WORD AT WORK

May 2007

Dear Friends:

The depth of warfare against the Church is so dramatic at the local, state and federal levels that new strategies are desperately needed for survival. The problem with what God is revealing is in the ***level of maturity necessary*** to implement it. First Peter 2:1-5 encourages us to embrace the growth process:

> *"Therefore, laying aside all malice, all guile, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.'*

Cultivating character that counts enables us to enter the depths of covenant demanding a demonstration of deliverance at all three levels. Jesus challenged us to walk in faith expecting a covenant outward manifestation of an inward relationship.

The Philistines plundered Israel all the days of Eli ***but with Samuel assumed the Priesthood everything changed.*** First Samuel 7:13b says, *"And the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel."* Samuel ***grew in character*** and moved God's hand against the enemy! Move God's hand against treasonous leaders or lose the land.

If we have salt, then we, like Samuel, can bring God's hand upon those defiling the nation. If ***we refuse to grow*** into this realm we sacrifice the nation to judgment and destruction resulting from the perverse filling it with iniquity. We have **no choice but to grow** into what God is revealing and exercise our covenantal authority to gain a national harvest.

Yours in Him,
Al Houghton

Ps: Our New website goes on line in May with great additions to the Bible study. The June Bible study will only Be e-mailed to those who register on the new site: **wordatwork.org**

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VOLUME XXVII NUMBER V

Three Dimensions Of Growth II

TUESDAY, May 1
Scripture: Matthew 16:13-20

Jesus initiated a test with His disciples when He said, *"Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"* The next question exposed the heart of the issue. *"But who do you say that I am?"* Peter got the revelation: *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."* Jesus commended him and continued revealing the prophetic plan. This process exposed a deceptive eschatological spirit operating in their midst. Jesus promised to build His Church on the revelation of what God was doing, and the gates of hell would not prevail against it. He gave authority to stop doctrines of deception in the church allowing the Holy Spirit to prevail. He ends His instruction by telling them they have to be quiet about what they know; which is always a prerequisite for receiving further classified information from the Lord. Are the keys of the kingdom still working among us? We know Jesus hasn't changed His mind - divine authority resides in the Church. Are we using God's authority to further the Kingdom? Have we developed the character necessary to handle the magnitude of what we are asking? If we receive a dramatic move of the Spirit, can we avoid becoming a denomination?

WEDNESDAY, May 2
Scripture: Matthew 16:21

Jesus immediately began showing His disciples what was coming (eschatology), with the understanding they were to quietly contain the information. Many today desire the Father to show them what's coming in the future, but they have never really established integrity in their ability to keep quiet about the things God reveals. One of our common roadblocks to receiving revelation is a tendency to be spiritual blabbermouths. Whenever God gives us something, we immediately want to tell it, showing what a sensitive ear we have or the depth of our relationship with the Lord, and how we're part of God's inner circle. Let's dig out spiritual pride by the roots and begin to expect God to reveal things to come with the bridle of speaking only when led by the Spirit. Reigning in the tongue is perhaps the most serious form of self discipline achievable! It certainly is necessary if we expect to seriously walk in the depth of the prophetic, necessary to navigate the end-times.

THURSDAY, May 3
Scripture: Matthew 16:21-23

Immediately, when Peter finds out what Jesus has planned, he rebukes Him saying, *"'Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You.' But He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.'"* Peter had a plan based on the

prevailing eschatology of the day and Jesus was not conforming to it. Peter expected Jesus to set up a physical kingdom, reigning in the earth by overthrowing the Romans with the power of God. Peter was convinced he would be one of the most important men in all the then-known world. Jesus addressed a manifestation of **self**-centeredness. Peter had a wrong motivation rising to the surface. He wanted a position of authority, honor, and power, and expected to get it from Jesus. Self-centeredness can be manifested in a number of ways. We can see it in blatant self-interest or self-preservation which denies Jesus three times. Jesus would not allow it! He told Peter his attitude was offensive and his interests were for the things of men not for obeying the Father. The keys of the kingdom won't work when that attitude of heart is prevalent. Let's make sure it's weeded out of us.

