulness or the sincerity of her love.

**She is industrious.** She will work as long and as hard as is needed to provide all she deems necessary for the good of her family.

**She is frugal.** She is never wasteful. She will not waste time. She has time for things that are right and no time at all for the things that aren’t.

**She is concerned for her family.** She is not afraid of bad weather because she has prepared her family ahead of time.

**She is praiseworthy.** Her children speak of her industry and concern. Her husband praises her for her faithfulness and provisions. Her reputation tells of her years of faithfulness and service.

Favor fades. Beauty is never permanent. But the woman who fears the Lord and does His will will always be favored and her beauty will never fade.

May God increase the number of virtuous women!

- Dee Bowman

## **Elisha And The Shunammite**

The story of the Shunammite woman and the prophet Elisha is an oasis in a desolate period of Israel’s history when such faith was rare.

**True righteousness is best expressed in the unsolicited, habitual sacrifices of a solitary life.** Elisha did not ask for the woman’s help. She offered it. She went to great trouble and expense on his behalf. Here is a woman for whom kindness was a habit. Can’t you see her picking out the guest bed, buying a suitable lamp and table and chair for the prophet? She took upon herself the care of God’s spokesman and asked him for nothing in return.

**Opportunities for service in the kingdom abound for the observant eye and the willing soul.** Folks who can find nothing to do for the kingdom’s sake will have to answer on the judgment day to the example of this woman. Criminals can be so creative in folly. Oh, that men would exercise the same creativity and industry in the business of the kingdom! There is work in the kingdom for all. This woman proves that.

The Hebrew writer speaks of the fathers “who through faith subdued kingdoms...stopped the mouths of lions” and among other great deeds, “women received their dead raised to life again” (Heb. 11:32-38). Behind the small kindnesses of the Shunammite woman lay a great faith. Could it be that such great faith is cultivated by such small, regular, selfless sacrifices? Go and do likewise.

- Jason Moore

## The Carpenter’s Construction

People were saying all kinds of things about Jesus when He polled His disciples in Caesarea Philippi. He had been called a “gluttonous man,” a “drunkard,” and a “friend of sinners” in Matt. 11:19. Still others thought he was John the Baptist, Jeremiah or Elijah. But Peter confessed that He was “the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” From that statement, Jesus identifies three things about His church.

**“Upon this rock.”** No man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (I Cor. 3:11). The only reason this structure has been able to withstand death, hell and the devil himself is because the church’s one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord.

**“I will build.”** Since He was given “head over all things to the church” (Eph. 1:22), He is the only One qualified to be the founder and architect. And he used the finest materials imaginable to assemble her – His own blood.

**“My church.”** Any church that has not been built *by* Christ has not been built on the *foundation* of Christ. The danger of this is seen in Jesus’ warning that “every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be rooted up” (Matt. 15:13).

These truths have not changed, no matter what people may still be saying about Jesus and His church. Make Peter’s confession your own today.

- Bubba Garner

## **Sunday Morning Starters:**

### **Some Songs To Hum**

“There’s A Great Day Coming”

“Jesus Savior Pilot Me”

“Jesus Keep Me Near The Cross”

“When We All Get To Heaven”

## Never Quit!

There are many ironies to this story about Elijah. Elijah prayed for death, but the Lord kept him alive. He hid in a cave, but the Lord told him to come outside. Elijah said, “I alone am left,” but the Lord said, “I have 7000.” Elijah ran away, but the Lord said, “Go return.” What is the message in all of these episodes? Never quit!

**Don’t let the enemy distract you from duty.** We are not the first to be disturbed by the triumph of the wicked. Elijah was discouraged by Jezebel’s slaughter of the prophets. “What are you doing here?” the Lord asked the prophet hiding in the cave. To hide was to concede victory to the enemies, to let the blood of the prophets be shed in vain. Now that the blood of God’s own Son has been shed, we dare not keep silent. Never quit!

**Remember that you don’t see the whole picture.** “I alone am left,” declared Elijah. But there were others – 7000 that had not bowed the knee to Baal. Never quit. You don’t know all the forces that God has at His disposal. God showed Elijah the wind, the earthquake, the fire, then sheer silence. There is a time for them all. And God uses them all to accomplish His purpose. Never quit.

