

Beginning With The End In Mind

“What's In It For Me?” Part 2

We are about to start one of the clearest and important chapters found in the New Testament that addresses issues about the end times. Much has to be covered before we can really break down some of the many details in which I believe we are facing and events we will be facing in the near future.

Our culture has become consumer oriented and so has a broad number of this generation. We come to church and are absolutely convinced that we are warriors for Christ but are often no more than **mercenaries, hired soldiers**.

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep."

John 10:11-13

Most of us, on the whole, love to serve God; we teach our classes, host life groups, share the love of Christ with those around us and work enthusiastically with others less fortunate. Yet there are occasions when we could do more, and instead we hesitate and there are some who could contribute in some way but never do. Equipping classes are designed to encourage us to develop our lives to be more effective, more like Christ. There are special events intentionally formed to enhance our ability and effectiveness as an individual and a Christian. There are countless other "extras" thrown our way -- and we hesitate. We hesitate because we don't understand "What's In It For Me?"

Asking that question can look like we're being selfish. And in an absolute way we are, we are being selfish. But for me and many of those in our church the bottom line to this statement might be different pending on the individual. **For when we say, "What's in it for me?" we really mean:**

- "What's in it for my family?"
- "What's in it for my career?"
- "What's in it for my kid's?"
- "What's in it for my goals?"
- "What's in it for my future?"

The absolutes are, the time spent engaging at our church or one of our life groups through serving, through participating and through giving is...

- **Not time spent at home**
- **It does not directly connect all the dots to your career and financial future**
- **It is not always about your kids**
- **It will often challenge your goals**
- **But it has everything to do with your future!**
- Your involvement with God can be one more thing on an over loaded back. And with all the things you are carrying already, you question yourself, "Can I take on any more?", "Can I go to one more class?", "Can I give one more dime?" and you sincerely look at all this Christianity and ask, "What's In It For Me?"

Understand Why Peter Wrote This Letter

“Dear friends, this now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking.”

II Peter 3:1 (NIV)

We really don't have much written by the apostle Peter even though many people would agree that he is one of the top three or four key figures in the New Testament. Peter was an important and an influential man in the early church. But he makes it clear that he has written both letters to:

- **Stimulate:** diegeiro 1326- To wake up, awaken arouse (from sleep)

“This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in [both] which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance:”

II Peter 3:1 (KJV)

- **Wholesome Thinking/Your Sincere Mind:** In other words, “I want to wake up a pure and genuine mind with my words. I want minds that have a heart for God and a heart to please God to read this.”
 - The word “sincere” is derived from the combination of *heile* indicating the “sun's rays” plus *krino* meaning to “judge”. Here's what that means: In ancient times the finest pottery was thin. It had a clear color and it brought a high price. Fine pottery was very fragile both before and after firing and would often crack in the oven. Cracked pottery should have been thrown away. Unless you were a dishonest salesman and then you might fill the defective crack with a hard pearly wax that would blend in with the color of the pottery. This made the cracks practically undetectable in the shops, especially when painted or glazed. However this “cover up” was immediately detectable if the pottery was held up to light of the sun which who demonstrate darker lines where the cracks had been repaired or disguised. Thus the artificial element was detected by “sun-testing.” Honest dealers marked their finer product by the caption “Sine Cera” (our English word “sincere”) meaning “without wax.”
- (KJV)- **“By way of”, “Reminder”-** (*hupomnesis* from *hupo'* = under + *mimnesko* = to remind) means a reminding or recollection, a remembrance. The idea is that once they were awakened, everything that they had previously learned gets up **under them**, continues to keep them **stirred** and continues to keep them **stable**.
 - A man once said, “I have a good memory. My problem is that my forgettery is even better.”
- **What's In It For Me?**
 1. **A Keen Awareness Of The Future**

Understand Who Peter Wrote This Letter To

“Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours...”