FRIDAY, May 4
Scripture: Matthew 16:24-28

Jesus amplifies this principle by saying, *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."* Peter was extremely goal oriented. He wanted his own way demanding God's blessing on "man's" plan. Jesus said, *"...whoever desires to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?"* Apparently Peter expected authority over a good part of the then-known world. Jesus explained in verse 27, God will reward every man according to ***obedience*** to the Divine plan. We have to learn this today, just as Peter had to learn it then. Everything that would tempt us to save ourselves, rather than pouring ourselves out for others, we have to crucify. Are we willing to let Jesus pour out His ability for sacrifice through us for the blessing of people around us in our church, and the world? This was a major lesson the disciples had to learn, and when they learned it, they became very fruitful.

SATURDAY, May 5
Scripture: Genesis 12:1-7

God has given us an excellent example of the previous truths in the father of faith - Abraham. In Genesis 12:1-7 God speaks to Abram and tells him His divine purpose. He wants to bless him, He wants to make a great nation out of him, He wants to make his name great, and He wants to make him a blessing to other people: *"In you all families of the earth shall be blessed."* So Abram departs as the Lord has spoken unto him. He's 75 years old when he leaves Haran. He takes Sarai, his wife, Lot, his brother's son, and all of their things. He passes through the promised land and decides to stop at a place called Shechem. The Lord appears to Abraham in Shechem and he builds an altar. Now it's interesting to follow Abram through the promised land to discover the significance of three altars he builds. Each of the three altars are indicative of principles that would cause us to succeed in our walk with the Lord. The first and most important was when God called - Abram obeyed. He began to follow the Lord with the expectation of receiving blessing. So God expects to bless us as we walk with Him and as we fulfill His purpose. The Bible says He is not a hard taskmaster, but one who has our blessing and prosperity at heart, although intense seasons make us question that declaration. We can rejoice in knowing God takes pleasure in the prosperity of His servants.

SUNDAY, May 6
Scripture: Genesis 12:6 Isaiah 9:6 Isaiah 22:22 Revelation 3:7-11

Shechem is a very important place for Abraham because Shechem means "to shoulder" or "to load up early." And of course here, God appears to him and says, *"Unto your seed will I give this land."* So Abram shoulders God's purpose and receives the divine plan for his life. This decision is expressed at the altar. God's plan is not always understood because of our own goals and designs. But in the plain of Moreh at the place of Shechem, Abraham builds an altar. Now Moreh means "knowledge" and the altar of burnt offering was given as a total commitment to God's will. So at the place where Abraham received the knowledge of God's will, he shouldered the Divine plan with a life-long commitment. And we see the very same thing concerning Jesus

because Isaiah 9:6 says, *"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His* ***shoulder****: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."* Again in Isaiah 22:22, the prophet says, *"The key of the house of David I will lay on His* ***shoulder****; So He shall open, and no one shall shut; and He shall shut, and no one shall open."* In Revelation 3, Jesus speaks of this ability and it is all because He chose to commit Himself totally to God's plan. It is amazing how much governmental authority comes to those who are willing to shoulder God's purpose and plan for their life. Let's fully endeavor to be in that group.

MONDAY, May 7
Scripture: Genesis 12:8

Here we find Abram, after shouldering God's purpose for his life moves from Shechem toward Bethel and Ai, building another altar, calling upon the name of the Lord. This is a beautiful picture of step two. Bethel means the House of God or the Family of the Mighty. Abram has now understood God wants to make him by faith, the earthly father of a mighty family which will eventually bless all the earth. What's exciting is to note Abram's position with his face toward Bethel and his back toward Ai. Ai means "a heap of ruins," and it speaks of our own devices, our own living for ourselves, our own life in the flesh for our own gain, and our own purposes and plans apart from God. So as Abram faces his calling, he turns his back on his own devices, desires, purposes, and plans, understanding they would produce only a heap of ruins in the end. If we, as God's people, could only realize this principle and give ourselves wholly to Him, the kingdom would be established in significantly shorter order. Our interests would not be in our own blessing, but in the purpose and plan of God, and the Lord would show off by doing exceedingly abundantly above all we could ever ask or think. Surely God will have such people. The boot camp has been long enough to guarantee it!