**Wait on the Lord.** We don’t know how He will show Himself. Is He in the fire? Is He in the wind? He doesn’t always show Himself in the way we want or in the way we expect. We must wait on Him. He knows the best time and the best way. Never quit!

- Jason Moore

## Flee Fornication

The body, just like every other blessing from the Lord, comes with a responsibility to use it properly. “This is the will of God...that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel (vss. 3-4). Here are some suggestions to help you do just that.

**Control your environment.** “Do not give the devil an opportunity” (Eph. 4:27). It’s hard to get burned when you stay away from the fire. How many times have you heard people say, “I never thought this could happen?” If we just stay out of dangerous and potentially dangerous situations, it never will. And don’t think it won’t happen simply because you’re “just friends.”

**Run at the first sign of trouble.** That’s what Joseph did. When Potiphar’s wife grabbed him, “he left his garment in her hand and fled” (Gen. 39:12). Look for the way of escape and take it. If you wait too long, you might never leave. And don’t deceive yourself into thinking you can handle the pressure. You may find out the hard way that you can’t.

**Look past the moment.** There are consequences attached to every sin. Some are immediate – loss of purity, loss of self-respect, an illegitimate child, disease, divorce. But all of these pale in comparison to the eternal wages of sin – death. Is it really worth your soul?

Sex is something sacred for husband and wife. Flee all other forms of it.

- Bubba Garner

## Man's Great Need In This Age

People don't really change. Culture changes, social conditions may vary, technology moves, but people and their needs and attitudes just don't change. The people in Isaiah's time were the same as they are today, their needs not much different than ours. Notice:

**The assignment.** Seek the Lord while He can be found, call on Him while He will still hear. The implication is that He will not always be available, that He will not always hear. We best hear while He is near. Man's greatest need in this age is to hear God, to listen to His word, to let Him speak to his needs.

**The reason.** It's simple: God's thoughts and ways are so far above ours. We should not hesitate to not only hear what He says, but to favor what He says above anything man says. His word will accomplish what He set out for it to do, but only if we listen to and obey it. Man's greatest need in this age is to hear God, to listen to His word, to let Him speak to our needs.

**The result.** The word of God will make us happy, prosperous and saved. It rids us of all the things that impair our happiness, that retard our joy, that diminish our hope. It makes fir of thorns, sweet leaves of the brier. But only if we use it.

Man's greatest need in this age is to hear God, to listen to His word, to let Him speak to our needs.

- Dee Bowman

## The Christian System

Peter summarizes for us the Christian system: "If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ."

**Here is the rule for speech:** "Speak as the oracles of God." Here is a rule not just for the pulpit but for all speech. How much harmful speech and poor communication would be prevented by following this simple principle? Our speech should be seasoned with hope, confidence in the resurrection, knowledge of the cross, and wisdom gleaned from the word. Folks from Texas have a peculiar accent. Folks who read the Bible ought to talk differently too and be ashamed if it's otherwise.

**Here is the rule for action:** "Minister as with the ability God supplies." First, it should be noted that God supplies the strength to *minister*. The kingdom belongs to the servant. It's the Servant of servants who is King of kings, and He equips His citizens to serve in like manner. The servant who whines, "*I can't*" has not considered that God *can*. If He orders it, it can be done. Doing God's work in God's way always accomplishes more, not less.

**Here is the motive for speech and action:** that in all things God may be glorified. Here is a different way of seeing your life. It's not about you. It's about God. "In all things" aim your life – your speech, your conduct, everything – to glorify Him. He in turn will glorify you. So simple. So forgotten. Remember it today.

- Jason Moore

## Death's Reminders

Solomon said that “it is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for...the living takes it to heart” (Eccl. 7:2). Death, whether it is sudden or expected, has a way of teaching those that remain. Moses reminds us of these lessons in his prayer.

**Death is real.** “Thou dost turn man back into dust” (vs. 3). Try as we may to ignore its certainty, it is, according to an Arab proverb, a “black camel that kneels beside every man’s gate.” Vitamins, exercises, treatments and surgeries only prolong your inevitable appointment (Heb. 9:27).