II Peter 1:1

- He is writing to those who have received a faith through the righteousness of Jesus. Jesus' life, death, burial and resurrection made it possible for us to share in the same precious faith.
- I can never be more saved than you and you can never be more lost than me.
- You can never be more saved than me and I can never be more lost than you.
- **God doesn't measure the extremes you've go in your life, he measures the simple decisions you've made toward His Son.**
- For us it's a million miles to Him and to Him it's just one step
- **This is where Satan tries to destroy us.**
- **First Lie of Satan: He tries to get us to compare experiences and not our faith:**
Your experiences may not be equivalent to mine or Peter's experience:
 - Peter prays for **man crippled from birth** and he immediately gets healed. **(Acts 3:1-16)**
 - Peter was walking in such an anointing that people would lay **sick people on the streets** so that **Peter's shadow** would fall on them and the Bible says that all of them were healed. **(Acts 5:12-16)**
 - **Peter had visions** that completely changed the way we eat today as Christians. If he had not had a vision we would all still be eating everything Kosher. **(Acts 10)**
 - Peter was **awaken** in the middle of the night, he was sleeping between two soldiers and was bound to them, and the **chains feel off** and he walked past two sets of guards and **out of the prison.** **(Acts 12:1-10)**
 - **Satan would love for us to confuse experience with our faith!**

“..to those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours...”

II Peter 1:1

- Here's what Peter is saying, you have received a faith that is as **precious** as mine or Peter's.
 - **Tois isotimon 2472:** “Of the same kind”, (Webster: “of great value or high price”, “highly esteemed or cherished”, “dear”, “very costly”)
 - **isotimon**, made up of **isos**, “equal in quantity or quality” and **time** “value, price, honor or esteem rendered towards something.” **Isotimon** was used for **foreigners** who had been granted the **privileges of citizenship** which were equal to those of the native born. Peter was addressing believers who had once been despised Gentiles but who had been given equal rights of citizenship with the Jews and even with the apostles themselves in the kingdom of God. There are no first and second class Christians in spiritual, racial, or gender distinctions. (Gal. 3:28)
- In essence, he has written to us.
- Have you made the decision to receive the faith made through the righteousness of Jesus? You should make that decision today!
- **What's In It For Me?**
 1. **A Keen Awareness Of The Future**
 2. **A Faith As Good As The Greatest**

- **First Lie of Satan: He tries to get us to compare experiences and not our faith**
- **Second Lie of Satan: He tries to get us to confuse intrigue and curiosity with natural born tendencies and DNA makeup**
 - **SIDE NOTE: PETE MOORE, THE WORLDS SMALLEST MAN-** I understand that the fair is in town. With most fairs come side attractions, and I am a sucker for them. I will never forget the day that I went to the fair with my wife and another couple. The side show was Pete Moore, The Worlds Smallest Man. I'm not sure what I expected. As I stood around and listened to the man trying to entice us to spend a wasteful amount of money for one ticket to see Pete Moore my curiosity continued to build. Eventually my friend and I bought tickets and walked into the tent. There sat Pete. He was sitting in a little rocking chair watching T.V. He was getting old and I would say, he probably was one of the worlds smallest men, without a doubt. After staring at him to the point of feeling ashamed we walked out, and you know what? We weren't small people!? What does that mean?
 - **Second Lie of Satan: He tries to get us to confuse intrigue and curiosity with natural born tendencies and DNA makeup**
 - Satan is no different than a sideshow tent-master. Sideshows have learned the power of mystery, intrigue and curiosity. The tent-masters intention is to **intrigue** you and **stir up your curiosity** to the point that you buy the ticket and go in the show. The problem is, when you come out of the tent, he **antagonistically accuses you of being a midget! He confuses and intrigues you with curiosity and accuses you as having born tendencies and a DNA makeup.** The circus and fair has know this secret for years of how to entice people, but Satan has been doing it since the beginning of time and knows that it works.
 - Our personal DNA is to be curious and intrigued with mystery. It is the basis of what causes us to create, invent and conquer. We are made in the image of God, and God created.
 - You may have experimented and you may have yielded to the curiosity and intrigue of a sideshow tent of ungodly behavior, but in Jesus Christ, it doesn't make you a midget! If you have been involved and enticed with ungodly actions you **first became curious and then you became confused.**
 - Once you respond to the intriguing, once you respond to the curiosity and yield to it's lies you can spend many years battling the deceptions and lies of Satan, lies that tell you, you are too far gone, that you will never change or could change because of what you have participated and experimented in. You will have to come to the point in your relationship with Christ that you confront the deception of Satan and realize that you have to stop seeing yourself the way that Satan has defined you as, the way that he has enticed you to think you are. When confessing the Word of God, you may have to speak to yourself in a way that feels like you are lying to yourself. It is like saying, "My righteousness is the same as that of The Apostle Peter's, not Pete Moore's!" My curiosities have caused me to observe or partake in ungodly behavior but my righteousness through Jesus Christ has called me to be an overcomer!