TUESDAY, May 8
Scripture: Genesis 12:9,10

Here we find Abram with a lot more to learn about **God's ways**. Abram discovers there's a great famine in the land. He takes the easy route, moving slowly along from place to place, following the pathway of least resistance. Even though God is giving him this land, because there's a famine, he decides it must be better down in Egypt. Even though God gives us great promises and sometimes shows us the things He's going to do, it's difficult to really value what God has said when it's still in the promissory stages. Abram doesn't quite value the land as much as he will later on when its significance begins to grow in his understanding. God is repossessing the earth and He's starting with a little patch of territory called Canaan. That's just going to be His beginning, but one day, He will claim whole nations, one of which is the United States of America. God expects His people to possess their nations for His purposes, just as much as Abram had to possess Canaan. Have we set our heart to make a difference in our nation?

WEDNESDAY, May 9
Scripture: Genesis 12:11-20

It's amazing what can happen to us when we find ourself in a place where we're not suppose to be. Abram should have stayed in Canaan. God would have provided for him showing him how valuable the land was and miracles would have taken place just because he was where God wanted him to be. Isaac finally discovered this fact in the 26th chapter of Genesis where he sowed in the midst of a great famine. While everybody else was having a hard time God gave him a hundredfold return just because he was in his assigned place. Abram traveled to Egypt and fell into trouble immediately because of lying about his wife. God intervened by grace, which He is in the habit of doing for most of us. But Abram, the man who was called to witness and exhibit God's character, found himself being rebuked by the worldly king, Pharaoh of Egypt, and rightly so, because he was not acting as God's covenant representative. How much of what we see in church today, both of saints and leadership are being

rebuked by people of the world because they're operating below the standard of godly character. Could the root be they are not where they belong? Are we out doing our own thing instead of doing God's thing. Let's value the promises He has given us and hold fast until we see a manifestation!

THURSDAY, May 10
Scripture: Mark 9:31-38

Do we value what God values, or what men value? Here in Mark 9, we find the disciples arguing over what men value - position, power, prestige, and all the things that are secondary to God. Jesus had to set them straight. He said part of your desire is alright. There's nothing wrong with wanting to be excellent, but the question is, how are we going to get there? If we want to be first in the Kingdom of God, then we have to determine we're going to be servant of all. They were in a position where they could not receive from God. The Kingdom operated by the character of the King! If we disdain an individual, God will probably choose that person to bring us a deliverance, a healing, or something we desperately need, so we'll have to humble ourself to receive. Do we value what God values or what men value? Lot valued what men value and moved to Sodom because it was well watered. That choice was costly. Choices have repercussions.

FRIDAY, May 11
Scripture: Genesis 13:1-4

In the first four verses, we see Abram returning to the place where he had built the first altar. Many a time, after forays into Egypt, God's people have to come back to their first love, and so, Abram is coming back and re-establishing his priorities in his calling. In Revelation 2:1-5, Jesus speaks to one of the greatest churches of the New Testament era in biblical days. The church at Ephesus earned their own epistle, the book of Ephesians which sets forth the pinnacle of New Testament revelation concerning God's plan through the Church. The epistle indicates the church at Ephesus was a booming, thriving organism linked very closely to God's purpose and plan for establishing His Kingdom. Everything Jesus says to this church in Revelation 2 down to verse 3 is good. He says, *"I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not...."* They didn't accept every flaky doctrine that came along, they labored and would not faint; they refused to give up. But in verses 4 and 5 Jesus puts His finger on something that is quite common in our day. *"Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place -- unless you repent."* Let's make sure we're walking with our first Love.