**Life is short.** “For soon it is gone and we fly away” (vs. 10). James compares our lives to a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away and David said, “surely man at his best is a mere breath” (Psalm 39:5). Even those that live 80 and 90 years are just a fleeting moment in the eternal ages. Judgment is certain. “So teach us to number our days, that we may present to Thee a heart of wisdom” (vs. 12). Since life *is* short, every day is extremely valuable and one that we cannot afford to lose. Even today. And the manner in which you number your days determines where you will spend days without number.

The Christian need not fear death and judgment. Jesus said, “he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die” (John 11:25-26).

- Bubba Garner

## **Praise Him! Praise Him!**

David was a praying person. We would do well to be like him. The 25<sup>th</sup> Psalm is a beautiful example of the type of prayer he prayed. Look at it. It is:

**A prayer of praise.** Who can look around and not thank God for His blessings? Who can ignore the great things of God, especially His gift of His Son? And who would dare fail to praise Him regularly in consideration of His great power and majesty?

**A prayer for guidance.** “Show me thy ways, O Lord, teach me thy paths,” he says. We don’t know how to go. We stumble along without sufficient light to see and with no goal in mind. God’s word is the lamp we need, the light that lights our way. Let us beg Him, as did David, for His guidance in our lives.

**A prayer for forgiveness.** We can’t forgive ourselves, that’s for sure. Where shall we turn? To some other man, to some group of men who cannot save themselves either? How foolish! Forgiveness is an act of God and only when we turn to Him and do as He says is forgiveness possible.

**A prayer of faith.** There is no doubting in David’s prayer. “All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies,” he says. Only in God is doubt sent away. Only in Him is there complete confidence.

Let us pray the prayer of praise, guidance, forgiveness and faith. Let us pray to God – regularly.

- Dee Bowman

## Sunday Morning Starters:

### Witnesses To Resurrection:

**The Plants.** Plant a seed in the earth, and God gives it a new body “as He pleases, and to each seed its own body” (I Cor. 15:38). If God has done so with grain, can He not do so with man?

**The animals.** All animals have a body suited to their realm. Beasts have a body fitted for land, birds for air, and fish for sea (I Cor. 15:39). Can God not make for man a body fitted for a heavenly abode?

**The Heavens.** “There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, another glory of the stars” (I Cor. 15:41). If God gave glory to the timekeepers He made to serve man, can He not glorify man himself?

**The Apostles.** Jesus who died “was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve...by over 500...by James...by all the apostles...last of all” by Paul (I Cor. 15:5-8). Did these men die for a fairytale? Indeed not! Christ arose!

## **Every Man Stood In His Place**

Gideon’s defeat of the mighty Midian alliance has to be one of the greatest upsets in the history of war. Through the hand of the Lord, the underdog prevailed that day because “every man stood in his place” (vs. 21).

The Midianites had joined forces with the Amalekites and the sons of the east. Their army was as innumerable as the locusts (6:5) and as the sand of the seashore (7:12), about 135,000 men strong (8:10). Enter Gideon’s army of 300. For every Israelite soldier, there were 450 on the other side. Yet every man stood in his place.

Gideon’s band had no military training. In fact, one of the reasons the Lord did not drive out all of the nations of Canaan when they inhabited the land was so that “the sons of Israel might be taught war” (3:2). Yet, when the battle began, every man stood in his place.

This ragtag army was greatly mismatched in number and skill and showed up to fight with a torch, a pitcher and a trumpet. Yet every man stood in his place.

Didn’t they know they weren’t supposed to win? No, because they had an alliance with God, who is “not restrained to save by many or by few” (I Sam. 14:6). They knew they were marching under His leadership, fighting a battle He had already won.

When you’re with the Lord, it’s the other side that’s mismatched. So find your place and stand.

- Bubba Garner

## God On His Throne

I have seen some spectacular scenes, the kind that make the hair stand up on the back of your neck. Yet, when I try to tell someone about it, I seldom find the words that are worthy enough to describe it. Imagine John’s frustration in trying to depict the immortal glory of God in terms that mortal man can comprehend. According to the old spiritual, “John couldn’t tell it, John couldn’t spell it, and John couldn’t write it all down.”