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- **First Lie of Satan: He tries to get us to compare experiences and not our faith**
- **Second Lie of Satan: He tries to get us to confuse intrigue and curiosity with natural born tendencies and DNA makeup**
- **Third Lie of Satan: He tries to get us to cancel the blessing of God by urging us to pursue the assumed expectations of God.**

“Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord.”

II Peter 1:2

If you don't know God you will either assume what He wants or be confused about what He wants. **Accurately knowing God always precedes effectively serving God.** I know that sometimes people refuse to serve because they don't feel the “spirit”. What God has already stated doesn't have to be restated. You can always count on His Word. If He said that He wants certain things...He wants certain things.

Peter makes an important statement here and you must read it and learn it. What is he saying?

- **Grace-**
 - **Grace is the opportunity to be forgiven, accepted and empowered without having to pay for it.**
 - **Grace is receiving unmerited favor through the character, sacrifice or actions of another.**

Examples:

1. **Character:** When I was a kid I would stay with my **Uncle in Oklahoma** every summer for two weeks. Everyday he would saddle up a horse and have it tied off on the propane take. I was very young because I remember running and jumping as high as I could to grab the loops on the propane take and pull myself and then stand up on the tank so I could get my foot in the stirrup. I would ride for hours and when it got real hot, I would ride the horse two miles to a little one street town where they had an old country store. I would slide down the side of that horse, step up on the porch, open that old screen door that had ten layers of paint and I can still hear the wood floor creek beneath my feet as I got a cold coke from the old soda chest. I went to pay for the coke and the person at the counter said, “Aren't you Eugene's nephew?” I responded, “Yes sir.” He smiled and said, “No charge.” I never had to say another word. I remember stepping out on the porch of that store and sat down on the bench under the shade of its awning and thought, “Life can not get better than this!” I received unmerited favor through the character of my uncle.
2. **Sacrifice:** What we call **freedom in our country** is nothing more than grace. Many men paid the “sacrifice” that enables us to walk in freedom. That is grace. Can you believe it, men died and sacrificed their lives to extend grace to us so that we might have a country that had the potential to be careless and manipulative with it's laws? **People shed their blood knowing that there was the opportunity for that liberty they were providing to be mistreated and abused. But they believed in**

“sacrifice” and we have not only received freedom because of it, we received grace! We received unmerited favor, others see that they have received unending rights, through the sacrifice of other people.

3. **Actions:** When character and sacrifice are found in one person they make way for impacting action. **Nothing is more inspiring than watching a person who serves a noble cause who has all the abilities to do something else.** Sacrifice is not necessarily doing what will cost you the most. It is doing what needs to be done, when it needs to be done when no one else can or will do it. **When noble character meets with a sacrificial attitude you have an impacting action!**

- **Peace-**

- **Hail:** You hear the weather turning, the wind blowing and hail hitting your roof and you remember your car is in the garage. That is peace.
- **Water:** You leave for a **trip out of town** and remember you left your water running in your yard and you call your **neighbor** or friend and immediately they answer the phone and say, **“I'll go over there right now and turn it off.”**
Test: You didn't study for a test and you get to class and someone says, “You can look at my answers.” That is...cheating, but some would think it was peace. But the reason you didn't study for the test is because it was finals and you were exempt. But just in case, you called to check up to make sure you were exempt; and you were. That is really peace.

- **Third Lie of Satan: He tries to get us to cancel the blessing of God by us pursuing the assumed expectations of God.**

- It has been said that if Satan cannot get in front of you and mislead you, he will get behind you and try to shove you to over compensate your walk with God.
- What's more important than knowing God's will is knowing God! If you don't know God you can only assume His expectations for your life.
- **Satan tries to make us feel guilty for making sure we are exempt of the main question on the test, “Do you know God?”.** Satan loves to make doubters out of us:
 - **If we check our spiritual balance he tries to convince us that we must be lost because we reviewed our heart. I'm telling you, if you are reviewing your heart because you want a closer walk with God you are on the right path.**
 - **Just because we want to check-up on our spiritual condition, Satan wants to make us interpret that as being full of doubt and having no faith.**
 - **Illustration:** Just because you check your oil in your car doesn't mean your convinced that your engine is about to burn up. You check your oil to make sure your motor will continue to run.
 - **In our attempt to know our position with God, Satan would have us retake the test of our relationship with God even though Jesus' blood has made us exempt of having to ever to take that test again. We get over balance in trying to be the right person that we lose the benefits of the blessed person.**

"Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord."