SATURDAY, May 12
Scripture: Genesis 13:-9a

God brings Abram to a place where he returns to his first love in his understanding which necessitates a return to the land God has given. As he returns to God's purpose, he now must render full obedience, for you see in Genesis 12, God told him in verse 1, to *"Get out of your country, From your kindred And from your father's house."* He didn't obey as he brought Lot along. Lot has to be separated so Abram could come to a place of full obedience. How many things would God put His finger on right now in our lives if we were to pray, "Lord, I desire to give you full obedience. Is there anything that needs to be separated from me? I'm willing. I'm ready. Just show it to me and I'll separate it." If we make that our prayer today and let God show us those things this week because returning to full obedience is the only place where God imparts the full measure of His peace. Inner peace trumps outer turmoil. The **peace of God** crushes satan under foot!

SUNDAY, May 13
Scripture: Luke 9:18-23

Jesus said, *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."* We're talking of a **daily laying down** of dreams and visions to serve acceptably so that Jesus rules and reigns each day in our availability to the Holy Spirit. Whatever we need to separate in order to get back to God's plan, then the Holy Spirit will be more than happy to reveal it. After showing it, He usually goes one step further. He gives us the ability, strength, and urgency to move toward Him, even as Abram did when it was personally painful. The urgency of God was upon him, and part of the application of the cross to our lives is obeying God above the dictates of the flesh and above the desires of any member of our family. If we wholly sell out to the Lord, He will move upon all of us and enable our willingness to go the distance.

MONDAY, May 14
Scripture: Matthew 16:24-26 Luke 17:20-23

Peter had every intention of getting exactly what he wanted. The only problem was, what he wanted was a manifestation of the flesh and very far from the purpose and plan of God. Jesus had to rebuke him to his face and say, *"Get behind Me, Satan! ...you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."* (or, your desires are totally soulish and not spiritual)." We find in Luke 17 Jesus taught His disciples the Kingdom of God comes not with a great big show of people-pleasing power, but the Kingdom is **within us**. The degree to which God rules and reigns in our life over soulish desires determines the path we walk. Difficulty doubled for Abram until he separated from Lot! The character of Christ is eternal. Attitude in adversity reveals Christly character or lack of it. Adversity comes to all but one way to prolong the pain is in how we minister to those in parallel circumstances. Judging those in adversity, as Job's friends did, carries its own penalties. Jesus said when the Kingdom is established within us, the Holy Spirit has His way and we will not always try to please ourself. I believe God is doing some Kingdom establishing in this season. Let's thank Him for it and ask Him to continue until the full character of Christ is revealed in us!

TUESDAY, May 15
Scripture: Second Timothy 3:1-5

Second Timothy 3:1-5 is very descriptive of a church having a form of godliness but denying the power to deliver from selfishness. The Bible presents selfishness as one of the major warring forces we have to overcome in order to fulfill our calling on earth. It is no wonder the Scripture says perilous times shall come, perilous meaning "hard to take, hard to approach, dangerous, harsh, fierce, and savage." Those adjectives can be descriptive of personal relationships, political poisoning and physical reversals of life-threatening intensity. Personal adversity makes certain passages take on new meaning revealing previous pharisaical interpretation. As God has begun His spiritual housecleaning, one of the first things He is declaring war on is – selfishness as manifested in what we want and expect from life – one day at a time is all we have. The first ten years of my ministry, I misunderstood this passage. I believed *"...having a form of godliness but denying its power,"* dealt with people who refused the Holy Spirit during the Charismatic Renewal with the evidence of speaking in tongues. *But* the Lord straightened out my theology. He asked me how many characteristics listed here did I see in the Spirit-filled church, and to my great surprise, I had to say "most of them." And the Lord said, "Having a form of godliness but denying its power doesn't have anything to do with speaking in tongues; it deals with the power of the cross to deliver a person from selfishness." And I immediately understood there would be many people who would not want the power of the cross in their life to deliver them from selfishness on a daily basis, as Jesus had taught His disciples was necessary to walk in the kingdom. It is God's divine pathway to a higher kind of life. Let's walk in it. The problem with embracing it is dreams, visions and expectations must be placed on the altar. Serving God *means* serving others.