Here’s what I see in his vision of God on His throne.

**The Lord is still in control.** While it looks like the devil has got a hold of the world, Jehovah has not lost the reins of His creation. He remains on His throne, ruling from heaven, watching over His children. When you’re tempted to believe God is nowhere, be assured that God is now here.

**The worthy Lamb was slain for me.** Jesus left His place at the right hand of the throne to be slain for my sins. With His blood, He purchased for God “men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (5:9). His death and resurrection make possible my victory over the grave. Any crown won on earth will be cast at His feet in heaven.

“To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and power forever and ever” (5:13). What a joy when we can behold them not through signs, symbols, and imagery but in sight, sound and reality.

Thanks, John. We got the picture.

- Bubba Garner

## How Great Our Salvation!

This passage is God’s plan of salvation in miniature. It states briefly what God has done to save us.

**Verse 1** – We are justified by faith. The radical idea in justification is forgiveness. It is because of our trust in God that we can be forgiven. We have peace with God when we have been justified, saved.

**Verse 2** – It is by Christ that it is all possible. We have access into the favor of God only through Jesus Christ. We can rejoice in our salvation on account of His willingness to die in our stead.

**Verse 3** – Because we have been saved, we are proud to suffer for His sake. We have fellowship in His sufferings in doing so (Phil. 3:10).

**Verse 4** – Such fellowship with His sufferings gives us experience and the patience we need to stay in our place and do His will, no matter the external difficulties. That, in turn, enlivens our hope.

**Verse 5** – Because of the love of God, our hope becomes a prime factor in determining our course of pursuit. Instead of being ashamed of who we are, we rejoice, even in the face of adversity.

**Verse 6** – We were powerless to relieve our malady of sin, but He came and willingly gave Himself that we – weak and frail – might be delivered.

How grand the will of God, how marvelous His provisions, how wonderful our Savior!

- Dee Bowman

## Following Jesus

The call of the fishermen illustrates essential truths about being a follower of Jesus.

**The call to follow Jesus never comes at a convenient time.** The devil will make sure of that. If the fishermen waited until their hands were idle, until their chores were done, until all the nets were mended, they would never have left the boats. To follow Jesus, you’ve got to leave your nets – all the tangled web of excuses that hold you back.

**The call to follow Jesus is a call to “follow.”** It’s not a call to occupy a pew, to just sit in church. The fishermen didn’t just follow Jesus to the synagogue. They went fishing with Him – fishing for men. We’ve got to walk where Jesus walked – to the sick, to the afflicted, to the mourners, to the lost.

**The call to follow Jesus is a personal one.** Jesus “saw Simon and Andrew.” He went further and “saw James...and John.” When Jesus looks upon the masses, He recognizes persons. He calls individuals. You can’t wait on others to see what they will do. James and John left their father to follow Jesus. What honor do we show Jesus if we wait to see who else is coming along before we go?

**The time to follow Jesus is right now.** “Immediately,” the fishermen left their work to follow. It’s not a matter of whether He’ll be coming by the boat dock again tomorrow. It’s not at all a question of whether Jesus’ invitation will stand. It’s a question of whether we’ll still be here. We really can’t afford to wait. Why would we want to?

- Jason Moore

## The Joy Of True Submission

This passage of scripture deals with various roles of life and how they are to be played out. It is imperative that we listen to them, since God created them and He alone knows best how to manage them.

He begins by saying, in 5:21 – “submitting yourselves to one another.” Submission is the key to properly keeping every one of the roles of life. For instance:

**Wives are to submit to husbands (5:22).** This is how God made the arrangement and we dare not fool with it. It is His way that is important.

**Husbands are to submit to wives (5:25).** It is certainly not the same submission as that just mentioned, but the husband is to love his wife, to submit to God’s will in the matter, to submit to his duties to support and care for her.

**Children are to submit to their parents (6:1-3).** God set it up that way. Children are not governors nor do they have the right to control the home. They are to submit to parents.

**Parents are to submit to their children (6:4).** Again, it is not the same submission as above, but it is nonetheless submission to the role of nourishing and disciplining children. No parent dare do otherwise.