II Peter 1:2

Here are some truths:

- **Grace and peace has a fluctuating balance where the currency for deposit is the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ.**
 - If grace and peace is not growing in your life it is possible that you may have no knowledge or an inaccurate view of God. It also may be that you are only educating yourself in theological information without getting a knowledgeable understanding of who God is.
 - (It is equivalent to cramming for a test. You have got the right information but it is nothing you can actually remember or utilize after the test.)

Jesus Knows God:

Do we really know who God is?

- Jesus said in Mark 11:22, "Have faith in God." But do you know that God?

Jesus knew God better than anybody else. Better than the prophets and Apostles who received their information by revelation. Better than theologians, philosophers and great thinkers of our time. Jesus knew God better than anybody.

Jesus has spent pre-world history in the eternal presence of God. If anybody knows about God, He does. And He says you can trust God with your life. So what does Jesus say about God?

- **God is a spirit**- John 4:24
- **God is holy**- John 17:11
- **God is just**- Matthew 21:33 (Vineyard owner destroys the wicked husbandman who treats his servants wrongly)
- **God is judge**- Matthew 22 (A man who refuses to wear the wedding garment was cast out into outer darkness.) Matthew 25 (Five foolish virgins came too late and were left out.) Toward the end of Matthew 25 (Jesus dies on the cross for the purpose of divine judgment)
- **God is powerful**- Mark 10:27 He says, "With God all things are possible."
- **God is sovereign**- Matthew 23:22 (Heaven is the throne of God)
- **God is omniscient**-Mark 6:4 (He sees everything in secret)
- **God is caring**- Matthew 6:32 (The grass of the field and flowers do not worry and He will cloth us just the same.)

The Main Lesson Jesus Taught About God (This lesson supersedes every other lesson)

- There is one title for God that is repeated in the gospels **189 times, 124 of those times** in the gospel of **John alone**. And that title for God is simply this, "**Father**."
- **More than anything else**, more than **any other concept of God**, more than any **other theme about God**, Jesus majored on the fact that He was a father. "Father" was always Jesus' special way of referring to God. He says, "**My** Father, **our** Father, **your** Father and **just plain** Father."
- **Do you know this Father God?** It says in II Peter 1:2 that the balance of Grace and Peace is in response to the knowledge you have of God and Jesus Christ.

Paul Knew God: Let's learn about God...

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort..."

II Corinthians 1:3

- **Father's Compassion:** 3628- *oiktirmos* {oyk-tir-mos} compassion, pity, mercy
- **God's Comfort:** 3874- *paraklesis* {par-ak'-lay-sis} consolation, comfort, solace; that which affords comfort or refreshment
- **I challenge you this week to find a scriptural reference for every time you are responding to a thought about God or Jesus. Here's how you do that, you just have a thought about God and you ask yourself, is that an accurate view of God according to scripture.**
- **Without a Biblically supported reference to the God you serve, you are only involved in idol worship.**
- **Grace and peace has a fluctuating balance where the currency for deposit is the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ.**

Knowing God: What else does it say?

"...who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

II Corinthians 1:4

- This scripture not only gives us a great perspective of the personality of God, but it also expresses to us what God values.
- God wants to comfort us not to be a parent who meets all of the needs of an unhealthy family. He does not console us because someone had hurt our feelings, but because he wants us to see how we are to act as a family. He comforts us to help us understand the values that God has for a family.
- **Individual verses Value:** Dysfunctional Families have undefined values while at the same time they have quality expectations.
 - If I were to ask, "Do you allow your son to hit your daughter." Almost every person would say, "No." But
 - There are many homes that have not created values but police or fill a need in their home without having their whole family accept responsibility for healthy behavior.
 - **Values are the clear expectation of attitude and behavior.**
- **What's In It For Me?**
 1. **A Keen Awareness Of The Future**
 2. **A Faith As Good As The Greatest**
 3. **A Father Who Is Every Caring And Leading Me**