WEDNESDAY, May 16
Scripture: Second Timothy 3:1,2

The Lord impressed me to study the Second Timothy 3 list. I spent several hours digging around in my Greek lexicons getting definitions and filling out a little chart on the meanings of each one of the characteristics listed here, and then the Spirit of God began to give me some of the applications from His viewpoint. Those were most enlightening. The first thing He mentions here in verse 2 is *"...men will be lovers of themselves."* That Greek word means selfish, too intent on one's interest. But the application in our churches is how many intercessors could you raise up in a group of people that were in love with themselves, that were intent on their own interest? How many would embrace imprecatory prayer or faint in fear of spiritual reprisal for entering this realm? The anti-war protesters of the Viet Nam era have become the gutless treasonous dogs depriving troops in the field of support. Is there any other option except imprecatory prayer! Here is one of our primary problems in the church world today. God has called us to pray and break down the strongholds, but so many of the saints are so intent on their own interests they don't have time for intercession. *"Lovers of money/covetous"* is the second descriptive word and it means "loving money, avaricious, and seeking to hoard riches." The antonym of covetous is "generous," and it's application is obvious. What kind of an offering would you get to carry on the ministry, from people like that? Usually, not much, if anything at all. I think we can all imagine how the enemy tries to work on people in order to keep them from feeding God's chosen ministries which will be used to birth the coming revival and to clean up the entertainment oriented Church. The war is on! When in doubt use napalm – I have Scripture! (Psalm 104:4, Hebrews 1:7)

THURSDAY, May 17
Scripture: Second Timothy 3:2

The third adjective is *"boasters,"* and that Greek word means an empty pretender, a braggart, or a spiritual vagrant. The application of it was a bit surprising to me. This is a person confessing and claiming something he wants for himself but is not grounded in the Lord. It means to ask or believe for what is not God's will at a particular point in time. It means to embrace a soulish desire out of one's own mind. The poor foundation causes the claim to be an empty confession and the man in God's eyes - just a boaster. The next word used is *"proud."* It means showing oneself above others, the over-topping, outdoing, preeminent attitude. It is an overweening estimate of one's own means, merits or beliefs. Judging based on perception rather than reality is natural for this person. This is the individual who continually has to talk about what they are doing or what God has told them. Pride goes before a fall, but humiliation before honor. Preparing the Church for exaltation is much tougher than most of us ever dreamed. It looks like a life-long goal.

FRIDAY, May 18
Scripture: Second Timothy 3:2

"Disobedient to parents" includes much more than how we treat mom and dad. Parents, in Scripture, is a term that is also used for positions of authority or God-given leadership. *"Disobedient to parents"* speaks of our attitude toward the spiritual leadership God has placed in our lives, giving a picture of one who is "...unpersuadable, not moved by a teaching, or refusing to yield to a different level of wisdom." So God has said that in our congregations and churches we will find people, regardless of how much preaching they hear, we cannot persuade. There will be those who just refuse to be moved by what God imparts to our hearts; those who simply will not yield to our ministry probably because of personal judgments. It seems these people are in a form of rebellion. Next, He mentions *"unthankful,"* which means "ungrateful, never showing appreciation, never granting the favor of a pardon or forgiveness." So a person who is unthankful will most likely also be unforgiving, unappreciative, and probably no fun to be around. Can you imagine trying to pastor a congregation of people like that? What a faith project! Pray for napalm!

SATURDAY, May 19
Scripture: Second Timothy 3:2,3

"Unholy" means "wicked" but it also means "refusing to accept divine responsibility." There's many a person who has refused to accept the job God wanted them to take in their local church, whether it be teaching in the Sunday School, helping out in the nursery, or cleaning up the building after the service. Those who refuse to accept divine responsibility, God says are unholy. We will even see people "without natural affection." This means hardhearted toward your kindred, and it shows up as a person who is unloving with a catalog of judgments and resentments. *"Trucebreakers"* are those who cannot be persuaded to enter into a covenant. In other words, regardless of how much we preach vision, they just can't catch it. They are constantly in enmity and strife.