**Even servants and Masters are to submit to their roles (6:9).**

Every person has his own role and he must submit to it or God is not pleased.

- Dee Bowman

## What Jesus Taught At Lazarus’ Tomb

Jesus who taught us about life and living was not remiss in teaching us about death and dying.

**Jesus taught that death is no respecter of persons.** Lazarus’ sisters sent word, “Behold, he whom You love is sick” (vs. 3). Death gave no special treatment to the Lord’s friends. It did not consider His affections. If Jesus’ love and interest offered no special exemption from an untimely death, what’s protecting *you*? Death is no respecter.

**Jesus taught that death is not beholden to our schedule.** Jesus waited two more days before going to Bethany. But death did not wait on Jesus. How foolish to presume that death will wait until we get our house in order. We must prepare and stay prepared. If death was not obligated by Jesus’ schedule, it certainly is not obligated by ours.

**Jesus taught that the one who recognizes His voice in life will recognize His voice in death.** “Lazarus, come forth,” said Jesus at the tomb of the one He loved. Lazarus, who had known Jesus’ voice when he lived, heard Jesus’ voice though he lay in the tomb. “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice” (John 5:28). Jesus knows the names of those who have known His name and responded to His voice in life. What assurance that death who respects no person and no schedule will be rendered powerless in the resurrection by the voice of the risen Savior.

- Jason Moore

## **Sunday Morning Starters:**

**You Are Cordially Invited.**

**Who?** “All who are weary and heavy laden.”

**What?** “Come.”

**Where?** “To Me.”

**Why?** “I will give you rest.”

Please RSVP before it's too late.

## **Surprise!**

The account of the flood serves as a reminder to every generation that the God who created the world is capable of destroying it. He has done it once with water and he has promised to do it again with fire. I imagine the second judgment will be just as surprising to some as the first one.

Among all the wickedness and corruption of the ancient world were surely those who ridiculed Noah and his family while they built the ark. But don’t you know their countenance changed when they saw storm clouds covering the sky and felt the rain drops covering their feet? They climbed to higher ground, thinking they could escape the rising waters. They clutched at the ark as it floated by, hoping they would be allowed on board. But they drowned in a flood they thought would never happen.

“In the last days mockers will come...saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming?’” (2 Pet. 3:3-4). Sadly, the day of judgment will be the surprise of a lifetime for a lot of people. Knees will hit the ground that were once too proud to bend. Tongues that once cursed the name of God and blushed to speak His name will confess Jesus as Lord. But they will be condemned on a day of reckoning they thought would never come.

Salvation is for those who are armed not alarmed at the judgment. Get on board.

- Bubba Garner

## Practical Principles For Living

Practical principles for living are so very important. They are neglected in today’s society; and that’s a shame, for they are the key to health, happiness and peace. Here are some practical principles for living.

**A good name.** Every person would do well to strive to gain a good reputation – one of faithfulness, diligence, and fairness. A good name is one of life’s greatest possessions. A bad name is shameful.

**Learning life’s real lessons.** We are all headed in the same direction – toward the grave. To ignore that fact doesn’t mean it will go away. We will all die. We should learn that from seeing the funeral procession, the obituary column, the graveyard.

**Discipline is good for us.** Nobody likes to be rebuked or rebuffed, but we all make errors and it is foolish not to listen to those who lovingly correct us. Failure to listen to discipline is failure to understand life. Heed good advice and live well.

**Perseverance is advisable.** No matter the project, to see it through is to be wise. To stop short shows a lack of sense. Finish what you start, for the end is always better than the beginning.

**Anger without a cause is foolish.** Pent up anger does no good for anyone. It retards good, diminishes love, demeans relationships.

Practice practical principles and live happily.

- Dee Bowman

## In The Beginning, God

**The Genesis account of creation has always contradicted the contemporary views of science.** The popular science of Egypt with which Moses was familiar said that creation was an accident that resulted from cosmic struggle between the gods. Science really hasn't changed much. Then the Big Bang was a clash of gods. Now the Big Bang is a clash of...well, *something* - scientists just don't know what. They just know it wasn't God.