SUNDAY, May 20
Scripture: Second Timothy 3:3

A *"slanderer/false accuser"* is one prone to errant judgment. This is an individual who misinterprets much of what they see and hear. They assess sinister motive where none exists. They project feelings they have on others and blame them for it. Their personal filter is warped. Such is a man who, by opposing the cause of God, may be said to act the part of the devil or side with him who is the accuser of the brethren. The next character trap is *"without self-control/incontinent,"* which simply means to be without self-government, intemperate, powerless, and without dominion over yourself. America has been baptized with this, witnessed by the myriad of Recovery Programs – addictions reign. There is a definite increase of those who are fierce, savage, brutal, and who will take any advantage in an instant. Unfortunately, we also find social climbers in church who always desire to be seen more than develop character that counts. The next category is *"despisers of good."* This is a group that is hostile to virtue and they simply don't have a strong love for the things pleasing in the sight of God. Their nature is that of compromise and they don't like to hear the word integrity because it brings a certain divine accountability.

MONDAY, May 21
Scripture: Second Timothy 3:4

"Traitor" means giving in to the enemy's plans. It means to surrender without a fight; which unfortunately the Church has done in the last forty years with the loss of constitutional freedom through the courts. God is still a covenant Judge. But it also means "betrayer of parents." So a traitor in God's eyes is a person who would criticize his own pastor or his own leadership, in whatever organization, without following the prescription for "offense resolution." This is the group that generally take the pathway of least resistance. *"Headstrong"* are those who are rash, reckless, thoughtless, hasty, hurried, and impetuous. They do whatever seems good quickly. Unfortunately in God's eyes, leapers often become weepers. *"Haughty"* means those who are puffed up with pride. They are blind. They are beclouded with pride, conceited, and foolish. Finally, *"lovers of pleasures"* means those who love enjoyment, entertainment, and the pleasures of life. You can just about expect this group to be weary, worn out and relegated to being a spectator rather than participant. This passage shows once the door is opened through **love of self**, then all companions come barging in to steadily take control and rob a person of their ability to serve God with all their heart, mind, and strength. Only God can open our eyes to take personal inventory asking to appropriate the power of the cross for deliverance.

TUESDAY, May 22
Scripture: First Timothy 6:7-10

We brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out. So why should we let the temptation to seek riches determine our activities? A prophetic desire to see wealth transferred is an exception in this season because of biblical promise. The Scripture says desire can draw us into destruction and perdition. It

will cause us to err from the faith and we will be pierced through with many sorrows. It is sad to stand up and attempt to teach a congregation when you sense they have been pierced through with many a sorrow. **The hardness of heart that follows people leavened with mammon is a spiritual shock to the uninitiated.** I believe God wants to heal those sorrows as we respond in repentance and learn how to apply the cross daily.

WEDNESDAY, May 23
Scripture: Hebrews 10:32-34

This passage reveals a group of people who were persecuted for their faith to the degree their property and possessions were seized but because of the revelation they had of Jesus Christ and the spiritual reality of His presence, they joyfully responded shocking the world. Their priorities were right. They had a revelation of heaven and knew they had a better and a more enduring substance there, and that was the most important thing. They certainly were not ruled by their senses. They were able to control their motivations of heart and were not led by earthly desire. Is God calling us back to that kind of spiritual reality? Becoming loosely attached to property may yield great benefits in the days ahead.

THURSDAY, May 24
Scripture: Colossians 3:1-6

Here we are boldly told to *"Set our mind on things above, and not on things on the earth. ...Put to death/mortifying your members which are upon the earth."* "Mortify" means to deprive of power, to destroy the strength of, to slay, or put to death. In other words, whenever we find even one of this list of things operative in our life, we need to deprive its power and destroy its strength. The first thing he mentions is *"uncleanness"* and it simply means a desire for luxurious, profligate living. If we find that desire in our heart motivating some of the things we do, we need to immediately cease and desist. The second thing he mentions is *"passion/inordinate affection."* This means a feeling which the mind suffers, an emotion or passionate desire that grips us and carries us along in the hope of its fulfillment. Next he mentions *"evil desire/evil concupiscence"* which means a craving or a longing for that which is forbidden. Finally, he deals with covetousness which is simply a greedy desire to have more. If we see any of the seeds of these operative in our life, the Scripture says we need to mortify them or deprive them of power to have any kind of control over our minds or actions.

FRIDAY, May 25
Scripture: Matthew 6:19-34 Deuteronomy 8:11-17

Over and over again, Jesus taught to *"take no thought,"* which means, don't be worried or anxious because it is through worry and anxiety the enemy many times brings a person into bondage or perverts their motivation and attitude concerning money and things. There is nothing wrong with financial planning. The Scripture says we need to guard our mind against greed. Jesus said, *"Consider the lilies,"* how *"Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."* Well, Solomon in his latter years was a very greedy individual. He over-taxed and burdened the people, and loved living in his wealth. Jesus is trying to teach us when He says, *"Consider the lilies...they toil not,"* meaning you'll never see one who is tired from working all day; *"neither do they spin,"* meaning they don't make their own clothes; and yet *"in all Solomon's glory, he was not arrayed like one of these,"* meaning, God looks for people who will give themselves over totally to Him and refuse the standard operating procedures of the world; which is to acquire at whatever cost without any consideration of integrity or honesty. If the world can deceive us out of an extra dollar, they certainly will. Jesus said, "When I find a group of people who will wholly give themselves over to Me and seek first the Kingdom, then I guarantee I can clothe them in a finer, better way than they ever could be clothed if they were out acting like the world seeking their own." In other words, God can surpass for us anything we could get on our own by using worldly ways, but He won't do it until we prove we are going to wholly give ourselves over to Him. The Church has known for a long time the wealth of sinners was laid up for the just, but we haven't really seen it flow. One reason may be we haven't totally given

ourselves over to the Lord. Another may be God wants to show off in what He does as He transforms us into good advertising to the world. A third issue may be God's desire that we never say: "We acquired through personal ability" what He has done! A fourth may be we are not prepared to execute God's judgment!

SATURDAY, May 26
Scripture: Genesis 12:4-13:5

Abram, the father of faith, again becomes our example of this truth (see Friday, May 25). Even though Abram didn't value the land like God did, because he didn't have a full revelation of God's plan, he learned by his departure into Egypt when he was rebuked by the unbelieving pharaoh, that it pays to be in God's will. He must return to where he first established his altar in the land, accepting divine responsibility and rendering full obedience. He was brought to a place of total obedience, as he was forced to send Lot away. But the way he accomplished it is what tells us that Abram did a tremendous amount of growing and got revelation of what God expects of His people. Abram yielded the choice to Lot. Lot chose based on mammon! Abram got the best deal but in the natural it didn't appear that way. God turns things to our good.

SUNDAY, May 27
Scripture: Genesis 13: 5-12a

Here we find Abram refusing selfishness. He refuses the grasping methods of Lot to keep his inheritance. He says in verse 9, "If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left." Now Abram refuses to hold on to his God-given land. He's not grasping at it for personal position or gain. He realizes the land is God's. The principle is this. We can't possess what God promises, by worldly means. I can hardly count the times I've seen assistant pastors take part of the flock, go down the street, start their own church, but lack of integrity in the origin curses the whole from the outset! God no doubt promised them one day they would have a wonderful ministry or a big church but they tried to help God out and then have to pay the character development price. What a lesson Abram learns as he realizes God promised him the land, but before he can possess it, he has to obey the first thing, which was *"leave your kindred."* To obey the first, he must sacrifice the land. Without doing the first things right, we can't expect God to bless our latter end. Tough lessons build character!