**The ancients understood our science better than modern scientists.** They understood what we claim to understand – that stuff doesn't just happen. Even accidents are caused.

**The difference in modern myths and ancient ones is that men have taken religion out of the myth.** The ancients at least had enough sense to see that the order of the universe demanded Some *body* not just some *things*. The idea of a creator or creators, as they speculated, was not just wishful thinking. It was thinking, period. It's the modernist who has wished God out of the world.

**I would rather believe in the myths of the Romans – in Jupiter and in Neptune – than in the mythologies of the present age.** There is more logic to the superstitions of those who bowed to the idols than in those who fancy that man descended from apes. At the Judgment, the idolaters of the past may stand and condemn our generation that with all its telescopes and satellites and probes cannot see what it plainly saw. “In the beginning, God.”

- Jason Moore

## Leaving Your First Love

When Paul describes the character of men in the last days as "unloving," he doesn't mean that they don't know *how* to love. They just don't know *what* to love. They are:

**"Lovers of self."** What is the first thing that Jesus requires of those who wish to come after Him? "Let him deny himself" (Matt. 16:24). Sin is a selfish choice, a decision that you are going to do what YOU want to do, regardless of what the Lord has said about it. There is a sense in which we need to love self, but this is the kind that interferes with the rights and interests of God and other people.

**"Lovers of money."** Money is called "the daughter of selfishness" because some think that it's the only way to make yourself happy. The Lord never says you can't have any when you're a Christian, but He does warn that "some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith" (I Tim. 6:10). Money can be an agent of great good in the kingdom, but the love of it is a root of all sorts of evil.

**"Lovers of pleasure."** The devil can make sin look really good, can't he? Especially when he disguises it as pleasure. The sting of sin may be blunted by momentary gratification, but it is not taken away. And if you give yourself to a love of pleasure in this life, you won't have any pleasure in the next one.

Saul Bellow once said, "a man is only as good as what he loves." So, how good are you?

- Bubba Garner

## The Drawing Power Of The Cross

“And, I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.” Death has a natural drawing power, an attraction that is both captivating and frightening. There is horror, mystery, and uncertainty attached to it. But we are drawn to Jesus’ death for different reasons.

**We are drawn to His attitude toward death.** He spent His whole life in service to His people, “For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve,” so that He could ultimately *give* His life “a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). Death is man’s greatest fear; for Jesus, it was His greatest feat.

**We are drawn to His attitude in death.** He carried His own cross “like a lamb that is led to the slaughter” (Isa. 53:7) and gave no answer to the abuse hurled at Him. Even when the nails were being driven through His innocent hands, He prayed for the pardon of His executioners.

**We are drawn to the significance of His death.** “It is finished” was His cry. Not “*I*” am finished; “*it*” is finished, what He came to do. His sacrifice for sins completed, the debt paid, He could now await His glorious resurrection and ascension to the right hand of His Father. Through His death, we have life.

Don’t be drawn away from Christ and Him crucified. It is “to those who are perishing, foolishness, but to those who are being saved it is the power of God” (I Cor. 1:18).

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## Fighting Discouragement

God’s people are not exempt from discouragement; even “the weeping prophet” had a limit as to how much he could endure. Life, in its very nature, is full of twists and turns, peaks and valleys, highs and lows that can quickly crush the most cheerful optimist.

Avoid these pitfalls of despair.

**Don’t overstate your case.** “Everyone mocks me” (vs. 7) and “all my friends, watching for my fall” (vs. 10) were certainly exaggerations. Be honest with yourself and about your situation. Learn from Paul who, when he was “despaired even of life,” said, “we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed” (2 Cor. 4:8-9).

**Don’t give up on God.** “Cursed be the day I was born” and “why did I ever come forth from the womb” is the language of one who has given up. If the Lord has led you to the mountain, do you think He will abandon you in the valley? We take the credit when things are going good and then blame God when they go bad. I may not have all the answers on how to overcome depression, but I do know that it can’t be done without Him.

As Paul Earnhart has observed, “Christians may suffer from discouragement, but they do not yield to it.” What are you doing about yours?

- Bubba Garner