MONDAY, May 28
Scripture: Genesis 12:10-12a

I'm sure Abram's mind was screaming at him: "You gave up the very best!" Lot went down toward the well-watered productive looking fertile ground next to Sodom. But Abram had learned those who walk with God and walk in His ways don't have to protect their own rights. They can rely on God for the outcome, and in the end, **Lot's choice was Divinely excluded.** How exciting it is to talk with a God that looks ahead, that requires integrity, and tells us He's big enough we do not have to protect ourselves with worldly ways. We can live day by day with one intention, and that is to obey Him to the utmost, to walk in integrity, and He will bring us into that which He has promised and no man can take it from us. No one can steal from us what God has promised, if we will simply walk in obedience to Him.

TUESDAY, May 29
Scripture: Genesis 13:14-18

After Lot was separated from Abram, God came to him and spoke to him and said, *"Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are -- northward, southward, eastward, and westward: for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever. Arise and walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you."* It was only after Abram had put it up for grabs and gave Lot the choice of taking what he wanted,

God appeared to him and said, "All right, now that you've obeyed you are going to get it after all." You see if we grasp a thing to tightly, we lose it. It is not until we seem to have lost it altogether that we really have it, because then we give God the glory, we give Him the praise, and then only He can do it and bring it to pass. There is no reliance on our own ability or our own worldly scheming or planning. Abraham, in God's Divine ability and mighty power, received the promise *after* he obeyed. So it is with us.

WEDNESDAY, May 30
Scripture: Genesis 13:18

We see Abram building his final altar at Hebron. It means "the city of the friend of the merciful God." It means a joining. The root word is fellowship or association. Abram has finally come to a place where he is joined to God. He is in fellowship. He is in an association. He has been promised the land and he is possessing it. God was merciful to him while he grew and learned Divine ways. He saw God fulfill what was promised. It is a reality. He knows the joy of fellowship. He learned a great lesson that not until we seem to have lost it altogether do we really have it. Unfortunately, just a few years down the line, he will have to learn it all over again through the Hagar affair. There are certain things God wants to teach us and if we get them the first time, we save ourselves a lot of trouble. The basic foundational lessons God wants to give can be grasped initially without the need to learn them over and over again.

THURSDAY, May 31
Scripture: Genesis 14:11-23

Here we find Abram probably wanting to say, "Aha, Lot, look what happened to you! You chose the very best and now, through a worldly army, you've been dispossessed. It serves you right. That will teach you to choose the very best." But in verses 14 through 16 we don't see any "I told you so." God requires Abram to lay down his life for Lot even though Lot didn't even belong in the land to start with and was only brought through Abram's disobedience. So in the bringing back of the goods, Melchizedek meets Abram and teaches a very valuable lesson. We may have learned that no one can steal what God has promised, but do we believe none can help unless God sends them? In the world, every person you can get on your side just adds to your power and ability. But God is not impressed by numbers. In the building of what God wants to do, it requires each laborer be one that is sent from above and their labor has its source in Him, for if it doesn't, it won't count and is worthless, we might as well turn it away. And so Abram learned to turn things back. We have to learn we can't stand and fight for God if there is worldly scheming, planning, or ambition in us. Following God's developmental path takes courage. Many try to accomplish spiritual things through the ways of the world. It wouldn't work for Abram and it won't work for us. Let's make sure we do it God's way with His ability, with His helpers, having our total source in Him.

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ITINERARY
Al Houghton

May 3-6 David Fees Zion Life Church, 2020 G Avenue, Plano, TX
For information e-mail dfees@efminternational.org or call
Phone: (972)423-2543 Thursday **5/3 7PM** Friday **5/4** & Saturday **5/5** call for times

May 20 Seattle Revival Center, 12636 SE 89th Place, New Castle, WA 98056
Sunday **5/20 10 AM & 6 PM**